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Distance Collaboration: A Study of Professional Conversations Between Isolated Church

Education System Teachers

By

Zachary J. Cowan

A plan B proposal

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

Instructional Leadership

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2014

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ABSTRACT

Distance Collaboration: A Study of Professional Conversations Between Isolated Church
Education System Teachers

by

Zachary Jeffrey Cowan, Master of Education

Utah State University, 2014

Major Professor: Dr. Susan Turner
Department: Teacher Education and Leadership

This qualitative research reports on the experience of eight single person faculty seminary teachers as they participated in four collaborative structured discussions with a colleague, while using distance technology. The structure of each discussion consisted of discussion of a selected talk or article, the giving and receiving of feedback on a lesson plan, and the discussion of other ideas, concerns, problems, and questions. Data was also gathered in an exit interview. Constant-comparative analysis was used to discover patterns and themes from observations notes and the exit interview. There are several implications from the data. The reason articles were selected for discussion determines the results of the discussion. Teachers experience a deeper motivation to study their subject material, and greater enjoyment when they discuss their lessons. Teachers benefit from having a shared curriculum and a common language. The benefit teachers experienced from participating in professional discussions is greater than the time and effort it takes to prepare for them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This marks another miracle in my life. Miracles are always the result of faith, work, and divine grace. I declare that the faith and work of many others is evident in nearly every line of text.

I want to thank my wife and most honest critic, Katie. I love, love, love you Girl Face. I am thankful to our band of boys: Quinn, Maxwell, Oliver, and Sullivan for not making their mama cry as much as they could have, and for always providing a stimulating retelling of whatever adventure I missed when I was gone.

I am grateful for my parents Jeff and Deb/d Cowan for being patient, oh so very patient with me. I am thankful that they hated me as equally as they hated all of their other children. I am also convinced that not only do they love me, but they like me and may even talk to me if we met at a party.

I express gratitude to my major Professor Dr. Susan Turner for laughing when I was ready to cry, and becoming a familiar voice of correction and encouragement, mountains became hills. I would like to express my appreciation to the other members of my committee, Dr. Michael Freeman, and Dr. Brian Warnick. Thanks to Krista Terrell, who I am convinced I would have drowned without. I also am grateful for Utah State University and the Distance Education program for collapsing distances.

I express gratitude to Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for my employment and making the attainment of this degree possible through financial assistance. I am thankful to my friends who acted as participants in this study, and Area Directors who are always expecting greatness

For a final delimitation I declare that I believe in God, and because of that there are no limitations. I am nothing without the gifts that have so graciously been bestowed upon me through the Holy Ghost which are made available through the enabling power of Jesus Christ's Atonement.

Zachary Jeffrey Cowan

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Distance Collaboration: A Study of Professional Conversations Between Isolated Church
Education System Teachers

Introduction

The greatest improvements in my educational career center around what I believe to be three significant conversations. First, as a new teacher who was feeling unsure about my own abilities to accomplish what I had just been hired to do, I asked my Area Director Alan Maynes if he had any advice for me. He replied: “If teachers will spend one hour a week talking about teaching with other teachers, it will do more to improve their teaching than anything else,” (Personal Communication, May, 2007). This statement motivated me to engage in conversation with other teachers, not only seminary and institute teachers, but with those teachers employed in public education and private. These conversations have provided stimulating and stretching experiences that have shaped my abilities and philosophy about teaching.

Second, at the beginning of my postgraduate work I took a class about curriculum from Dr. Richard Rhees. In a particular class was focused on effective schools and teachers. In a moment of poetic summary Dr. Rhees said: “The single greatest inhibitor to instructional improvement is teacher isolation,” (Personal Communication, May 12, 2011). The idea that teachers fail to improve and grow because of being cut off from other teachers was principally important to me because for my whole career I have been a lone teacher in a single building separated from colleagues, a situation equivalent to a single room school house. My professional development and the development of similar colleagues will be limited unless we find ways to establish relationships and engage in collaborative conversations (Crow, 2008; Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Wood, 2014).

Third, class had not yet started and Dr. Barry Franklin was talking with his students about some of his experiences working with teachers and schools. Then he said: “We all know about the difference that an effective teacher makes, and we study methods that effective teachers practice. If it is the teacher that makes the difference we should also study the teacher rather than just their methods,” (Personal Communication, August 27, 2012). Anyone who has ever taught has tried to use a method that they saw another teacher perform wonderfully, and failed in the process. There is something about a teacher’s passion, and conviction that can’t be exchanged like money, but teachers with such passion have infected me as I have exchanged ideas and opinions about teaching with them.

