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### Is It Possible to Teach as a Christian in Today's Public School Setting?

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Is It Possible to Teach as a Christian in  
Today’s Public School Setting”**

written by

**Rachel Waggener**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for completion of the  
Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

(Name) thesis director

(Name) second reader

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honors program director

April 18, 2007

“Is It Possible to Teach as a Christian in Today’s Public School Setting?”

Rachel Waggener

Honors Senior Thesis

Ouachita Baptist University

I am a teacher. I have chosen to invest three years of my life as well as my undergraduate college experience to learn how to educate. In the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2007), education is defined as “the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools.” Education, particularly as it relates to public school classrooms and teachers, is often a topic on talk shows, front page newspaper articles, and political campaign speeches. It should be. It affects every family in our country and world.

Education affects our financial and human resources. In 2006-2007, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated 75.5 million students entering the classrooms. The amount of money that the U.S. government spent on education reached an average of \$8,287 per student, giving an overall total of 6.2 billion dollars (“Back to School: 2006-2007,” 2006, para. 4). Not only does education require sufficient financial resources and careful attention, but it also requires people. People create the foundation for all educational institutes, and teachers are the cornerstones of this foundation. In 2006-2007, there were 6.8 million teachers working in the classrooms to provide 20 to 150 students in each of their classes with a solid education (“Back to School: 2006-2007,” 2006, para.22).

Education demands teachers to take responsibility for numerous tasks. Some include becoming familiar with students and their needs, creating individualized lessons plans for each class period, assessing all students for learning and understanding, modifying lessons to improve instructions, and participating in personal professional development. Teachers also have an obligation to their schools, to their students, and to themselves to be the most effective teacher they can in order to cultivate genuine and fruitful learning environments. In the nationally referenced book, “Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching,” Danielson (1996) addresses a specific set of criteria that outlines particular ways to demonstrate effective

teaching. The frameworks presented are used to evaluate beginning teachers through a national assessment called the Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessment created by the Educational Testing Service and endorsed by the National Council of the Accreditation of Teacher Education ([ncate.org](http://ncate.org)), which is responsible for accrediting the teacher education programs in 48 of the 50 US states as well as District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The frameworks in the book identify “those aspects of teacher’s responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning” (p.1). This valid and widely known resource in the educational realm is a powerful tool that helps emphasize the key components all classrooms and all teachers should display.

In August, I will step into my own classroom and begin my job of educating 100 high school students in math. I have thought often about how I will personally do this important job. Along with the desire to follow the specific frameworks used to demonstrate effectiveness, I have determined another component I believe is just as critical as those found in the Praxis III. That component is teaching as a Christian. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2007) defines a Christian as “one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Christians believe that Jesus Christ lived on this world and modeled a perfect life for his followers. Jesus was a teacher and because of this, I have chosen to examine his teaching strategies, methods, and characteristics. I believe that my commitment to follow Jesus Christ will greatly impact my teaching as well as validate additional ways to demonstrate effectiveness.

In order to combine Christian principles with national frameworks, this thesis will look at different teaching evaluation forms as well as religious texts. Jesus’ teaching experiences will be directly observed from different passages found in the Holy Bible, particularly in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Further references that analyze Jesus’ teaching ministry will

come from books written by noted religious educators such as Dr. Howard G. Hendricks, a distinguish professor and chairman of the Center for Christian Leadership at Dallas Theological Seminary, and William R. Yount, professor of Christian Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Hendricks, 1987 & Yount, 1999). All of the resources presented will provide unique Christian perspectives used to add to the creditable frameworks already set in place for teachers. With these principles, one of the hopes of this thesis is to show that effective teaching can take place anytime, anywhere.

With that in mind, imagine a classroom filled with twelve diverse students whose society is the poorest in the country and whose potential for academic greatness or any type of greatness is bleak. In addition, the students in the class possess outlooks, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves, their school, and the world that are drastically different from those of their teacher. Inside the classroom is a student named Peter whose fiery disposition tends to make him outspoken, temperamental, and assertive. However, he is the leader of his class and has a “rock” solid commitment to maintain this position. Next is Peter’s brother, Andrew, who is very eager to learn, but whose major flaw is to digress during discussions and to talk about fishing with his friends. Two more students are the teacher’s pet, John, who adores his teacher greatly and clings to his every word and the skeptic and realist, Thomas, who constantly questions and doubts every word. Another student is Matthew who is very good with numbers, loves to talk about money, but is disliked by majority of his peers. Two more students are named Simon and Judas who both yearn for power in the class and want to become political icons in the future. The rest of the class have just as much uniqueness as the students previously mentioned, yet as a whole, they all appear to be uneducated, prejudiced, unstable, self-centered, and overly sensitive (Yount, 1999). They are the outcasts in the academic, economic, and social realm of society.

Nevertheless, their greatest and most important component for ever having a promising future is their teacher. Their teacher sees past every barrier they bring to the class and notices their hearts: hearts that have potential to seek higher knowledge, to strive for noble and moral qualities, and to leave any comfort zone if necessary to give their new understanding away. One could guess that these students mentioned were the twelve disciples and their teacher, Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus, the Master Teacher of all times, took these twelve hopeless students and taught them wonders and truths that molded and changed them into men of knowledge, integrity, and bravery. But how did Jesus transform these diverse students during his three years of earthly ministry? What were his initial thoughts, strategies, techniques, and goals for these men? Looking broadly, is it beneficial to adapt Jesus' teaching styles into public school settings in hope to make a similar impact in the lives of students today? Since the twelve disciples possessed some of the same characteristics that students during this era display, can teachers look to the past in order to follow the guidance and example of Jesus? Have teachers across the United States already attempted this ambitious quest and have found themselves as well as their students successful and blessed? The purpose of this thesis is to explore these ideas in an attempt to answer the guiding question, "Is it possible to teach as a Christian in today's public school settings?"

First it is critical to examine what it means to "teach as a Christian." In the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ is called a teacher 45 times. One example occurs in the verses found in Mark 6:1-3, in the *New International Version Bible*. The passage states,

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked, "What's this wisdom that has

been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sister here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Jesus sets the highest possible standard for Christian teaching. His teaching transformed his followers, especially the twelve disciples, from uneducated individuals into bold, influential leaders. Many have examined Jesus' thoughts, strategies, techniques, and goals for his students but this thesis will compare His teaching with the criteria contained in the Pathwise Evaluation Form derived from Danielson (1996) and developed by Ouachita Baptist University, Teacher Education Department (2007).

The Pathwise Evaluation Form is the assessment that certain universities and accrediting agencies use to assess pre- and in-service teachers. The evaluation form is divided into four domains and each one is subdivided into four or five other categories. The domains look at the entire educational process from planning and implementing lessons to professional development. The four domains include the following: Domain A: Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning; Domain B: Creating an Environment for Student Learning; Domain C: Teaching for Student Learning; Domain D: Teacher Professionalism. University supervisors observe their students teachers throughout the semester and collect evidence proving that each one has understood the requirements for each category, has practiced a wide range of teaching strategies, and has developed a solid repertoire ready to be used in their own classroom. One component of this thesis is to utilize the Pathwise form to classify the different ways Jesus taught his students. This can be accomplished using different verses found in the Gospels of the Bible. Jesus definitely had ample amount of evidence to pass any test or observation successfully. Additionally, this thesis will consider several texts written by Christian authors who provide



unique perspectives in their books that will either further emphasize Jesus' teaching methods or give helpful advice for Christian teachers today.

## **Domain A: Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning**

### **A1: Become familiar with students' background knowledge and experiences.**

That Christ was familiar with his students' background can be confirmed using only a few of the many verses found in the Gospels. Jesus knew the minute details of his students from their occupations, family situations, and cultural backgrounds to their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs. When calling his twelve disciples, Jesus met them in their natural surroundings near the Sea of Galilee or at a tax collector's booth. A great example of how Jesus was very familiar with students' background occurs in John 1:47-48. These verses record a dialogue between Jesus and a student named Nathanael. The verses state,

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

This master teacher was knowledgeable not only about his disciples and their lives, but also about his friends, the teachers of the law, the political leaders, and even strangers. In John 4:17-29, Jesus demonstrated His extensive background knowledge about a Samaritan woman sitting at a well. Through conversation, Jesus was able to show his knowledge about her home situation. The conversation begins with the Samaritan woman's comment:

"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

After this dialogue, Jesus has the opportunity to share and to teach his eternal lessons. The impact of knowing the woman's background was tremendous and is evident in John 4:29. In the verse, the Samaritan woman states to the townspeople, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." Later in the chapter, the author comments that many believed in him because of this interaction. Thus, he demonstrated the necessity and power of knowing and building rapport with every type of student. He did this not only by conversing with everyone, but by personally dismissing crowds after teaching his lessons, attending wedding parties and other social functions, and eating at students' homes. Other ways Jesus displayed the importance of becoming familiar with students were through his example of understanding the speech of the current times and using familiar words when speaking in order to relate to a wide range of individuals. From appealing to the "fishers of men" to reaching the social outcasts, Jesus took what he learned about his audience and used that information to make a stronger and more genuine learning environment. For cross-references: Matthew 4:18, 23; Matthew 7:6; Matthew 9:9-10; Matthew 14:22; Matthew 15:32; Mark 1:16, 17, 19-20; Mark 2:13, 21; Mark 6:34; Mark 8:2; Luke 10:25; John 2:1-4.

From the public school perspective, becoming familiar with students' background and past experience is a vital step in becoming an effective teacher. Hendricks (1987) stresses that getting to know students personally allows teachers to earn respect and trust, which in turn, can make a huge impact in the lives of their students. When students see that they are respected and are an essential part of the class, their participation and attention can be strongly effected in a positive manner. When teachers become familiar with their students, teachers are better equipped to recognize their unique learning styles, to understand their thinking process, and to find ways to make a stronger connection (Hendricks, 1987). Because not all students learn the same way,

teachers must know the past circumstances in order to effectively help the present and the future. Moreover, teachers need to realize that students have lives outside of the classroom that greatly affect their lives inside the classroom. When teachers are aware of outside occurrences, they can have a better understanding of why students act a certain way. In addition, Wilkinson (1992) asserts that knowing a student's background can help teachers fulfill their ultimate purpose: to serve students by meeting their needs through developing healthy and appropriate relationships and by empowering them through love. The only way to build beneficial relationships is to find out information about every student and use that knowledge wisely and purposefully in order for all to have a chance to learn.

**A2: Articulate clear learning goals for the lesson that are appropriate for the student.**

Jesus always knew why He was sent to this world. He was prepared for every situation with a solid and effective repertoire of goals and expectations. Evidence that confirm this subcategory is displayed in John 3:17 when Jesus stated, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." Because his ultimate goal was to save the world, Jesus spoke plainly to his audience by giving clear and concise expectations. He stated direct commands that all could understand and attempt to fulfill. For instance, Jesus articulated clear learning goals during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), one of his most important teaching opportunities with his disciples and a huge regional crowd. Some explicit command words he said to his audience include go, rejoice, pray, and love. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus clearly stated his learning goals when he said,

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your

neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Another way Jesus gave clear learning expectations was when he delivered the Great Commission. He issued his followers to go forward and to proclaim what they had been taught to the ends of the earth. This learning goal was stated very clearly in Matthew 28:19-20 and was very appropriate and doable for these now knowledgeable men. For cross-references:

Matthew 5:12, 17; Matthew 6:1, 2, 5-7; Luke 9:14; John 13:34.