Many religious educators do not understand the purpose or value of engaging in conversations with their fellow colleagues about teaching and professional development; therefore they do not participate in this most fundamental of improvement tools (Matthews, 2014). As teachers participate in conversation about educational articles, talks, books, and studies, then give and receive feedback about lesson plans, and discuss questions and concerns that they are facing such conversations will lead teachers to thoughtfully change their teaching practices (McLaughlin, 1993). I believe that if religious educators better understood what benefits could result from participating in a professional dialogue many more would make the transition from struggling in isolation and burning out to becoming pedagogical professionals who understand their craft and can help sustain other educators to become long term passionate teachers.

Research Question

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has always had a vested interest in the spiritual education of its people. In 1912 the LDS Church established its first

seminary program; this became the start of the Church Education System (CES). This system included all Church elementary, secondary, and higher education programs. Later Seminary and Institutes (S&I) were separated as a distinct division. There are 2,013 full time teachers, 246 part time teachers, and 44,610 volunteer teachers in S&I (LDS, 2104a). Between S&I teachers is a group who has traditionally been referred to as “one-man” teachers. For this study I will be using the term “single faculty” or “one person” programs. These are isolated teachers who also function as principals; they provide religious instruction to all students freshman through senior. A traditional seminary teacher in Utah will participate in several types of professional development called inservice each year. On average a seminary teacher will attend five area wide meetings, six regional or cluster meetings, and 36 local faculty meetings (Winder, 2011). Teachers reported that the local faculty meeting was the most beneficial for their improvement as educators (Winder, 2011). This means that one-person programs are missing 36 opportunities to engage in the most helpful professional development meeting. In the Utah East Area the one person programs are allowed an additional two days to meet together each summer.

My research question is “What is the experience of isolated religious educators when they participate in professional conversations using a structured collaborative format and a network communication system?”

The structured collaborative format will consist of educators discussing a preselected article, talk, or book chapter about teaching; giving and receiving feedback on a future lesson plan. Teachers will also discuss other problems, questions, ideas, and concerns they have about teaching. Participants in this study communicated using the Cisco WebEx system, which is a provided networking system for all LDS employees.

Literature Review

When I was first hired as a seminary teacher I was told by Mark Eastmond my Preservice Director that the LDS Church had just made a substantial financial investment by choosing to employ me (Personal Communication, May, 2007). Dave Walton the Area Director for the Utah East Area reported that Chad Webb the Administrator of S&I said that “teacher burnout is the biggest problem we have” (Personal Communication, August, 2012). Teacher isolation is not only an issue with one-person seminary faculties it is the very structure of their assignment. They are expected to be able to form adequate relationships not only with students and parents, but also with local school administrators, educators, and ecclesiastical leaders.

I will review the problem of teacher burnout and isolation. Look at how professional conversation and dialogue are a reasonable solution. Then I will review what we know and understand about effective conversations and what we don’t know. Finally I will review what LDS literature adds to the discussion about conversation as a means of professional development.

The Problem of Teacher Burnout and Isolation

I have been acquainted with several young and newly hired seminary teachers who have lost their passion for teaching and chosen to seek different employment. This is not an isolated phenomenon in the seminary programs nor is it a new trend in public education. 50 percent of new teachers quit teaching and seek new employment after five years of teaching, and, of the 50 percent who stay, 80 percent of them will leave after 10 years (Boreen & Niday, 2000). This is a horrible retention rate, not to mention the studies that suggest that it takes 10,000 hours to become a master of a professional discipline (Gladwell, 2008). Schools for the most part are organized to produce teacher isolation and absorb high levels of turnover (Crow, 2008; Lortie,

2002). Rust (1999) pointed out that this burnout frequently comes, as new teachers have to face the challenge of transitioning from novice pre-service teachers to an employed educator whose role becomes increasingly complex. The organization of teaching expects new teachers to carry the same workload as experienced teachers and respond to problems as an experienced teacher (Crow, 2008). Teaching is being portrayed as simple when in reality it is very demanding and often discouraging (Crow, 2008).

Boreen and Niday (2000) cite lack of community and a hierarchy problem of high verses low, or teachers with experience verses the educators with little experience, as two of the major factors resulting in the fleeing of fledgling teachers. Snow-Gerono (2005) stated that the traditional hierarchal structure doesn't promote an environment of safety, trust, and care. In one case study a newly hired elementary teacher named Heather stated that she found herself in the paradox that many teachers face: the teacher has many chances to interact with students, and yet they have a colleague isolation which results in stagnation and disappointment (Snow-Gerono, 2005). This disappointment leads to a loss of teacher moral, which in turn dissuades students who are considering teaching as vocation (Lortie, 2002). Teachers are often faced with an overwhelming amount of activities and responsibilities that demand immediate attention; leaving educators with little or no time to interact with colleagues in a way that adds depth to their philosophy or practice of teaching (Little, 2002).

Professional Conversations and Dialogue as a Solution

If this turnover and environment remain the same, the productivity of school efficiency appears to be in a cataclysmic decline. Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (2010) offer an interesting outlook on the solution:

Over 85 percent of a total school budget is used to pay employee salaries. Education is a human enterprise. The essence of successful instruction and good schools comes from the thoughts and actions of the professionals in the schools. So, if one is to look for a place to improve the quality of education in a school, a sensible place to look is the continuous education of educators—that is, professional development. Virtually any experience that enlarges a teacher's knowledge, appreciation, skills, and understanding of his or her work falls under the domain of professional development. (p. 335)

A lack of adult or seasoned professionals hinders the growth of the young, and it is imperative for the success of collaboration efforts, learning communities, and support networks (Snow-Gerono, 2005). One of the simplest solutions to teacher isolation and burnout is for teachers to develop teacher literacy by engaging in professional conversations (Boreen, & Niday, 2000).

Kitchen (2005) suggested that for a new teacher to be properly prepared for the wide variety of things they would face it would take four additional years to train them, but since that is not an option they must learn from their colleagues. With appropriate mentoring and sharing of knowledge from practiced and experienced teacher new teachers can move beyond recipe teaching that only involves the tips and tricks to really trying to understanding the craft of teaching (Loughran, 2005). McLaughlin (1993) discovered that the quantity, specificity, and content of colleague discussions shape individuals and classroom practices. In addition to discovering, school improvement cannot happen without a closely connected culture of professional development. Loughran and Northfield (1998) also found that authentic conversations are critical to developing a community that participates in self-study about teacher education practices. Lortie (2002) suggested that the long and hard reflection every teacher needs works best with interaction among peers.

What We Know About Professional Conversations and Dialogue

Leikin's (2005) study suggested that if a template, model, or chart is used professional conversations had a more focused dialogue than those who used nothing to guide their conversations, and that having these models or templates results in a conversation that is more focused on pedagogy and the content of a teacher's subject. McLaughlin (1993) said:

Without a structure or focus to prompt teachers to reveal their own classroom practice, teachers offer few glimpses of their own action and agency in the classroom. We have posited that professional learning and change in practice requires opportunities to see and talk about one's own and others' practices. Such talk is more likely to produce opportunities for learning when practices are related with more frequency and more concrete detail. Such talk develops resources and routines that can help teachers improve their work. (p. 395)

McLaughlin (1993) also explained that teachers can't improve their instructional abilities if all of their time in meetings is spent reworking and discussing school policies. Teaching improves when there is a structure that allows for discussion and examination of teaching.

Loughran (2005) discovered that "articulating personal principles of practice helps in better aligning practice and beliefs" (p. 12). There is even an inherent value of a teacher talking about why they disagree with another teacher on a method or theory. The chance to dialogue about our disagreements forces them to state clearly what they mean and offers a chance to thoughtfully reflect about how their classroom methods measure up to their ideas (Snow-Gerono, 2005). "Researchers benefit by working with collaborators who help them step outside themselves to notice patterns and trends in their work" (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 14).

Many teachers don't participate in professional development conversations because they feel that they would experience a decrease in their professional credibility if they were to sincerely ask questions (Snow-Gerono, 2005). Isolation is the way to protection, while collaboration requires a teacher to be in a state of inquiry (Snow-Gerono, 2005). Boreen and Niday (2000) believed that engaging in conversation with our fellow colleagues is one of the best ways to practice and improve educator's professional language and practices.

Other important supports for these kinds of conversations are deep curricular and subject matter understanding and content knowledge for teaching particular groups of kids. There are issues of expertise. Groups that don't have the means to unpack and resolve their problems can only get so far in having a discussion, especially by themselves. The conversations can point to places where school leaders or district leaders could help build the capacity of the group to do more with the conversations they're having. (Crow, 2008 p. 56)

Teachers who share a curriculum and have a shared understanding of instructional methods are able to engage in conversations that are really useful in their own particular classrooms (Crow, 2008).

In the highly data driven age that we are now in Goldring, and Berends' (2009) point out that "successful implementation of ongoing data use for instructional improvement requires teacher-to-teacher interactions and teachers talking about the data, implications of the data, and specific suggestion on how to alter instruction to meet individual students' learning needs." (p. 87).

The problem is simple according to Miller (2009) "we have to transition [new teachers] from student thinkers to pedagogical professionals, to maximize their opportunities to improve

their teaching and their student's ability to learn" (p.159). Regularly meeting with other educators to share stories helps with these needs and assists new teachers move from novice to advanced beginner to competent professional, and in the very least sharing stories with colleagues reminds teachers that they are valued and needed (Rust, 1999).

Carroll (2005) in a yearlong attempt to develop a theoretical framework and analytic tools for such conversations discovered that re-voicing, inquiring opportunity, and participating in interactive talk changed a group of teacher-mentors into a professional learning community. Loughran and Northfield (1998) learned that it is important that the conversations are meaningful to the participants and revolve around issues, which they are concerned and passionate.