In the field of education, teachers are encouraged to articulate clear learning goals in order to notify their students and administrators what is being taught. By developing clear-cut objectives, educators will be able to think of different ways for teaching their lessons in hope to stretch their students' minds (Hendricks, 1987). Thus, the learning process will be meaningful, and the time spent teaching will not be in vain. Teachers will have a precise plan for the day, and both students and teachers will know exactly where every lesson is heading. In terms of teaching spiritual lessons, Coleman (1964) encourages ministers and teachers to always make clear and purposeful plans in order to strive to reach true potential for learning. This goal can be transferred easily to the public school setting in attempt to receive a similar impact.

**A3: Demonstrate an understanding of the connection between past, present, and future content.**

Starting with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus related his teachings to past lessons. He began his speech with, "you have heard that it was said to the people long ago..." He used this introduction several times before talking about major legal and moral issues such as murder, adultery, divorce, and oaths. That way, he could recall past materials, correct any

misconceptions, and add new truthful insights that could further enrich their learning. Also, in Matthew 5, Jesus demonstrated that he was aware of his students' prior knowledge and had confidence that when he mentioned King David or King Solomon, his audience could make a direct reference and would know exactly what he was talking about. In Matthew 12:3, Jesus related his lesson to a past situation David did in order to connect to his audience as well as to connect to the past to help prove his message. The verse states, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?" Jesus knew his audience had heard that story before and that he could build on it because they had a solid past foundation.

Nevertheless, Jesus was not limited to just connecting the past with the present. He also understood the power of connecting both past and present to the future. Because Jesus knew that his lessons would directly impact the future, he invested so much of his time, energy, and devotion into the lives of his students in hope to see his words become a reality. He knew the potential effects his words would have on the world. In Matthew 10:18-20, he commented that when the moment of persecution arose in the future, his students would be prepared because the words would already be given to them. Thus, Jesus was always looking toward the future when dealing with situations in the past and present in order for his students to be successful. For cross-references: Matthew 5:21, 33, 38, 43; Matthew 6; Matthew 28:19; Luke 9:48.

Today public school teachers are instilling knowledge in the minds of their students. Teaching students how to think and to learn in the present enables them to use necessary skills to become independent and self-sufficient (Hendricks, 1987). Study habits, cooperative group work, and discipline can all be demonstrated in the present to help mold productive citizens in the future. By expecting students to succeed in the future, the past and the present will be greatly influenced by hard work, dedication, and commitment (Wilkinson, 1992). In addition, teachers

can provide relevance, meaning, and support to their teaching by connecting together the past, present, and future content. That way, students will have the opportunity to see the reasoning behind each decision that the teacher makes and that the curriculum requires. The question “why” tends to surface a lot in classrooms filled with curious and sometimes frustrated students. However, it can quickly be answered with confidence, efficacy, and assurance when the teachers recall and acknowledge all of their lesson connections that possess a plan, purpose, and goal.

**A4: Select methods, activities, and materials that aligned with the lessons.**

Jesus used different types of teaching strategies all throughout his ministry. He used visual aids to help answer students’ questions, to explain his message, and to emphasize important points. This is shown in Luke 20:23, when Jesus answered a trick question given by the teachers of the law. The verse states,

He saw through their duplicity and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. He said to them, “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

Other teaching strategies Jesus used include personal examples, similes, metaphors, parables, imagery, figures of speech, exaggerations, rhetorical questions, and humor. In addition, Jesus taught using familiar language and illustrations that would associate with the particular time frame such as discussing farming or certain religious practices.

As for materials that align with the lessons, Jesus stated, in Matthew 10:9-10, that he would always provide for his students with the necessary equipment to tackle any journey. When sending out his disciples to be witnesses, Jesus said that they should not be worried about what to bring on their trip such as clothing and money, because He had already given them the items that would be use to accomplish his work. He recognized the importance of providing students with

the necessary tools to learn and the knowledge to become independent. For cross-references:

Matthew 5:13, 16, 20; Matthew 6:1, 25; Matthew 7:3; Matthew 12:25; Matthew 13:3;

Matthew 25:14; Mark 2:19; Mark 4:3; Luke 6:39; Luke 7:24; Luke 8:5; Luke 20:46; John 10:6.

As for public school teachers, Braley and White (2003) mention other appropriate and creative methods and activities teachers can use in the classroom. These include the following: group discussions, storytelling, experimenting, discovering, listening activities, and direct instruction. These varieties of methods add novelty, excitement, fun, and entertainment to the class. Yount (1999), writer of *Called to Teach*, suggests some more meaningful methods that can be adapted to a lesson such as to “ask questions rather than provide answers, pose problems rather than give reasons, and present examples rather than isolated facts” (p. 5). These teaching strategies provide unique opportunities to sharpen skills and to open minds. Maston (1985) encouraged teachers to take the skills of what the students already have, to sharpen those skills to increase enhancement, and to allow the students to grow individually to reach their maximum potential. Thus, when appropriate methods and materials are selected, students can take ownership of their learning as well as of their own successes.

**A5: Select evaluation procedures that are appropriate for students and aligned with the goals.**

Jesus evaluated his disciples continuously by making them think about his parables, his rhetorical questions, and his heavenly insights. He even gave homework to his disciples as well as to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13 by saying, “But go and learn what this means...” Other evaluation procedures Jesus used included oral questioning and deeper research. Jesus directly asked his disciples questions to see what they had learned. In Mark 8:29, Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” Through this direct questioning

method, Jesus was able to see quickly if Peter truly understood his messages. When understanding occurred, Peter as well as the other disciples established a more productive environment for putting the lessons into practice. Jesus' evaluation techniques further allowed them to see the life changing implications their actions could possess. For cross-references: Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:8.

For teachers, a variety of effective evaluation procedures can be used to demonstrate what students have learned. After giving instructions on appropriate assignments, teachers allow students to exhibit their true knowledge (Coleman, 1964). Pointing out students' exceptional work from those assignments can increase self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth (Wilkinson, 1992). By allowing students to achieve success, teachers can inspire them to listen more intently, to study more intensely, and to strive for success continuously. Without having appropriate evaluation procedures that align with the specific learning goals, lessons will seem irrelevant and the effects from gaining success will be lost. Therefore, suitable evaluation procedures must be present for all to achieve victory.

## **Domain B: Creating an Environment for Student Learning**

### **B1: Create a climate that promotes fairness.**

A fair and conducive environment was always created when Jesus taught because he met his students where they were. He taught in a field, in a boat, in the temple, at a wedding, and in homes. His selfless attitude was displayed through his caring words in John 6:37 saying, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." He took the time to heal every disease and to associate with every type of person from the demon-possessed to the paralytics. He even healed a mother-in-law. Jesus did not show bias or prejudices toward anyone. In Luke 20:21, this fact is proven from the words spoken by several spies belonging to the teachers of the law. They



described Jesus by stating, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.” These verses reveal Jesus’ heart filled with compassion. They further show the importance of serving others no matter what race, gender, or circumstance. Even little children felt comfortable and safe to run to Jesus and lay at his feet. For every student, Jesus “nurtured them, wept over them, and prayed for them. He taught with compassion and retaught them with patience” (Yount, 1999, p.16). For cross-references: Matthew 4:23; Matthew 7:29; Matthew 8:14; Matthew 9:2; Matthew 10:24; Matthew 14:18, 22; Matthew 15:28; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34; Mark 8:2; Mark 9:35; Mark 10:1; Luke 5:3, 13; Luke 6:17-19; Luke 9:48; Luke 12:1; John 2:1; John 3:2; John 4:7, 9; John 6:5; John 8:10-11.

In the classroom, a fair and non-threatening environment can be created when teachers take the lead. Jesus demonstrated fairness by always practicing what he preached. He never taught anything he did not do himself (Coleman, 1964). Consequently, teachers should always believe in what they teach, practice what they preach, and be a role model for their students to follow. When teachers model the desired behaviors, students can see the effects, significance, and validity of making safe and appropriate choices.

Another way to establish fairness is to remember that every student is created in the image of God (Maston, 1985). Thus, each student deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. God has a unique purpose for every single person in the classroom, and with the help of a safe and productive environment, students can have the chance to use their strengths to benefit not only themselves, but also their entire class. A fair environment eliminates the feeling of being embarrassed, overlooked, or insecure when learning something new.

**B2: Establish and maintain rapport with students.**

Matthew 4:23 states that “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” This shows that the range of students Jesus taught was very broad. He talked with fishermen, tax collectors, Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans, poor, rich, young, and old. Jesus’ message was for all to hear, and the crowds continued to follow him. The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well presented in John 4 demonstrates how Jesus looked beyond the world’s perspective of an individual, focused on the real issues of the heart, and gain wonderful rapport with all types of people (Hendricks, 1987). In addition, Jesus selected a core intimate group of twelve students who would have the opportunity to receive direct instruction, to hear personal real-world applications, and to gain truthful insights about heaven and earth. Because the rapport with eleven of these students was so strong and powerful, they were willing to leave their comfort zones and spread Jesus’ message to everyone, everywhere, no matter what the circumstances. For cross-references: Matthew 8:1, 3, 7; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 14:22; Matthew 15:28, 32; Matthew 18:14; Matthew 19:14; Mark 1:41; Mark 2:15; Mark 6:34; Mark 8:2; Mark 9:35; Mark 10:1; Luke 5:3, 13, 20, 31; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:48; John 2:1; John 3:2, John 4:7; John 6:5.

Thus, “teachers must be able to establish rapport with learners if they are to be effective. Rapport building is a social skill which requires some degree of sensitivity to those being taught” (Yount, 1996, p. 346). By being sensitive to the needs of students and by never degrading or embarrassing them, teachers can establish and maintain an appropriate relationship. Gaining trust can be easily accomplished through showing love. Coleman describes love as giving of one’s self (1964). By giving of one’s self day after day, students will know the noble characteristics their teachers possess and can find the courage to learn and to express their feelings and

understanding. By being available during morning, afternoon, and after school, teachers can show their commitment, dedication, and hope for their students. When students know teachers care about them even outside of their certain subject matter or outside their classroom, strong rapport can be cultivated, nurtured, and solidified. Also, by never hanging a label on a student or by showing favoritism, everyone can have a chance to learn in an equal and fair environment (Hendricks, 1987). Altogether, a teacher's words of kindness, hope, support, and love should always line up with their actions and relationships.

### **B3: Communicate challenging learning expectations to each student.**

Jesus challenged his listeners by asking rhetorical questions and making effective use of hyperboles. These were intended for his students to think deeply within their minds and hearts. "Who" and "what" were words which Jesus used to grab everyone's attention and keep them focused on the topics at hand. An example of a hyperbole that expressed challenging learning expectations can be found in Matthew 5:20. There Jesus stated, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teacher of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." This was a very challenging expectation because the Pharisees were known for being the experts of their time who were very knowledgeable about the laws of righteousness. Another example that stretched the mind of his older students occurs in Matthew 18:3 which says, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." The students had to rise to the challenge of figuring out what Jesus really meant. Other challenging comments include store up treasures in heaven, forgive neighbors seventy times seven, enter the narrow gate, and possess faith, only as big as a mustard seed, in order to move mountains. Statements and stories like these definitely provided unique opportunities for his students to stop and think. For cross-references:

Matthew 5:13; Matthew 6:20, 25-27; Matthew 7:3, 13; Matthew 9:13, 15; Matthew 10:16;  
 Matthew 12:25; Matthew 13:10; Matthew 17:20; Matthew 18:21-22; Matthew 21:21;  
 Mark 2:19, 25; Mark 3:4; Mark 8:27, 36; Luke 5:22, 34; Luke 7:24; Luke 10:1, 26;  
 Luke 13:23-24; Luke 18:19.

In the classroom, setting the bar high, rising to the challenge, and finding success along the way can provide wonderful experiences that every student longs to feel. Challenging expectations are great tools to use in order to show students that they can eliminate obstacles, achieve greatness, and contribute to the classroom and even the world. Challenges present novelty, excitement, anticipation, and bewilderment. When students are appropriately challenged, their inner characteristics can find the desire to meet the demands. Teachers can express these challenging expectations in a variety of creative ways, but the main point to remember is to express them (Wilkinson, 1992). Believing that students can meet those expectations creates hope, love, and support. Teachers can let students “scratch their heads” when faced with something new and teach them how to be self-directed and self-disciplined when striving to make the new familiar (Hendricks, 1987). Overall, expectations give purpose, meaning, and drive, which allows for unique opportunities to display encouragement, support, and self-esteem.

**B4: Establish and maintain consistent standards of behavior.**

Whatever Jesus taught, he also practiced, whether it was publicly expressing his faith or washing his followers’ feet. In Matthew 11:4, when some of the disciples of John the Baptist approached Jesus to ask if he was “the one who was to come” Jesus answered, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see.” Hence, his actions and consistent manner proved his words, position, and power. When he told others to do something or to change the way they

lived, Jesus had ultimate authority because his perfect way of life gave him the right to correct his students. Furthermore, he consistently cared for everyone, healed every disease, and preached everywhere. His attitude and disposition was steadfast and is the supreme standard for everyone to see and to follow. For cross-references: Matthew 4:23; Matthew 15:30, 32; Matthew 18:14; Matthew 19:2; Matthew 20:28, 34; Matthew 22:37, 38; Matthew 23:23; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34; Mark 8:2; Mark 15:2; Luke 3:21; Luke 7:22; Luke 20:21; John 11:5; John 13:1, 14, 34.

As teachers who see the same students every day, having consistent behavior can help eliminate fear, anxiety, and distrust. When students know exactly what is going to happen or how the teacher is going to react in a certain situation, students can build trust, rapport, and security. Loving students consistently and unconditionally also creates a learning environment that welcomes and inspires all types of students (Wilkinson, 1992). Knowing that a teacher does not show favoritism and that each student has a chance to express their thoughts is very reassuring to timid and vulnerable students who are trying to learn and to grow.

In addition, teachers practicing what they teach allow students to see just how important lessons can be and just how necessary and vital learning is (Coleman, 196). “The best teachers are living case studies of their subject matter” (Yount, 1999, p. 356). Consistency in every realm of education can establish truth and justice. Teachers’ actions are very powerful, and consistent behavior can speak volumes to observant students.

**B5: Make the physical environment as safe and conducive to learning as possible.**

Again, all types of learners were among those listening to Jesus’ words wherever the crowds gathered. Matthew 5:1 states that “when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to them and he began to teach them...” This verse shows readers Jesus recognized the precious and priceless teaching opportunities and seized the

moment to share his heart. His students were able to approach him with confidence and ask him any question. The children enjoyed his company, and the disciples were given a rare opportunity to remain constantly and steadfastly in his presence in order to learn. For cross-references: Matthew 13:1-2; Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:2-3; Luke 5:1-3.

In public schools, teacher should always strive to be prepared in order to make their learning environment safe and conducive (Hendricks, 1987). When teachers are organized, ready, and knowledgeable, students will find distracting or flustering those teachers very hard. Time will not be wasted because each minute has a purpose, plan, and point. The teachers will have the opportunity to focus on the students' needs rather than to focus on what should be their next move. By considering the students' needs as well as the best ways to meet those needs, teachers can create safe environments where learning and doing something new will not be feared (Wilkinson, 1992). Additionally, an environment that is eye catching, colorful, bright, and covered with students' exceptional work can help provide students with a calm, cheerful, positive, and inspirational classroom.

## **Domain C: Teaching for Student Learning**

### **C1: Making learning goals and instructional procedures clear to students.**

In order for Jesus' students to know precisely what he wanted them to, Jesus spoke plainly and used examples dealing with familiar topics of those times such as farming, fishing, money, and social statuses. Some clear instructions he expected his students to follow can be seen in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you," in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," and in Matthew 7:12, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Not

only did his words set a great example to follow, but also his life became a great example for students to follow and to use as a model in learning how to live a moral and righteous life (Coleman, 1964). John 13:34 describes Jesus telling his disciples how to demonstrate love to others. The verse states, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Thus, he practiced what he preached and allowed his students to see the correct way to handle situations. When Jesus told his followers to pray, he provided them with an example known as the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9). The vivid picture formed by Jesus’ life, actions, and words provided powerful and clear imagery for his students to think about and to remember as they live out their lives each day. For cross-references: Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:8; John 15:9-11.

Regarding public school teachers, making learning goals clear allows students to have guidelines to follow throughout the day. Letting students know what is happening in class gives them a chance to focus their minds on the task at hand. When teachers state the learning goals and instructional procedures clearly, students will not have to guess why a certain lesson is being taught or how to complete an assignment. Goals and instructions provide targets for students to reach for, and when students are aware of those goals, purpose for learning can be established.

## **C2: Make content comprehensible to students.**

Jesus gave direct instructions and explicit commands that all could understand and attempt to follow. During the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus explained lessons clearly by providing the “whys” behind each statement. His audience was able to grasp the cause and effect relationships his message described, giving it meaning, significance, and comprehension. When he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” Jesus gave the reasoning behind the statement in order to show its relevance to learning and living out his teachings. Jesus could tell when his students did not comprehend his words through their thoughts and through their whispers;

therefore, he would repeat his instructions in order to avoid any confusion. In addition, Jesus would tell several parables just for one lesson in order for everyone to grasp the meaning. When his disciples did not understand the different parables, Jesus would explain plainly to them their complex meanings. Another way Jesus made his message comprehensible was by demonstrating the very acts he wanted his students to do. In John 13:14, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and displayed the qualities of a servant. This powerful image allowed his students to really see what his words meant and to see how they could personally transform his words into actions in their own lives. His lessons were comprehensible because he restated them, reviewed them, demonstrated them, and lived by them. For cross-references: Matthew 5:13-15; Matthew 6; Matthew 7:6; Matthew 15:10; Matthew 25:14; Mark 1:17; Mark 2:21; Mark 4:33-34; Luke 10:1; Luke 11:1-4; John 10:6-7; John 11:14; John 13:34.

When teachers do not use words or examples that students can understand, learning will not take place and teaching will be in vain. Learning something new can be very stressful. Moreover, learning something new, while hearing unfamiliar words, can be disastrous. Student's commitment, love, and drive for learning can be destroyed. Once destroyed, they are hard to regain. To eliminate confusion, a repertoire of teaching methods and strategies must be developed. Unique teaching strategies teachers can use in their classroom are connecting facts with objects, movement, drama, or music. Teachers can also use storytelling and presentations in order to make content comprehensible (Wilkinson, 1992). All of these visual and auditory techniques can appeal to a wide range of students and provide essential learning opportunities. A key to remember is that teachers can be experts in their specific teaching fields, but if they cannot convey and transfer that knowledge to their students clearly and concisely, students will



not be able to excel and learning will not be accomplished. Therefore, comprehensible instruction is essential for successful learning.

**C3: Encourage students to extend thinking.**

A great way to extend students' thinking is through asking rhetorical questions. The Gospels are saturated with verses showing Jesus doing just that. Questions that were intended to stretch his listeners' minds include "Who do people say I am", "But what about you," and "How do you read (Scripture)?" Another tool that Jesus used to extend thinking was telling parables. This teaching strategy was used in order to let his students think about their responses and personal actions rather than telling them what to do. In John 3:5-10, one Pharisee, named Nicodemus, went to talk to Jesus about becoming born again. When talking with Nicodemus, Jesus used statements that required him to stretch his mind extensively. Jesus stated, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Nicodemus appeared stumped by this statement because he could not wrap his mind around someone being born again in their mother's womb. However, Jesus was not talking about another physical birth. He was encouraging Nicodemus to stretch his thinking and dig deeper for a richer answer. Another way Jesus stressed the importance of extending thinking was by giving out homework to provide opportunities for further reflection. Again, this proof is displayed in Matthew 9:13, "But go and learn what this means..." For cross-references: Matthew 5:46, 47; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 13:10; Matthew 19:24; Matthew 22:43-46; John 10:6.

For teachers, letting students settle for mediocrity can drain any spark of ambition or participation. Therefore, by giving students numerous chances to extend their minds through challenging exercises, teachers can spark heart-felt effort. Appropriate assignments can be used to provide mental warm-ups and opportunities for students to strengthen their practical skills in

order to face and to tackle harder activities (Hendricks, 1987). Challenges should be appropriate and purposeful. Engaging minds to reach new heights through problem solving and brain teasers can inspire students to do more, learn more, and dream more (Wilkinson, 1992). When students enter the real world, their mind will be constantly challenged, but their teachers will not be there to help guide their thinking. Consequently, these problem solving skills need to be established while the teachers are still with them and willing to assist in order for all students to become autonomous after school.

**C4: Monitor students' understanding through a variety of means, provide feedback to students to assist learning, and adjust learning activities as the situation demands.**

In order to teach spiritual lessons, Jesus needed to simplify these complex subjects by relating them to everyday terms. After he taught, he sent his students out to practice his words and see the actual effect they can have on different hearers. Jesus emphasized learning by doing and by having his students become actively involved (Braley, 2003). Learning became hands-on, purpose driven, and applicable (Yount, 1996). He monitored his students learning in Matthew 13:51 and Matthew 16:9, by asking them if they understood his words. Also, he was always aware of his surroundings and noticed the details that would create many teachable moments. In Luke 14:7, the verse states, "When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable..." The parable goes on to talk about a wedding feast with guests ranking themselves based on importance and because he noticed this occurrence he was able to give a lesson that directly applied to the situation. Overall, through stories, parables, imagery, field experience, teachable moments, and many other techniques, Jesus was able to transfer his knowledge creatively, appropriately, accurately, and efficiently. For cross-references: Matthew 5:21-48; Luke 10:1.

Similarly, a variety of teaching strategies is known throughout the educational realm and is practiced every single day. Some familiar methods include training, telling, showing, and modeling (Hendricks, 1987). Each student and their learning styles are different, and with a wide range of activities available, students will have a chance to succeed. When one strategy is not working, teachers will be able to rely on other materials to achieve understanding. Teachers should feel responsible for their students' learning and recognize when a lesson plan needs to be modified in order to meet specific needs (Wilkinson, 1992).

**C5: Use instructional time effectively.**

Jesus only needed three years to establish a strong group of disciples, to spread his message throughout numerous cities, and to fulfill his earthly ministry. Jesus' actions were always preplanned and never by accident (Maston, 1985). The evidence for this category is confirmed by Jesus' words to his Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do (John 17:4)," and "It is finished (John 19:30)." For cross-reference: John 5:17; John 17:1-5.

In terms of education, teachers should have the mindset that class is always in session and that every minute counts (Coleman, 1964). Teachers should use their time wisely by being prepared and knowledgeable. Because they only have their students for a year or two, the moment for influencing autonomous and self-directed learners is limited. Nevertheless, the power to make a difference in the lives of the students is limitless.

**Domain D: Teacher Professionalism**

**D1: Reflect on the extent to which learning goals were met.**

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus demonstrated the importance on reflecting about his work through prayer. Matthew 14:13, Matthew 14:23, and Mark 1:35 describe Jesus seeking a place of

solitude early in the morning in order to be and to communicate with God. Jesus was always reflecting on his ultimate purpose for coming to this world, and in Luke 4:43, when Jesus' followers from one town asked him to stay longer, Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because this is why I was sent." Because Jesus used his instructional time effectively and wisely, he was able to know the precise extent to which his learning goals were met. He had shared everything he wanted to and was asked to and then gave his students opportunities to practice these lessons while he was still with them. By the time of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus had the ability to send forth his disciples into the world with assurance. He knew they were ready and had learned by heart the lessons he had given them. However, the most accurate picture of Jesus' reflecting on his ministry is shown in John 17 when he was talking to his Father. This chapter contains powerful words that display Jesus reflecting on his time on earth and how he did the will of his Father and accomplished everything his Father had told him. Jesus could look back on his time spent on this earth and back to every lesson he had ever preached and could know that no time spent was wasted, no relationship cultivated was unnecessary, and no words spoken were in vain. For cross-reference: Matthew 8:28-29; Matthew 10:34; Matthew 11:20; Luke 5:43; Luke 24:44; Luke 6:12.