In a mixed methods study Tillema and Orland-Barak (2006) compared what educational professionals believed about collaborative knowledge construction verses their experience in participation in these conversations, and discovered personal beliefs do not determine outcomes, but that participation in the discussion does. This study showed that regardless of a professional educator's personal beliefs participation in collaborative conversations produces positive experiences at least in problem understanding and perspective shift.

Participation in more professional communities impacts teaching practices and improves student learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). McLaughlin (1993) discovered that teachers who report working in highly cohesive and collegial professional communities also reported high levels of excitement, energy, enthusiasm, innovation, and a high commitment for every student learning.

What We Don't Know About Professional Conversations and Dialogue

We know a lot about best practices and student learning. We even know that professional conversation among colleagues matter, but we know very little about how such conversations

help transform teachers (Miller, 2009). In an interview Judith Warren Little said “Most of the research doesn't supply much guidance for what those organized efforts might pursue. Most research, my own included, tends to identify existing instances of robust communities, but doesn't really account very well how they got there,” (Crow, 2008, p. 53). Early in my career another teacher and I created a simple framework that fostered a professional relationship that continues to help my teaching. I want to investigate what happens when other teachers participate in similar structure in an attempt to improve their teaching.

LDS Literature

The LDS community already has a strong understanding and belief in the council system. Ballard (1994) related that the LDS use of councils begins with the theodicy of the heavenly councils of the Gods before the creation of the world. Richards (1953) announced that the genius of the LDS organization and growth is the work of councils at all levels and in all programs. Ludlow (1992) described the LDS concept of councils as both philosophical and administrative. Not only is it the structure but also it entails the basic belief that by participating in councils members are prepared and trained for future leadership responsibilities. In fact there are scriptures in the LDS canonical sources that point out the need and importance of engaging in communication with each other (*The Bible*, 2013 Isaiah 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12, 14, 18, 20-21, 26; Ephesians 4:12-13; *Book of Mormon*, 2013 Mosiah 18:21-22; Moroni 6:5; *Doctrine & Covenants*, 2013 6:32; 50:10; 78:9; 88:122; 107:27-31, 85-89; 120:1; 121:32).

A review of the LDS Church *Handbook 2 Administering the Church* (2010a), which contains policy and practices for local leadership, offers these helpful lessons on how to improve councils and discussions:

- Prepare and distribute a written agenda before a council so participants have time to prepare (3.3.7).
- Spend a minimal amount of time on calendar, business, and administration items (4.6.1).
- All participants are expected to come prepared to participate in the discussion, ask questions, listen carefully, speak honestly, speak from personal experience as well as focus on general principles and perspectives (4.6.1).
- Prioritize the meeting agenda so that most important matters get discussed. It is better to cover a few items well rather than many in a superficial way (4.6.2).

Ballard (1993) reasoned that the organization of a council individual responsibility on all participants to identify problems and offer solutions. Ballard (1994) stated that when people of different experience and opinion council together openly, listening with respect, in patience; that this group will move their work forward faster and farther than others. That is the miracles of councils; that ordinary men and women can become extraordinary leaders. Aston (1989) and Ballard (1997) cautioned that a council system where the majority of the leading participants are male, there should be extra attention given to the voices that represent families, women, youth, and children. Hafen (2002) in his biography of Neal A. Maxwell cites him teaching that councils demand a personal surrender of priorities when they are of no benefit to the group. Unanimity among a council is “not just a procedural nicety. To have real agreement by [those who will one day become the leaders of the council] ensures continuity of policy. So unanimity means not mere assent but a willingness to support,” (Hafen; 2002, p. 454-455).

From the literature it is obvious that there is a growing concern with the problem of teacher isolation and burnout. There is also a growing body of research that suggests that teacher conversation and dialogue are a good solution to the problem. The literature showed that many

teachers don't take advantage of these discussion opportunities and that a structure is vital to help these conversations transform teachers. There have not been many studies that look at how teacher discussion actually transforms teachers, and we know very little about how these effective collaborative communities start. The LDS Church is a community that already has strong theological beliefs that the gathering of people united in purpose brings additional insight, even revelation.

Methodology

Context

Leaders from the LDS Church (2010b, 2011a, 2011b) have recently made several presentations about the fundamental importance of using the council system with the above-mentioned principles to improve the quality of meetings and councils. The relationship to the principles and practices of being able to council and discuss issues is not simply a matter of best practices. The council system is a theological doctrine for members of the LDS Church, Elder David A. Bednar said:

If I had the wish of my heart, I would remove from the vocabulary of the Latter-day Saints the word 'meeting'. We have not been talking about a 'Ward Counsel Meeting'. We have been talking about a 'revelatory experience' with the members of the Ward Counsel. If members of counsels, if members of families as they come together would think in terms of I'm preparing to participate in a revelatory experience with my family instead of going to a meeting, or a revelatory experience with a Ward Counsel. I think we would prepare and act much differently (LDS, 2010b).