Focusing on education, Hendricks opens his book by saying, "If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow" (1987, p.27). Without reflecting and growing stronger, teachers can become ineffective and mundane. "How can I improve" is a valid question to ask when considering the extent to which the learning goals were met (1987, p. 28). Also, prayer is a very easy way to reflect on students' needs and learning. Praying can occur anytime, anywhere. Teachers can even pray about their own teaching and attitude (Yount, 1999). When teachers

reflect about their attitude, changes can be made if necessary, and learning can thrive in a healthy environment.

**D2: Demonstrate a sense of efficacy.**

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2007) defines efficacy as “the power to produce an effect.” Jesus knew his responsibilities as a teacher were to tell the truth, to show his students the way, and to inspire them to grow. Matthew 9:36 states, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus knew the world needed him and his heavenly guidance. He took on the responsibility to be the role model, teacher, counselor, and friend that each hungry student needed in order to hear and to obey his words. Jesus’ words were, of course, very useful, meaningful, and applicable. His disciples as well as his many followers were able to take his message to the ends of the earth and to transform lives. Peter could have confidence that what he learned and the way that he lived his life would have an effect on the world through Jesus’ statement in Matthew 16:18-19. The verses state,

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Altogether, Jesus’ lessons were not in vain and his actions were not disregarded because each one had a specific purpose and carried a significant consequence. Because he took his responsibility as a teacher very seriously, he was able to show his authority to the whole world.

For cross-reference: Matthew 8:7; Matthew 14:14; Luke 2:52; John 16:33; John 17:20.

Efficacy should be a goal all teachers should strive to reach. One tool that can be use to accomplish this is self-evaluation forms. These can help maintain a sense of efficacy because they provide opportunity for reflection and revision. An effective teacher is constantly growing, thinking, reviewing, and creating. There are many new resources to use from the Internet to booklets provided for by the school systems. Teachers should seek to be the very best they can be and use every means available in order for all students to succeed.

**D3: Build professional relationships with colleagues to share teaching insights and to coordinate learning activities.**

Jesus was able to communicate with all types of learners. Diverse groups of individuals would come hear him speak as well as to ask of him questions or favors. Jesus built relationships with rulers, servants, fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners. He talked with them around the dinner table, at their homes, during the night, and during Passover celebrations. His Spirit allowed him to form strong connections to individuals and these relations made him approachable. This is best seen through the eyes of his disciples. He was able to build an intimate circle with these individuals and eleven of them followed out his lessons and goals even after he was gone. Matthew 10:1 states “(Jesus) called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” He believed in them, gave them authority to do his work, and allowed them to learn truthful insights that could dramatically impact the world. After the Great Commission, the disciples demonstrated just how much they believed in Jesus by carrying out his message even when faced with death. For cross-reference: Matthew 10:24; Matthew 13:36; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 26:6, 20; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:38; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 19:5; John 3:1-2; John 11:1-43.

In schools, teamwork among the teachers is vital because it provides extra strength, support, ideas, and encouragement. By developing professional relationships with colleagues, teachers can have the opportunity to share experiences and to receive effective advice. Also, materials and effective teaching strategies done in the past can be shared in order for all teachers to find success in their classroom. By knowing that there is a solid support system ready to help out in anyway, teachers can receive that much needed reassurance, confidence, and peace of mind.

#### **D4: Communicate with parents or guardians about students learning.**

Throughout his ministry, Jesus communicated with several parents, especially when their children were sick, even to death. Matthew 9:18, Matthew 15:28, and Matthew 17:14 all describe situations where Jesus was asked by parents to come and heal their children. Not only were the children blessed with healed bodies, but also the parents were blessed from seeing and feeling the miraculous power of Jesus. As for communicating with his own parent, Jesus was always praying and caring for his students by talking to his Father or by doing His will. He would spend nights and mornings in constant communication. This solid partnership helped strengthen Jesus' own heart and mind in order for him to continue to perform challenging tasks as well as to teach hard lessons. For cross-references: Matthew 20:20; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; John 17:1.

Educationally, students' behavior and learning processes are greatly affected and influenced by the relationship with their families. Every home situation is unique and needs to be considered. Some families may encourage their students to pursue lofty goals with passion and integrity, while other families may neglect or overlook the power of encouragement for their students' innermost ambitions. Some families may either nurture their students' minds and work ethics or they may degrade and destroy ambitions and desires to grow and mature as a learner.

Thus, teachers must take the responsibility to spark imagination and to strengthen expectations for each student whether their parents are actively involved or not. However, teachers should not be discouraged by, or disconnected from the parents, since they represent one of the greatest and most powerful links to students. Emails, newsletters, phone conversations, and conferences are just a few ways to maintain constant communication with a network of people who may best know the students, their abilities, and their potential.

As one concludes this portion of the thesis by considering the nineteen categories as well as their explanation, an important note to remember is that Jesus' teaching methods are not limited to just these verses and texts mentioned or to these specific categories. This Pathwise comparison only gives a small glimpse of how the Master Teacher transformed the hearts, minds, and lives of his students. Jesus left an incredible legacy and example for teachers to remember and to follow. By striving to use his strategies and methods as well as to possess his noble characteristics, teachers can create a productive environment, can challenge diverse students, and can strive to reach new academic heights.

The next set of questions to concentrate on are the following. "Is it beneficial to adapt Jesus' teaching styles into public school settings in hopes of making a similar impact in the lives of students today?" "Can teachers look to the past in order to follow the guidance and example of Jesus?" "Have teachers across the United States already attempted this ambitious quest and have found themselves as well as their students successful and blessed?"

The criteria for answering these questions will come from a survey sent out to members of the Christian Educator Association International. The CEAI is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "serve the educational community by encouraging, equipping and empowering Christian educators serving in public and private schools"



(<http://ceai.org/about.htm>). Some of their main goals are to show that the teaching profession is a calling from God, that excellence can be obtain through the help and guidance of Jesus Christ, and that a solid network of teachers, administrators, parents, church members, and community leaders can form to provide support and advice in order to effectively display Christ's love in the classrooms. Moreover, CEAI provides legal counseling, educational seminars, and monthly newsletters and magazines that members can benefit from and use as they strive to seek personally the best ways to live out their calling in a public school setting.

A ten question survey was sent to the mailing list of the CEAI members (see sample survey in Appendix) and 149 responses from all over the US were received, read, and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The statistical findings for specific location of teachers were categorized into the Northeast, South, Mid-West, and West. The states in the Northeast include the following: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut; South: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas; Mid-West: Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Colorado, and Idaho; West: Arizona, Nevada, Utah, California, and Washington. Out of 149 surveys sent back, the South had the most responses with 34%. Other statistics include 16% from the Northeast, 24% from the Mid-West, and 17% from the West.

The ages of the participants varied as well. The majority of the participants, 39%, were comprised of the age range of 51 and above. Ages 20-25 make up 3%; 26-30 with 5%; 31-35 with 11%; 36-40 with 11%, and 41-45 with 19%. Further comparison includes the different subject areas these educators taught. The largest number of participants, 20%, taught all subjects in elementary and middle school settings. The breakdown of subjects and percentages include the

following: Science-7%, Music-5%, History-7%, Language-6%, Computer/Business-4%, Math-10%, English-10%, Special Education-7%, Principal/Counselor/Librarian-4%, Reading-3%, Language Arts-3%, Arts-2%, and Physical Education-2%.

The final comparison among these participants was their denomination. The majority of the participants, 25%, stated that their denomination was Baptist/Southern Baptist. The breakdown of the remaining denominations and percentages include the following: Luthern-3%, Presbyterian-3%, Pentecostal-1%, Methodist-7%, Non-Denomnational-23%, Evangelical Free-5%, Assembly of God-2%, Episcopalian-2%, Catholic-1%, Evangelical Covenant-3%, Nazarene-3%, Mennonite-2%, Church of Christ-2%, Independent-2%, Foursquare-2%, and Christian-5%.

After asking about specific demographic information, the survey contained nine other questions that allowed the participants to express their thoughts and ideas about their current situation as a public school teacher. The questions ranged from sharing personal experiences to giving practical advice. Every survey was saturated with invaluable information and proved the fact that there are hundreds of Christian teachers all across the United States using their skills and occupation as a testimony for Jesus Christ.

*There have been many times that I have questioned whether I should remain in my public school position. I've thought, "Surely, God didn't intend for education to be like this!"*

*However, He has me where He has me, and I'll never know what kind of difference I've made until I see eternity (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).*

1. Why did you want to teach in a public school setting?

*Look at teaching not only as an opportunity to educate the children but a chance to make an eternal difference. God's love is powerful. It does make a difference especially in the darkness!* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

There were several common reasons why these participants chose to teach in a public school. Many of the participants stated that their initial choice was based on finding a job that provided a steady income. They commented that public schools have better paying salaries than those of private schools, which in turn, is more suitable for meeting their everyday needs. Nevertheless, they realized that their practical reasoning included spiritual consequences. Several participants believed that they were called and placed by God to certain public schools in order to be a light in the darkened world. A great quote from one of the participants perfectly conveys this important idea. The participant asserts that, "It is a lost world. How will the kingdom grow if we are not among the lost?" Thus, their workplace was transformed into a mission field, which, indeed, contains a ripe harvest longing to be soaked with truth and love. By having the solid determination to reach children where they are, these teachers are able to find ample opportunities to minister to their students. Furthermore, these teachers possess passion for children, which softens their hearts and shows them the need to become positive role models in public school systems. By demonstrating noble characteristics, these teachers believe that their students will have the opportunity to see Christ through their actions and words. Their desire is to teach with a Christ-like heart and mind.

One participant confirmed this point by declaring she wanted "to reach as many students as possible, to help them learn, and grow, and feel like real human beings through my example of Jesus." Another reason that numerous teachers choose to teach in a public school was they wanted to make a difference in the lives of their students in the same way a previous teacher had

made a real difference in their own lives. A few stated that they wanted to give back to society the hope and support they had been given as students. They saw teaching in public schools as the perfect opportunity. One participant chose to be a public school teacher in order to start a Christian club. Moreover, numerous teachers stressed they wanted to be among the many, among the lost, among the hungry, and among the hopeless. Overall, they chose to teach in public school settings because God equipped them with the mission, desire, talent, characteristics, and mindset to serve, to witness, to love, and to teach.

2. What are some ways you have had the opportunity to live as a Christian example in the schools?

*Everyday is an opportunity to pour hope into hopeless kids in desperate situations*  
(Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

The broad range of answers from this question gives public school teachers beneficial insight into the minds of Christian leaders today as well as some helpful tips that can be adapted into their own witnessing and teaching strategies. From an external perspective, many teachers commented that they show Christ-like qualities by sponsoring a Christian organization, having a Bible always lying on their desk, starting and/or attending a group Bible Study for teachers and administrators, and publicly praying before meals or during a crisis. The participants asserted that their actions and mannerisms are a huge way to provide students with a chance to see a Christian example. "Children believe what they see more than what they are told." From being available for students in any situation to being punctual and prepared for each class, teachers indirectly send a message to students about the type of person they truly are. Other simple ways these teachers express their love and commitment to their students are through smiles, a listening ear, conversations, appropriate clothing, being real, and expecting the best from each of them.

Furthermore, inner emotions can seep through and paint a powerful picture of God's grace just by showing kindness, forgiveness, fairness, concern, respect, and attention. One teacher commented, "Share Christ with others at all times, and if necessary use words." These teachers believed that taking pride in their job, doing the best they can, and facing tough challenges with integrity provides the best opportunities to display character that seems very unfamiliar to this world. By being a role model, moral standards can be set, values can be cultivated, and learning can become much deeper. One survey participant wisely stated "Trust the Lord" and "Use the 'open doors' wisely."

3. Have you ever directly shared your faith to your students? If so how? Have you ever indirectly shared your faith? If so how?

*Don't let any child feel anonymous or unimportant. Continually reflect on what you do and adjust to make sure all students get opportunities to shine* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

There are many direct ways these participants have stated they share their faith to their students. Whenever their class asked faith questions, these teachers asserted that they would honestly answer them without fear or shame. Furthermore, their faith has been displayed directly through sponsoring a Christian Club, attending and sharing devotions and testimonies during a group Bible study for teachers, and decorating their classroom with Bible verses, scripture calendars, and moral posters. Some teachers even stated that they integrate faith-learning opportunities into their lessons. In Social Studies or History classes, several teachers commented they have the privilege of sharing the Christian origin of America and the faith based roots the founding fathers established. In Science classes, the origin of the world creates moments of wonderment and curiosity in which students may ask deep and powerful questions. In Math

classes, one teacher stated that having journal entries can give teachers unique chances for seeing their students' faith by asking them certain questions such as, "What is the difference between a constant and a constant variable." In several of the students' journals, the teacher stated that God was mentioned as being the ultimate constant. Thus, by incorporating faith issues occasionally and appropriately into a lesson, teachers can have planned opportunities to share their faith. However, several teachers commented that preplanned discussions do not have to be in place in order to encourage students to ask questions. These teachers proclaimed that sometimes unexpectedly moments will open up and students will initiate questions, comments, and discussions.

Nevertheless, more indirect ways of sharing their faith was collected by these teachers. During conversations about themselves on the first days of school, several teachers commented that they would tell their students what church they attend, that their favorite book is the Bible, and that their favorite music is a form of Christian music. Some indirect comments these teachers make to express their belief is "God can hear what you say" and "God bless you." Furthermore, these participants asserted that their actions speak very loudly about what they personally believe. By maintaining good rapport, establishing a healthy and appropriate environment, and demonstrating that everyone makes mistakes, teachers provide a scene for students to remember that can indirectly portray their solid based faith in a consistent, compassionate, and forgiving God. Therefore, by having a different outlook in life, teachers have an indirect chance to shine their faith and to plant seeds in the hearts of their students.

4. What type of legal issues have you encountered or have had to be aware of when talking to your students?

*Realize that the public schools are truly a mission field. Even though we may not be able to directly witness, your students will see a difference in you* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

Out of 149 surveys, 53 participants stated that they have never had to encounter or face any type of legal issues or debates in their classroom. However, there were several participants who commented that they have had to deal with and/or are dealing with legal issues in their public schools. In general, numerous teachers stated that in their classroom, they could not promote their beliefs as something their students should and must accept. Teachers cannot initiate any type of discussion about faith. Rather, students must directly initiate discussions in order for teachers to be able to share their opinions with the class. They can only answer questions and teach religion or faith based concepts just like they would any other lesson. By law, teachers cannot proselytize, but can only share their personal belief tactfully. At specific public schools, several teachers stated that they could not mention Christ unless asked, could not read the Bible just to read it, and could not lead students in prayer. For specific occurrences in the classroom, a few teachers stated that they have had to be very careful about their song selections and artwork that contain Christian themes as well as Christmas programs that solely focus on Jesus Christ. During lessons about religion, many teachers stated that they have to present and to respect the many different views held across the world and to not show favoritism or more attention to any specific one. In addition, all holidays must be acknowledged and respected. Nevertheless, these participants asserted that teachers can still be effective as a Christian by helping to eliminate any legal debates through acting and teaching in a non-biased manner as well as not to preach their faith, but rather, to demonstrate it through their characteristics or through student-initiated discussions.

5. What is some of the curriculum you have integrated to promote moral character?

*When setting up classroom expectations do not be afraid to set the boundaries of behavior that reflect your relationship with Christ (i.e. Honesty, respect, accountability, and acceptable behavior) (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).*

Several participants stated that their schools and administrators provide specific character curriculum to be used in their classes. These specific programs are designed to encourage discipline, respect, and honesty. Even with set curriculum, teachers have found other ways to promote moral character to their students. Simple things such as hanging posters on the walls with influential statements as well as saying wise proverbs from the Bible (not even having to mention that it is from the Bible) can inspire others to make smart decisions. Moreover, several teachers commented that they use the Golden Rule in their classroom, which strives to teach others to give the same courtesy, respect, and attention that they would wish to receive. Also, these teachers can address cheating, self-control, and judgment issues by stating their rules, the importance of following it, and the consequences that can occur. Other ways these participants stated they demonstrated the importance of character is through showing tolerance, interacting with everyone, teaching peace-making skills, and setting higher standards. "For some students, the only structure they have in their lives is inside the school setting." During lessons, several teachers commented that their book selections and storytelling provide wonderful opportunities to share the necessity of making the right choices and being an admirable person. In all, these participants believe that by being consistent, setting a good example, and valuing wise decisions, they can promote character to their students effectively and dynamically.



6. Do you have a support system to pray for you? If so, describe your support team and the activities that they do for you. If not, if you could create a group, describe some of its characteristics.

*Don't be afraid to ask teachers to help you when you start your career. You will be pleasantly surprised at how many will come to your aid* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

Most of the participants stated that their support systems are comprised of their families, church leaders, church members, other Christian teachers, parents of students, student organizations, and friends. In addition, numerous teachers commented that "Moms in Touch" was a very vital support organization for them in their public schools. Steadily, these groups and individuals provide a wide range of activities for these participants to enjoy. Some activities mentioned include having parent prayer walks, organizing group email and chats, hosting before school breakfast and prayer meetings, leaving notes of encouragement, and delivering baked treats. These support systems also lend a listening ear, a helping hand, and an open heart for teachers who need some encouragement, prayer, and support. A great idea that was mentioned for teachers who would like to have a support system was getting a walking/jogging partner in order to converse and to unwind with after a long days work. A neat suggestion given for churches to do was to match a church member with a specific teacher that they could have the opportunity to pray for by name. All of these support systems mentioned as well as their activities give a wonderful picture of how powerful a Christian network can be. Spirits can be uplifted, burdens can be shared, advice can be given, and lives can be changed with a support system that is willing to sacrifice a few minutes in their day to remember teachers who need their prayers not only for themselves, but also, most importantly for their students.

7. Have you ever adapted some of Jesus' teaching methods (parables, visual aids, exaggerations, etc.) to your own class?

*Live by Faith, draw strength from God, and work your job as if you were working for Him* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

This survey shows that many teachers all across the United States, without even noticing it, have adapted some of the same teaching strategies that Jesus Christ used during his three years of earthly ministry. Evident teaching strategies that Christ used and that others have done is meeting the students where they are, demonstrating moral and ethical characteristics, establishing a comfortable environment, helping individuals whenever possible, and showing servant leadership through words and actions. Participants stated their character and dispositions should strive to be like Jesus and that the way he lived his life should be an example for them to follow. By showing kindness, mercy, and grace, many teachers commented that they can see the tremendous effect of adapting some of Jesus' teaching strategies. During lessons, these teachers have seen the power of using parables, visual aids, metaphors, similes, analogies, hands-on activities, practical application, and real life experiences into their instructions and assignments. Jesus knew the potential of the techniques and used them to relate strongly to his audience and to make a more powerful connection.

Another similar teaching strategy that Jesus used and that teachers today can practice is "using scripture to modify negative behavior." The results can be just as effective even if the teachers do not mention it is from the Bible. One surveyor stated that the reason why Jesus' teaching methods is so easily adaptable is because the teaching works. Several teachers commented that they even have used the same parables that Jesus did in the Gospels to further prove their point in discussions. In addition, they have used past biblical materials such as the

Old Testament hero stories to stress the importance of a certain topic and to relate more effectively to the class. For instance, several teachers have used the stories of David and Goliath, King Solomon and his verdict between two mothers, and Sampson and Delilah to talk about strength, wisdom, and courage. Overall, these participants have looked at and have seen the significance of the lessons given by Jesus, the Master Teacher of all times. They have basked in his educational legacy and now consider it a privilege to remember and to use his strategies in their own classrooms whenever possible.

8. What techniques have you used in the classroom to keep your motivation as a Christian teacher high?

*Keep in mind that teaching is a calling, because the demands can be consuming at times, but God can help you with the multiple problems you will undoubtedly face, giving you creative solutions* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

Being a public school teacher is a very demanding and sometimes stressful job where many elements can drain motivation and strength. However, the participants for this survey have given many different ways they have been able to keep their motivation high when their job becomes challenging or when they seem to feel alone as a Christian. When their job becomes stressful, several participants stated that they pray, ask others to pray, surround themselves with positive people, talk to their friends, read Bible verses that lay on their desk, read the Bible, and listen to Christian music. They also find strength to continue on through simply smiling or singing to themselves. In addition, finding humor in hopeless moments can brighten any day and help teachers face their struggles. Whenever students seem unruly and uncooperative, one surveyor wrote a powerful statement that has helped maintain his/her positive motivation. The teacher stated that the key thing to remember is that “every student is a child of God, whom He

loves enough to send His Son to the cross for. If God has called (specific people) to teach, He will equip (them) for it daily.” Thus, God will provide the necessary ingredients for teachers to have in order to stay motivated, encouraged, and purposeful. Other ways motivation is cultivated are through enjoying being in the presence of the students, remembering encouraging past experiences, finding the good in everyone, thinking “What would Jesus do,” reading poetry, and watching students’ expressions when positive things happen to them. A unique way one participant suggested to quickly help change any attitude is finding objects around the classroom and relating them to an uplifting phrase or memory. Throughout the day, whenever the teacher sees that object, they can quickly recall its hidden meaning and change their present attitude if necessary. Further pieces of advice were staying away from gossip, which can harden and discourage any heart, creating high expectations for students, and watching their reactions as they achieve more than they ever thought possible. Although discouragement and frustration is inevitable in any new circumstance, through the help of God and through little inspirational activities that can be done throughout the school day, teachers can erase dispirited feelings and strive to keep their motivation as a Christian teacher high. “Don’t give up when things aren’t easy. Even with a difficult class, wipe the slate clean and start each day fresh with new love. Have high expectations and (the) students will rise to meet them.”

9. What advice can you give me as I start my career?

*It’s a tough profession but what a wonderful way to make a difference* (Survey Participant, Nov. 2006).

The participants were just bursting with invaluable advice for me as a beginning teacher to remember and to adapt to my own teaching style and strategies. Some helpful advice includes the following: live faith by example, do everything to the glory of God, pray always even starting

now, set high standards for everyone, have a strong Christian mentor, give each student a hope and a vision, teach with passion and manage with compassion, develop strong and appropriate relationships, teach subject matter second to character, be real with students, never use sarcasm, learn about students' lives, pray when students are taking exams, never forget to laugh and smile, remember that not all students like the subject being taught, be very organized, try new things, love and care deeply about each student, exercise throughout the week, give students the opportunity to shine, have a positive attitude, take time for one's self, see students as Christ sees them, and meet any physical needs. All of the participants possess a huge amount of knowledge that allows them to be influential leaders for their classrooms, for their communities, for their church, and for me. My desire is to be the most effective teacher I can be and to show my students through my words and actions that I have Christ leading me in the direction he has already set for me to follow. By taking their advice and applying to my life and to my teaching career, I can strive to reach higher, love better, and teach stronger. These words of advice come from teachers who have been out or are currently out in the field putting these words into practice and seeing great results. I want those powerful results to be present in my own classroom; therefore, I will take these words seriously and watch as students' lives as well as my own are changed.