The participants in this study have all received numerous trainings and materials on the theology of councils. Latter-day Saints' believe that one of the vital moments of their religion was a great

pre-mortal council where a plan of salvation was presented and a Redeemer was selected (*Doctrine and Covenants* 29:36-39; *Pearl of Great Price 2013* Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 3:22-28; LDS, 2004). With an understanding of these beliefs it will come as no surprise that Latter-day Saints' believe that revelation, communication with the divine, is scattered among their people and most likely to be found in discussions and councils (LDS, 2011a).

It is ironic that with all of the emphasis that the LDS Church has placed on the importance of councils and discussions that this is not reflected in the religious academic literature. *The Religious Educator* is a peer-reviewed journal produced by the Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University that began publication in 2000. In a review of the 41 volumes that have been published there is not a single article that discusses anything about using conversation, discussion, councils, faculty meetings, as a means of professional development. In fact there are only a handful of articles that touch on professional development themes. Most of the articles focus on historical and cultural context for the scriptures, or an exegesis of the scriptural content. However an interesting thing happened about four years after the journal started they published a conversation between two teachers. Since then there have been another 23 conversations that have been published. Many of these conversations are among the most memorable things that I have read from the *Religious Educator*. I am confident that this study will add an important perspective to the religious education community and literature.

S&I employees have entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ to continually improve. S&I employees also have a contractual obligation with the Church and the Church Educational System. "Part of this professional, contractual obligation is to develop professionally by becoming better teachers and leaders" (LDS, 2003, p.16). Robinson and Aronica (2009) state that the "most powerful method of improving education is to invest in the

improvement of teaching and the status of great teachers” (p. 238). One of the best ways to improve people and organizations is to make small changes to things that are done often (Eyring, 1998). Collegial interaction is one of those small things that if adjusted by a structure and a focus could drastically improve teacher development, isolation, and burnout.

Research Design

I am interested in performing a qualitative study of all of the eight single person seminary faculties in the Utah East Area. These religious educators will be asked to participate in four one-on-one conversations with each other, making up four groups of two. These conversations will happen once a week for the duration of four weeks. Because of the physical distance between these programs the use of technology will be very important. The participants will be coordinating these meetings through e-mails and phone conversations, but the actual conversations will be carried out by using Cisco’s WebEx program.

During the conversations each pair of educators will select a talk or article about teaching to discuss. Each will bring one untaught lesson that they will teach during the upcoming week. They will give and receive feedback about their lessons. They will also discuss any other questions or concerns that they have about teaching. The conversation will end by selecting a new teaching article for the next week and planning a time to hold the discussion.

Following the four once a week discussions each pair will participate in an interview with me using the same web based meeting system that they used during their own discussions. During the interview participants will be asked to share their experience and thoughts about the professional conversations that they were engaged in over the last four weeks.

Following the interview I will look for patterns and themes among the data (Mertler, 2014). Specifically I will look for patterns and themes that reveal what religious educators experienced by participating in similar conversations. My hope is that the themes and patterns found may be useful in encouraging other educators to participate in similar conversations more frequently and with higher expectations. I also hope that this data will confirm the importance of having a structure that allows for collaborative discussion of teaching philosophy as well as a transferal and sharing of teaching practices.

Research Assumptions

The very nature of this type of study assumes that each of the participants will have their own experiences and be willing to share them during the discussion, and interview process. For eight years I have been a seminary principal and instructor of a one-person building. I have been a member the Utah East Area's training council for three years, and have also mentored a young one-person principal. I am incredibly passionate about the importance of colleague conversations. Some will argue that this will bias the data or contaminate the research. It might also be suggested that because of my passion about this topic I will have spent more time thinking deeply about the specific elements that are involved with conversation structure, and will be better equipped to describe in detail the variances and nuances that will be found in each participant's experiences. Language and words are fractured and imperfect, but they have a far better chance of describing an individual's passions, beliefs, and desires than any quantified number has.

Procedures

As the researcher I will be responsible for gaining approval from S & I leadership through the Area Director David Walton. I will then send out an e-mailed invitation to all of the

one-person faculties. Upon approval and positive responses to the invitations I will pair off the participating teacher into pairs of two. The participants will be paired off with someone who they are not in the same region with. I will send out an e-mail with a schedule of the weeks for each of the discussions to happen, and announce the pairings and appointing 1 person from each pair to make contact and schedule the first meeting. I will contact the appointed leader and instruct them on how to schedule a meeting using the WebEx system, and provide some basic instruction on how to manage and maneuver the system. I will also discuss the structure of the meetings with the leaders so that they will be able to lead out on that initial meeting.