The guiding question to answer with all of the research presented is "Is it possible to teach as a Christian in today's public school settings?" The answer is yes. Because of the background information found in the Gospels, the Christian texts, and the surveys, one has immediate access to accounts of Jesus as well as other teachers using their skills, knowledge, and dispositions to teach their students as a Christian. Jesus' teaching methods are easily adaptable for teachers in today's public schools because it works. His style, actions, and words provide

evidence that is strong enough to pass any evaluation form or test created. His love for his students, dedication to presenting the truth, and influential words that change lives is a powerful legacy for teachers to strive to follow and use in their own classroom. In addition, there is invaluable advice that saturates the contents of many books written by Christian authors who have had experience teaching in modern times and have gathered effective techniques and strategies for teaching students today. Furthermore, the personal survey research has provided individuals with in-depth responses from 149 devoted teachers from all across the United States desiring to be like and to teach like Christ. These teachers shared personal experiences and teaching methods they have found to be successful as well as helpful advice for others to remember as they start their teaching career.

The answers to these several questions have created in me a strong realization of just how important Christian influences can be in public schools. Christian teachers can use the information presented to make their teaching stronger, their minds sharper, and their hearts softer. God has called Christian teachers to work in public schools in order to reach generations that need to see his love and grace. By pursuing the goal to teach like Christ, teachers can show their students that they realize each one of them is God's creations and that each one is full of worth, purpose, and greatness.

In his educational career, Jesus' most intimate lessons were shared to a class of twelve diverse men. Originally, these men were uneducated, foolish, temperamental, and apprehensive. The make-up of this class would be a modern-day teacher's nightmare. However, through his teaching and his teaching methods, Jesus transformed these unique men into individuals who possessed knowledge, self-worth, and power. Through these twelve disciples, Jesus' lessons were spread throughout the ends of the world and have not ceased from being taught today. His

impact has not lost fervor even after two thousand years. What an earthly blessing it would be to see those dramatic changes occur in the lives of students today as well as to make an impact that can last a lifetime. Teaching as a Christian in a public school is not an impossible feat. Rather, it is a noble ambition, a prime mission field, and above all, an amazing journey that can be taken with a fellowship of friends having Christ as their perfect leader.

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## Appendix

## Actual Survey Sent to CEAI Members

My name is Rachel Waggener, and I am a senior mathematics and secondary education major at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. I am currently working on my Honors Senior Thesis which explores the question: "Is it possible to teach as a Christian in today's public schools?" As a part of my research, I have developed a brief survey that will examine the viewpoints of current Christian teachers from across the United States. I would greatly appreciate your insight and ideas as I strive to answer this question and apply the practices to my own teaching. Once your information is accumulated and analyzed, I will destroy the survey to ensure your confidentiality and protection. Thanks again for your time and consideration.

## Honor Thesis Survey

1. Can you give some background information about your school and teaching position?

Location (just state):

Number of Students:

Subject and Grade you teach:

Age (check): 20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46-50

50-

Denomination:

2. Why did you want to teach in a public school setting?

3. What are some ways you have had the opportunity to live as a Christian example in the schools?

4. Have you ever directly shared your faith to your students? If so, what was your approach? Have you ever indirectly shared your faith? If so, how?

5. What type of legal issues have you encountered or have had to be aware of when talking to your students?

6. What is some of the curriculum you have integrated to promote moral character?

7. Do you have a support system to pray for you? If so, describe your support team and the activities that they do for you. If not, if you could create a group, describe some of its characteristics.

8. Have you ever adapted some of Jesus' teaching methods (parables, visual aids, exaggerations, etc.) to your own class? If so, can you describe some situations? If not, how could I implement these methods in my teaching?

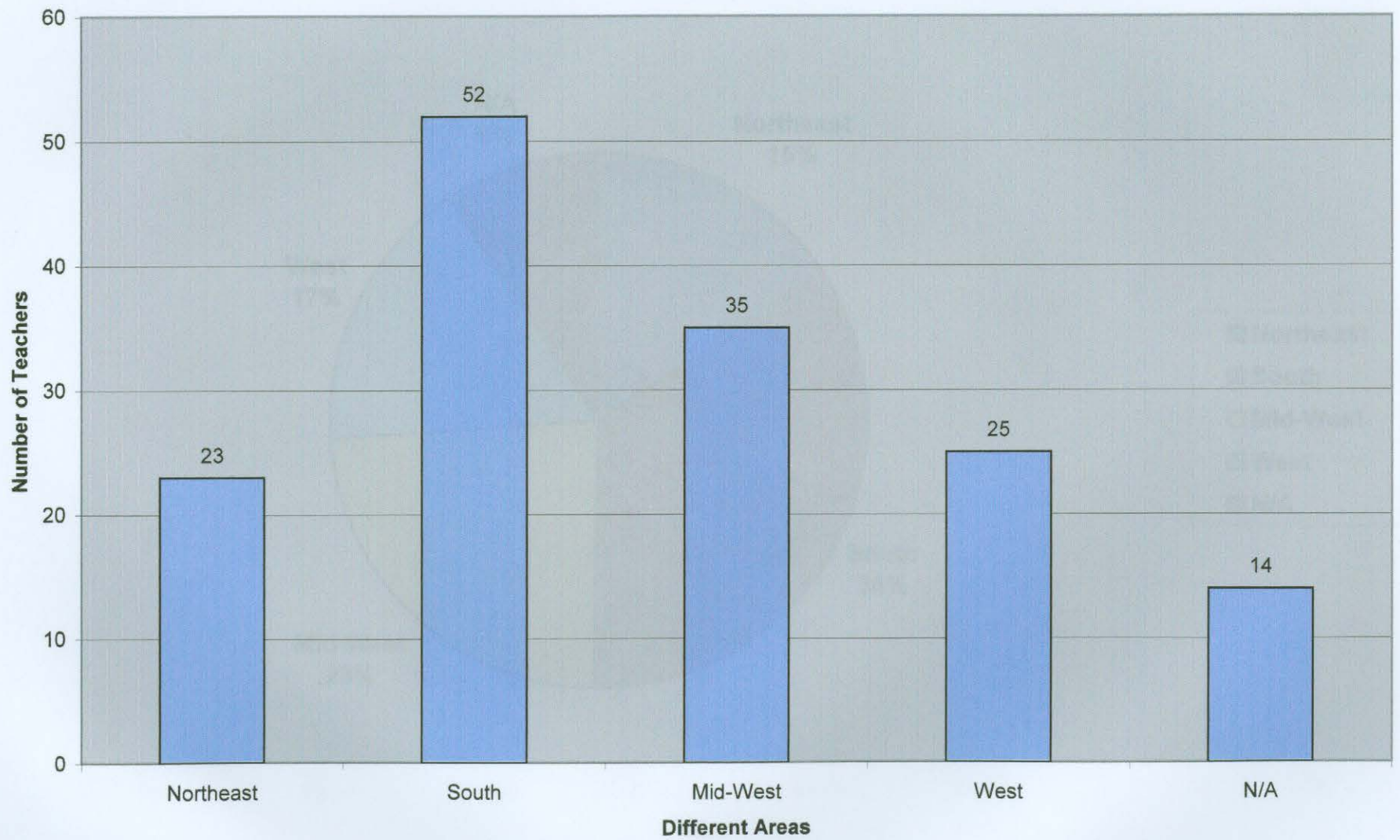
9. What techniques have you used in the classroom to keep your motivation as a Christian teacher high?

10. What advice can you give me as I start my career? What should be some of my goals and expectations for me and my students?

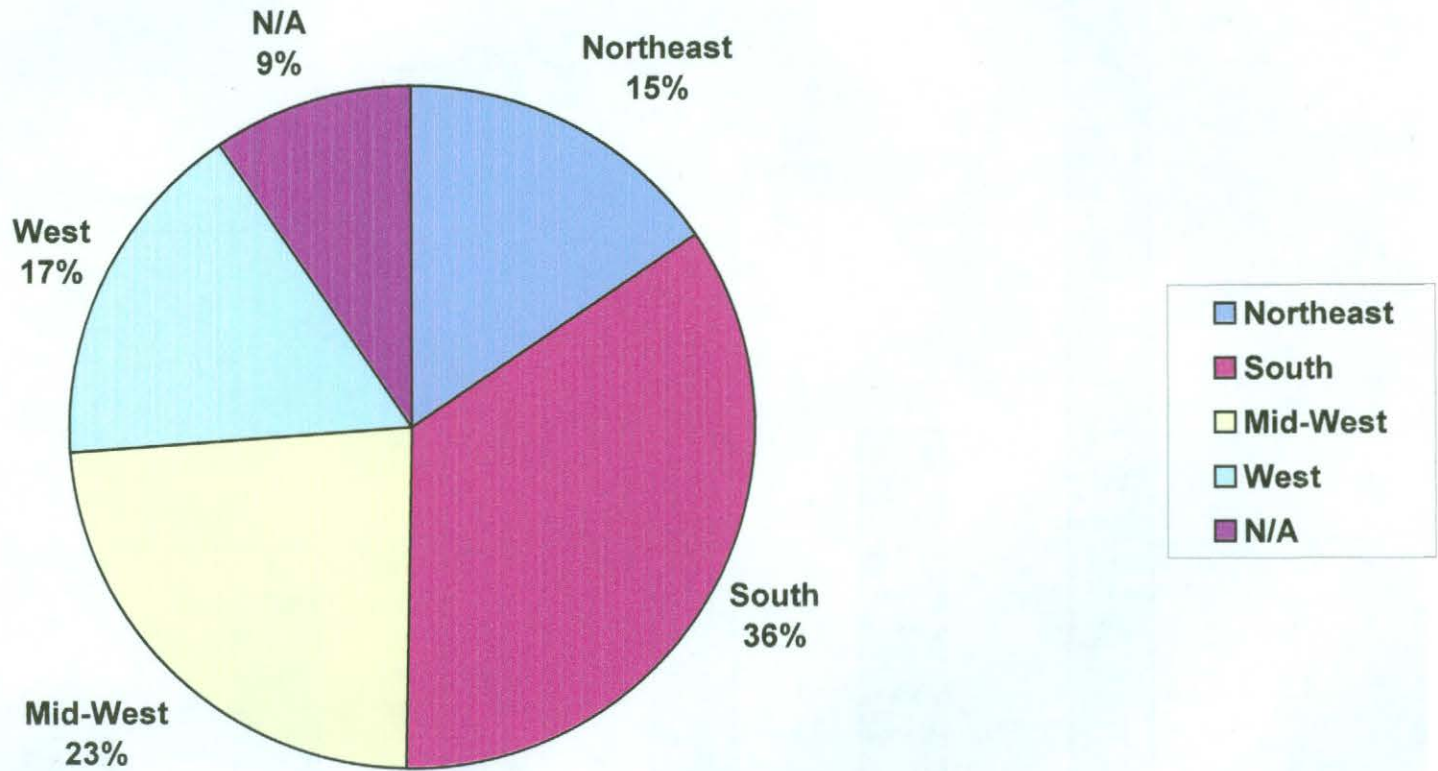
**Please submit the survey to the following email address: [wag39578@obu.edu](mailto:wag39578@obu.edu)**

**If possible, could you please submit your answers on or before November 1, 2006. Nevertheless, I will still collect your responses if you miss the deadline.**

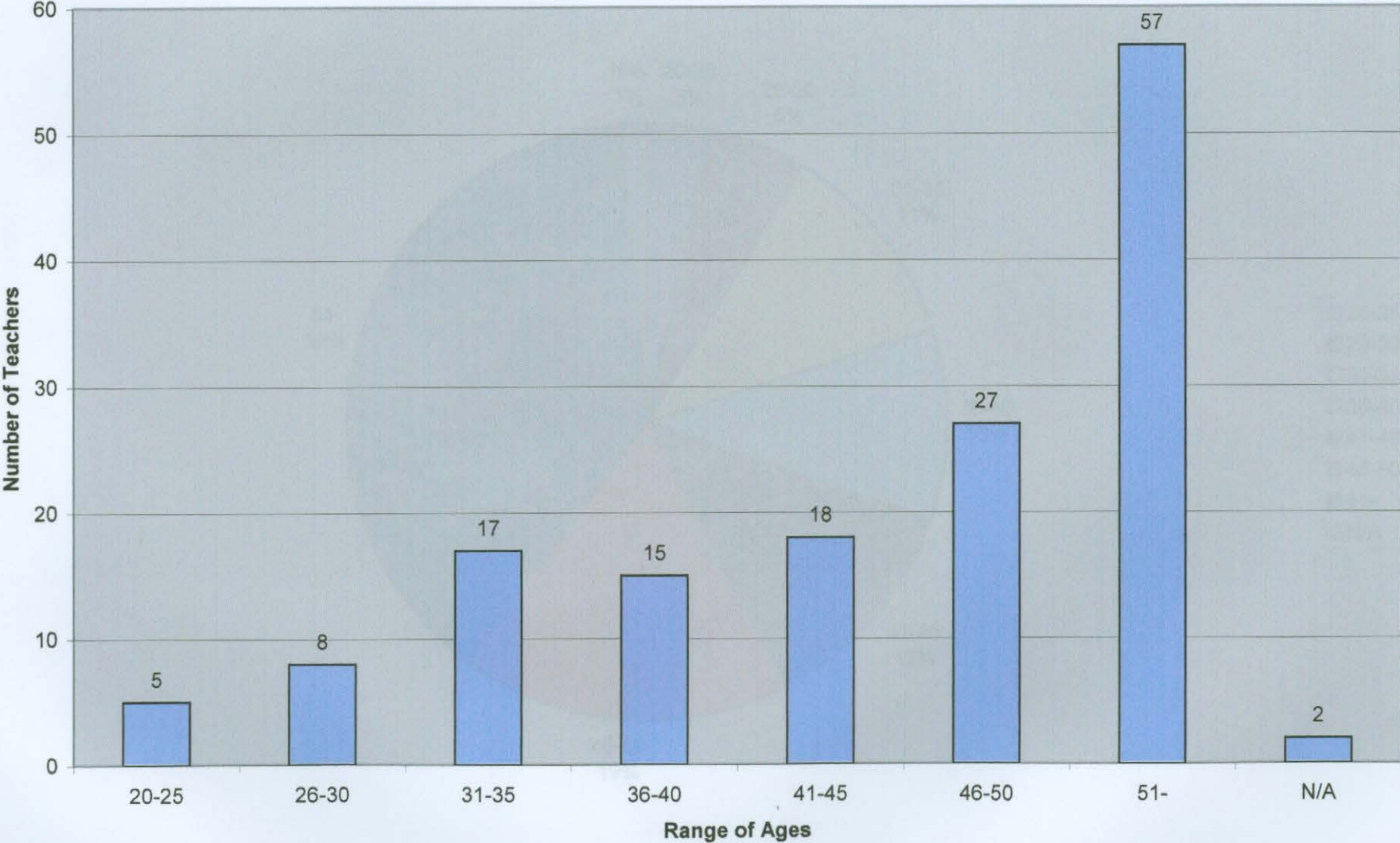
## Location of Teachers in the USA



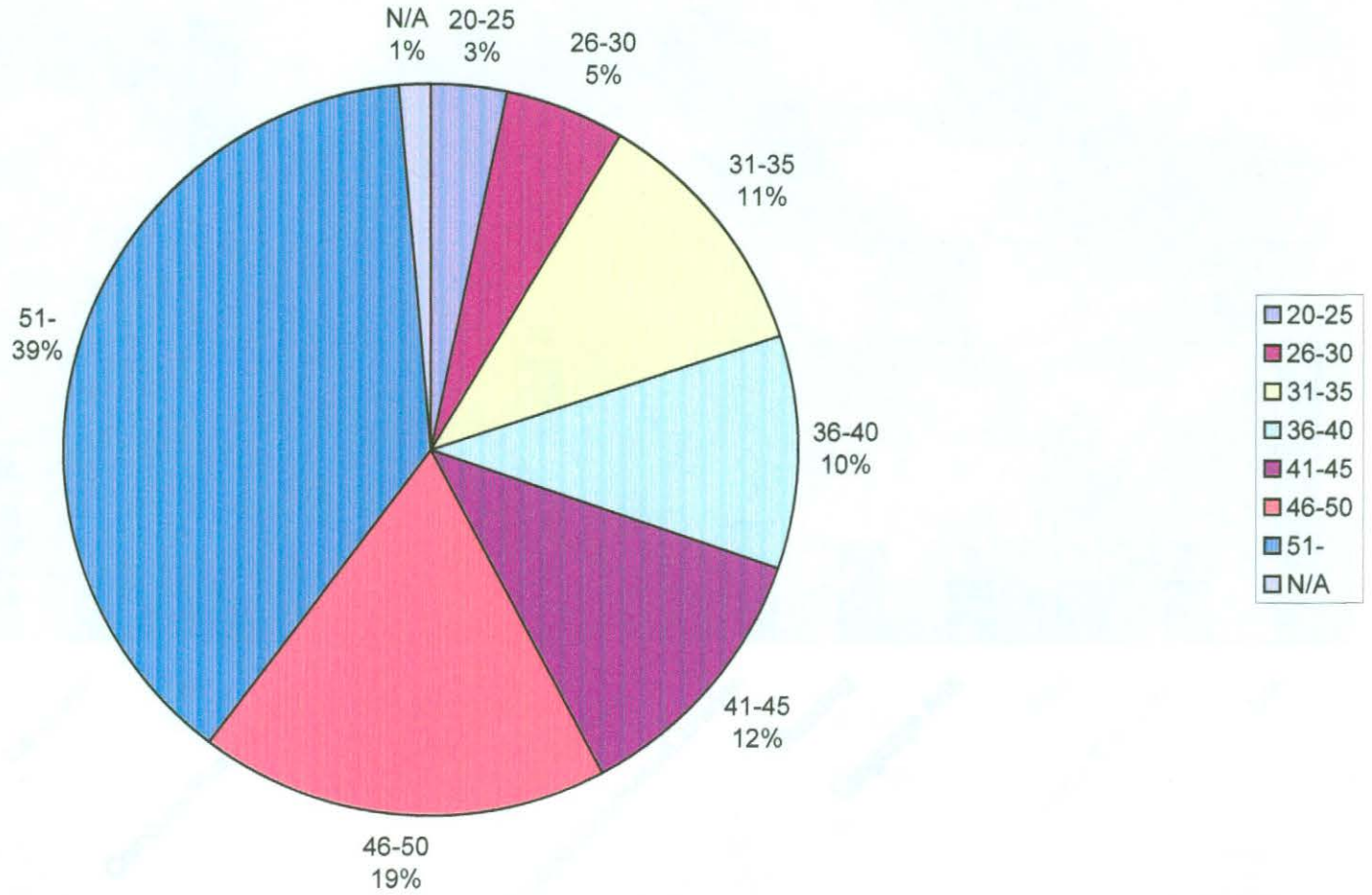