I will be invited to attend each conversation by every pair and will sit in on several meetings to take field notes on the discussions (Mertler, 2014). Following the discussions I will be setting up and conducting interviews with each pair of participants. I am qualified to administer the interviews because I have been a religious educator for many years and have an understanding of the unique language and terms that are common in religious education that are not found in the discourse of public education.

After conducting each interview I will carefully produce a transcript of the interview. I will then study the transcripts and field notes in an attempt to identify patterns, and themes that will reveal the participants' experiences in participating in a regular semi-structured professional conversation (Mertler, 2014). I will then begin the process studying the multiply sources of data and create a coding system to identify key themes (Mertler, 2014). I will then present discoveries in written form in the remainder of this paper.

Participant Selection

The eight participants for this study were selected because they are the single-person or one-person faculties in the Utah East Area.

A rural Utah area. This rural Utah area is one of several areas in the Seminary and Institute program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The S&I educators that teach in this area have a wide range in experience. In the Utah East Area there are two female teachers, and 50 male teachers. Many of the educators are in small faculties consisting of one to three person programs. Nearly all of those teachers have acquired postgraduate degrees in various subjects. The eight participants for this study were selected because they are the single-person or one-person faculties in a rural Utah area.

Those not participating. There are two single-person faculties in the area that are not represented in this study. I am one that is not represented and the other could not participate because of time constraints. The vacant spot was filled by Steven prior to his current appointment was a one-person Principal and instructor in a rural area. Because of his prior experience I felt that Steven would be an acceptable substitute.

One-person principals and instructors. All of the participants in this study also act as the principal for their seminaries. All of the teachers participating in this study are teaching *The Doctrine & Covenants* for their course this year. Each teacher has the same teacher's instructional methods handbook, teacher's manual and pacing guide, but they are encouraged to adapt each lesson to make it fit their own teaching style and the needs of the students in their classrooms. Having a unified curriculum and teaching vocabulary to discuss is something viewed as most beneficial for improving teaching (Horn and Little, 2010; Crow, 2008).

List of participants.

Table 1 Participant Information				
Participant's Name	Rural Area	Years Teaching	Program Size Total Students	Class Size Range

Steven	One	15	N/A	N/A
Leia	Two	18	18	2-8
Peyton	Three	9	127	6-29
Cal	Four	25	210	14-35
Jay	Five	7	136	11-30
Hugh	Six	15	63	5-23
Walter	Seven	2	109	13-29
Javier	Eight	4	144	5-32

Data Collection Strategies

To create a referencing system that allows for data to be accessible each group of teachers has been assigned a number one through four. The first number will always refer to a particular group. The second number will refer to a meeting or interview. The third number will refer to a section of a meeting, or a question from an exit interview. An example would be (1.4.3) which would mean (Group 1. Meeting 4. Section 3).

Discussion meetings, and field notes. For the groups and dates of all meetings and interviews, as well as a list the article/talk that each group chose to discuss for each meeting (see appendix A). I attended nine of the scheduled conversations. Do to conflicting times and other obligations I could not attend all of the meetings. For those that I attended I took field notes on what I heard. These notes were compiled as observations. Later these observations were reviewed and observer notes there made (see appendix B). Wegner (1999) purports that by teachers sharing personal stories, and their teaching experiences with each other builds a community of professional development, validates experiences, and encourages better practices in the classroom. Levine and Marcus (2010) say, “With the exception of teachers whose collaboration involves peer observation or joint teaching, most collaborating teachers must represent their work verbally or through artifacts of practice, such as student work samples or lesson plans (p. 390). While taking these field notes I have

watch for evidence of Clark's (as cited in Kitchen, Ciuffetelli, Parker, & Gallagher, 2008) seven qualities of authentic conversations:

1. Good conversation is voluntary.
2. Good conversation happens on common ground.
3. Good conversation requires safety, trust, and care.
4. Good conversation demands good content.
5. Good conversation resists the bounds of definition.
6. Good conversation develops.
7. Good conversation has a future (p.161).

During these conversations I have played a limited role. The participants were aware that I was listening to the discussion, because I was using the same program that they were and my name was visible to them as one of the attendants in the meeting, but my microphone always remained muted.

Exit interview, and transcriptions. At the conclusion of the four weekly meetings I held an exit interview with each group as another source of data. Group four could not schedule a time where all three of us could meet so separate interviews were held with each participant. I contacted each group before the interview to schedule a date and obtain their permission to record it. The WebEx program was used for the final interviews. This allowed me to post the interview questions in print as well as verbally asking them, giving participants a chance to really process what is being asked of them before they respond. For a list of the interview questions that I asked (see appendix C). These interviews were recorded using audio technology and later transcribed. For referencing convenience the transcripts are contained in (appendix D).

Theoretical framework. To assist me in the process of identifying themes and patterns I will watch for three themes and indications of professional conversations as presented by Horn and Little (2010). There are routines in conversations that have been discovered to be the most beneficial in helping educators to learn from one another (Horn & Little, 2010). Three of these conversational routines are normalizing, specific accounts, and general principles.

Normalizing. Normalizing is a term created by Horn and Little (2010) to describe the act of a teacher identifying common problem, question, concern, or idea from another educator as normal (p.190). This routine of conversation helps supply reassurance and understanding in a discussion setting. I will watch for this as I observe the discussions between teachers.

Specific accounts. Specific accounts are identified by teachers exchanging stories from their experience to help relate lessons that they have learned. This is one of the most common routines found in conversations. I will keep track of the different examples of specific accounts as I observe discussions.

General principles. General principles are lessons or guiding truths that are often universal in their application. Their purpose is to help identify concepts that add to a teacher's developing knowledge about education. I will identify examples of general principles that I observe during the discussions.

Data Analysis

From the first observation I begin compiling observation notes. From the observation notes I constructed observer's comments that initiated the examination of data to find key themes, issues, language, and that were eventually turned into categories of focus. Following

each exit interview I carefully produce a transcript that was carefully read and studied. I used constant comparative analysis as a method of understanding the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This type of analysis allowed for continual comparison, rethinking, and rediscovery. The analysis of the data was an ongoing process (Attard, 2012). The Constant comparative allowed me to take raw filed notes and interview data and turn it into credible conclusions by using reduction and interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I sifted through the texts it became necessary for me to develop a code marking system to identify common themes and patterns.

Many of the categories that I produced came from terms that I have read about during the review of the literature. I used the theoretical framework of Horn and Little (2010) to find and record examples of normalizing, specific accounts, and general principles. My familiarity with the vocabulary of S&I educators was very beneficial during this stage. This allowed for possible themes and core categories to emerge. Constant comparative analysis allowed me to continue to redefine these categories as new data or incidences occurred or as I compared incidences against each other, or as I begin to compare concepts to incidences (Fram, 2013). At this point connections, contradictions, and conflicts about my research question arose. Finally I sought to interpret the collected and simplified data into usable and accurate information with concrete examples and quotes from the field notes and interviews.

Analysis of the Data

This section will begin with an analysis of the data using the Theoretical framework, and then move to an analysis of other key themes. There are many categories and subcategories identified and discussed in this section. The following figure is designed to give an overview of the entire section.