### Locations in the United States



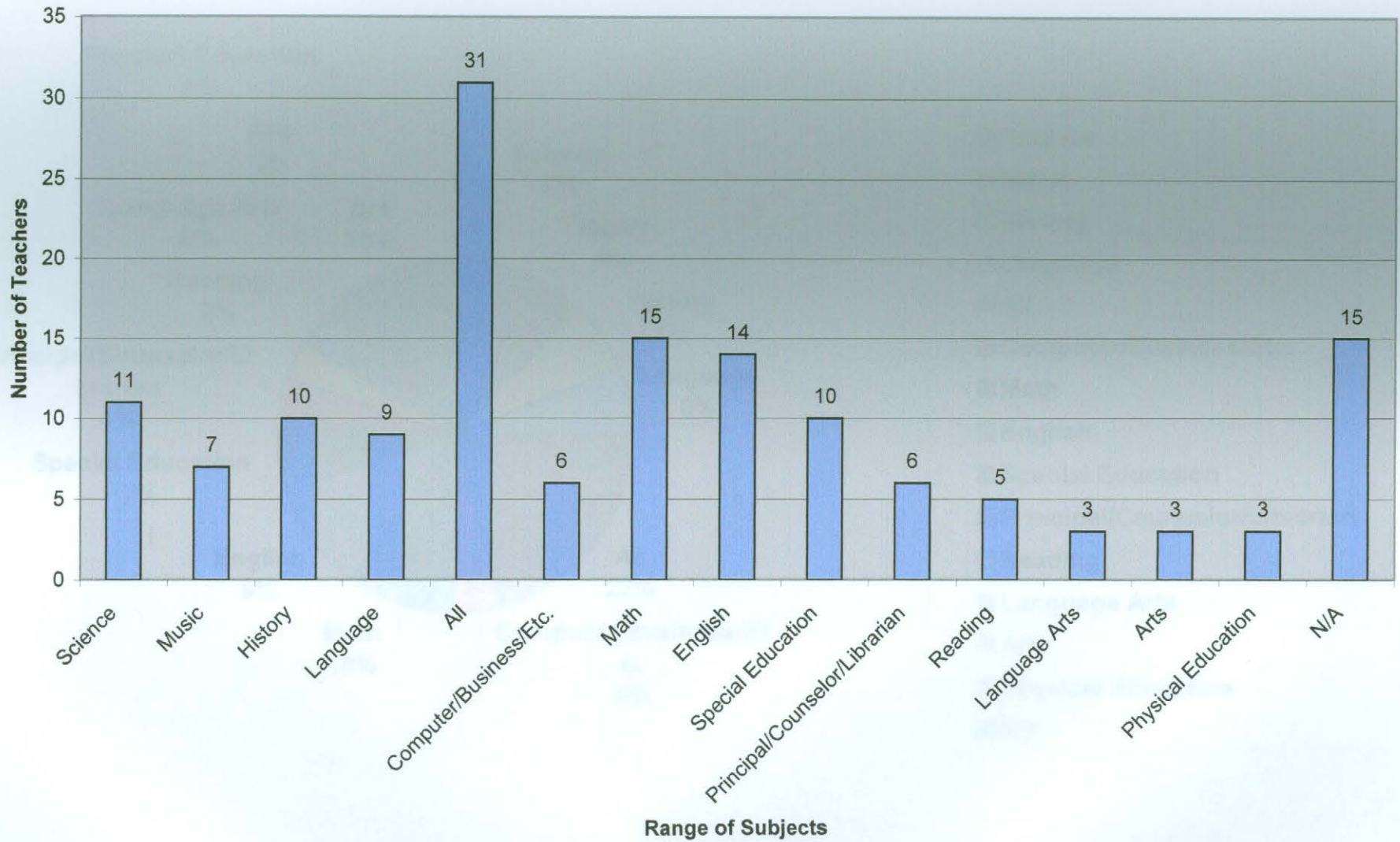
# Ages of Teachers



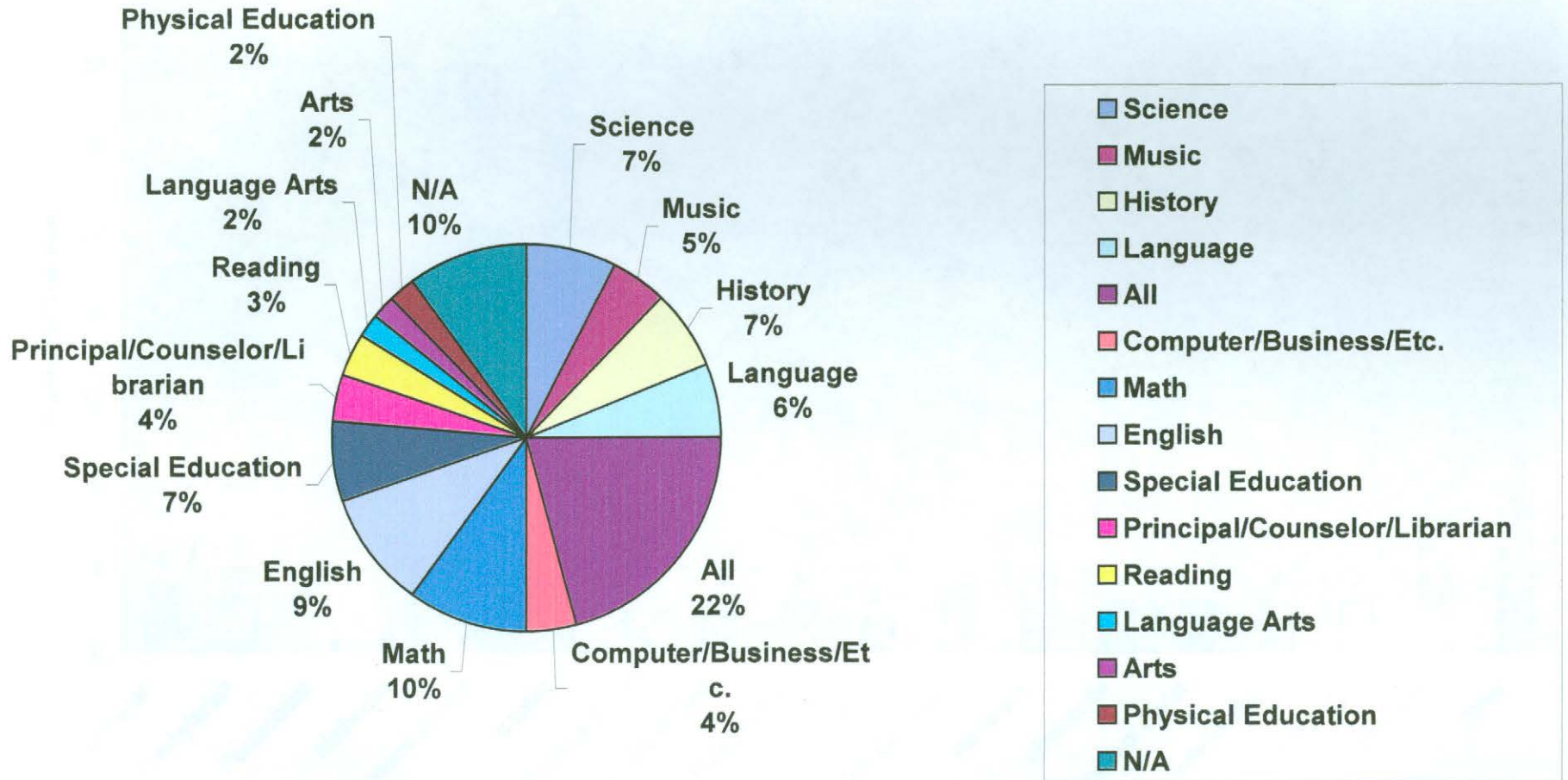
# Ages of Teachers



## Subject Areas

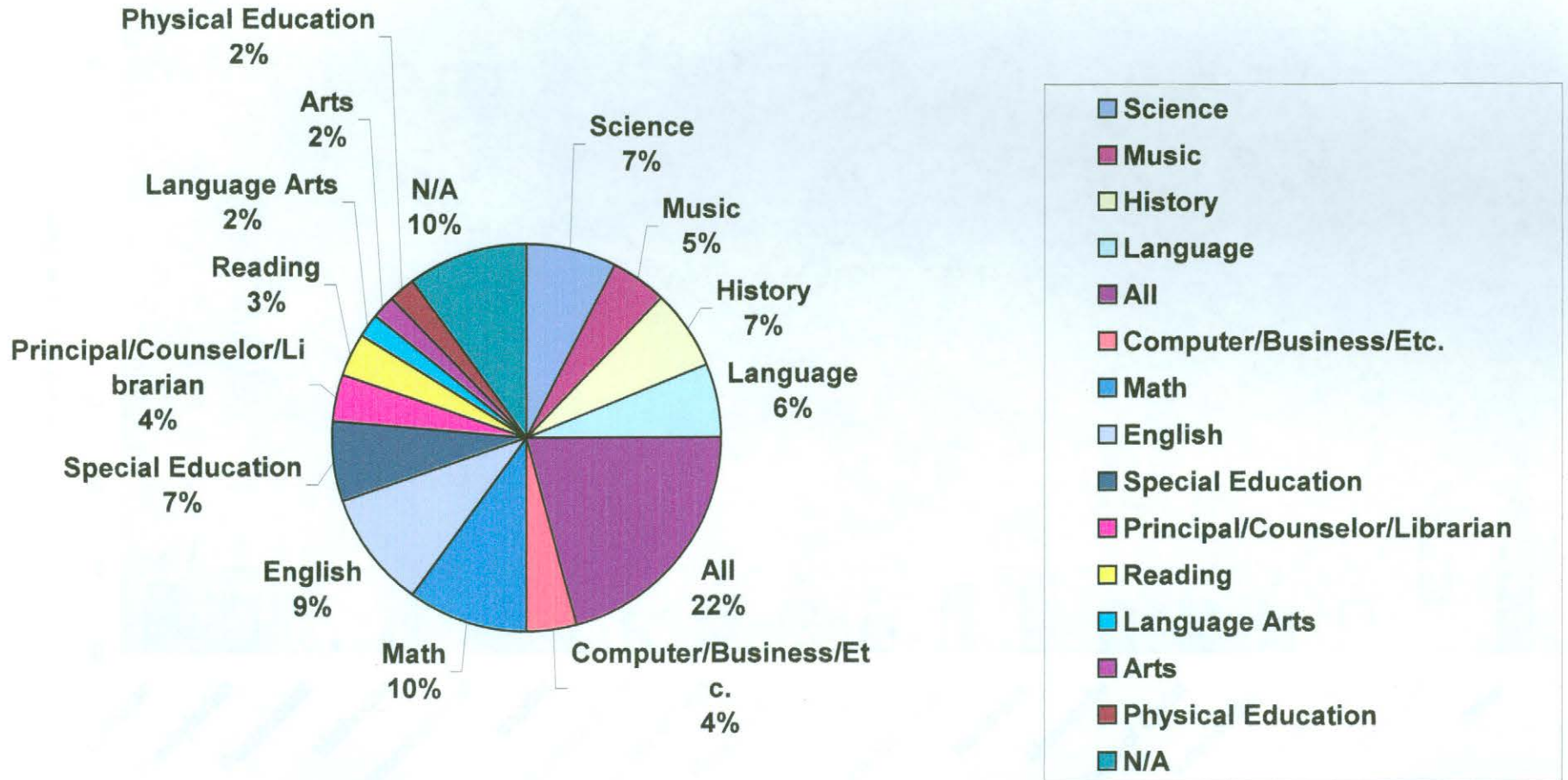


## Subject Areas

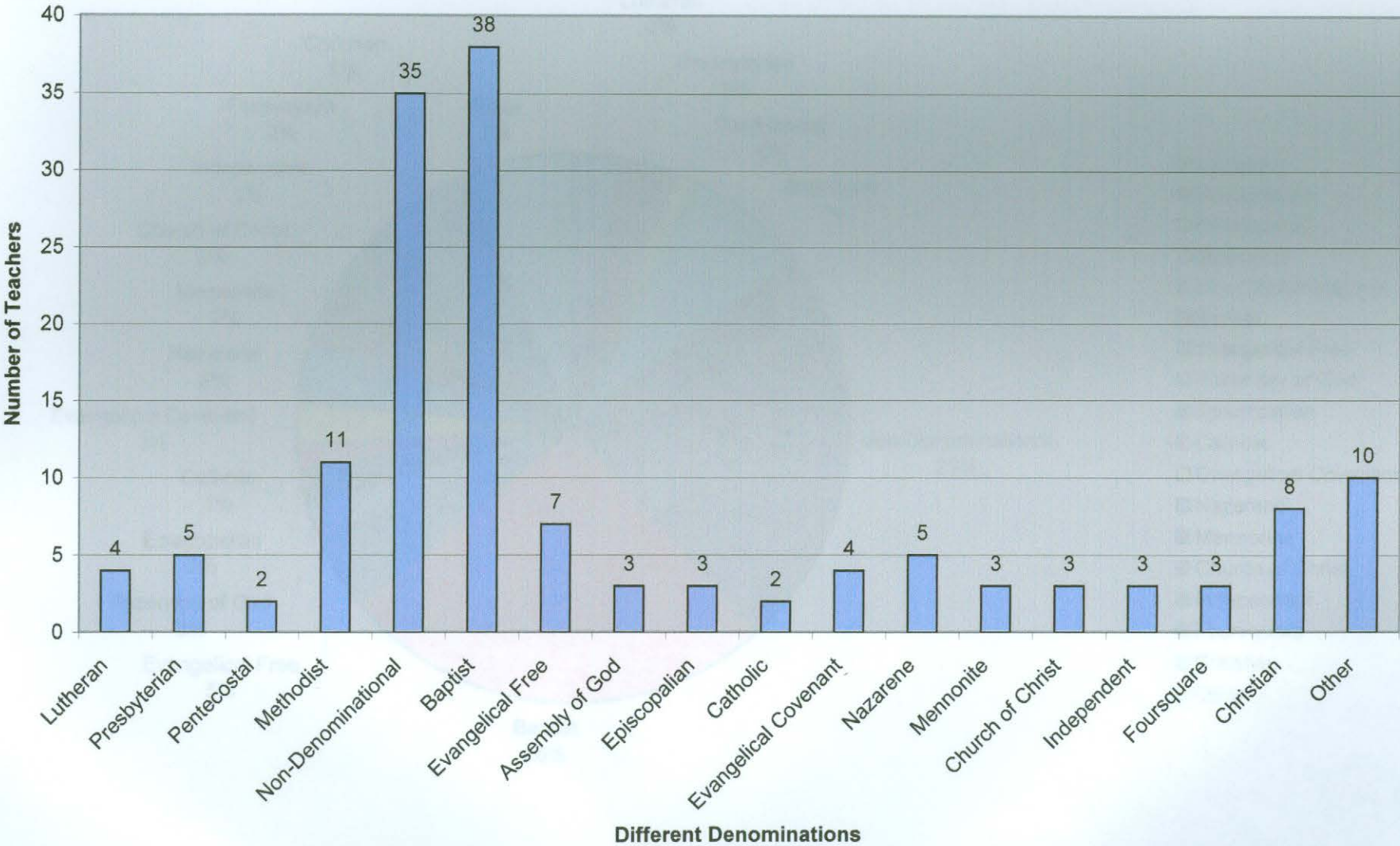




## Subject Areas



### Teachers' Denominations



## Denominations