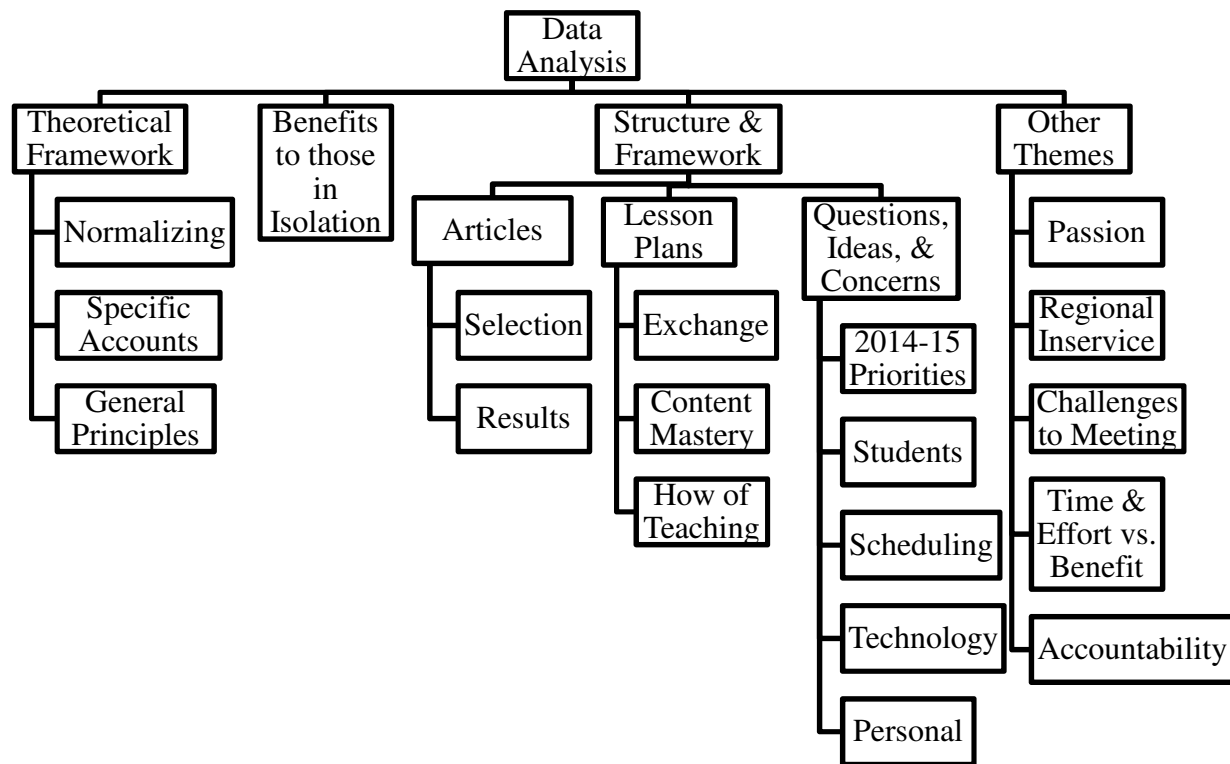


Figure 1. A chart of the analysis of the data with categories and subcategories. (A figure created by Z. Cowan using Microsoft Word SmartArt).

Theoretical Framework

To help me better understand the data that I collected from my field note observations I looked for the routines of education conversation identified by Horn and Little (2010).

Normalizing. I found 17 accounts of normalizing where very specific wording was used to show understanding and extend sympathy. There were many other types of loose normalizing where expressions of understanding were used, but they didn't contain that additional element of support by saying this is normal. Normalizing was observed seven times when teachers were

expressing challenges caused by lesson preparation and teaching methods. One of the most memorable was when Jay explained how his students had been going through so rough times and he felt completely drained, and only his personal study was supplying what he needed to get through. Hugh agreed with Jay about how hard these struggles are. This became the powerful moment that Hugh referred to several times during the interviews (3.3.5). Six times normalizing was used in conversation about scheduling or pacing. There were four examples of normalizing when struggling students or classes were discussed. Walter and Javier demonstrated this back-to-back in the same meeting. First Walter described a student that no longer wanted to be engaged in class in any way, with Javier expressing understanding and sympathy (4.4.1-2). Then Javier expresses his discouragement with apathetic juniors and seniors, with Walter demonstrating normalizing (4.4.5).

Specific accounts. I found 21 examples of teachers sharing specific accounts. Often these accounts were shared as a way to add validity to a general principle that was stated. Specific accounts were also shared as a way of normalizing and expressing their understanding, sympathy, and hope through a story. A great example of this happened between Peyton and Cal:

Cal said “you must have rapport so you can look students in the eye and tell them how you really feel about them.” Peyton shared how he told a struggling student “You really are a good kid” the student said “No way”, Peyton persisted, and the young man came on time today.

Cal then told a story about a young woman who was a runner up in homecoming and Cal told her “I’m not the only one who notices how good you are. Since then she has been acting like my seminary president” (2.3.8).

In many cases the specific accounts were more memorable than the general principle that they were used to explain or demonstrate.

General principles. There were 30 accounts of general principles identified. The language of these principles was not always as clear as it could have been. Rarely did the participants realize that they were offering up a general principle to enhance the developing collection of teaching knowledge. Groups one and four were responsible for identifying 25 of the general principles, of those 21 were principles specific to teaching. Some of the principles identified were:

- “In the Church we are really good at teaching information, but not at teaching people to understand” (1.4.1).
- “I think that his is telling us that we don’t need to worry about lesson plans so much as conversion” (2.3.6).
- “When I give my time to questions it changes my lesson and teaching. Questions drive the depth and breadth of discussions” (4.4.6).
- “If you know the history/context [of the scriptures], then it is easy to help them [the students] know what to look for” (4.4.9).

The two groups that were clearly the most dominant at stating general principles of teaching were also the two groups that consistently discussed lessons. These groups’ reasons for article choices also matched up with a desire to improve teaching (1.5.Q3; 4.5.Q3; 4.6.Q3).

Benefit to those in Isolation

In the exit interviews each of the participants mentioned that they found these discussions to be beneficial to them, especially and specifically because they are in isolated situations (1.5.Q1; 2.5.Q1; 2.5.Q11; 3.5.Q1). Javier mentioned that for him the most beneficial thing in his

teaching career was to be able to observe other teachers while he was going through preservice.

Javier said:

I was able to see things that I just wasn't able to see before, but since being in a one-man situation, it is hard when you are not in Utah valley to say, "I'll go visit this teacher, or I'll go visit that teacher." I can see how this can help me replace that, and just make me better, all around, not just as a teacher, just as a person, an individual. This is good I felt that (4.6.Q1).

It seems that these discussions helped fill a hole that Javier has had since he is no longer able to observe other teachers as a means to improving his teaching. Walter described the conversations by saying:

They're worth it. I think especially for me in my situation. I'm the only faculty member in a program. I think it is beneficial to communicate with someone else and to do it often. I think there are dangers of getting stuck in less beneficial patterns and habits if you are not constantly striving to progress and improve, and I think that is probably more of a threat when you're all by yourself in the middle of nowhere. So, I think it is always beneficial to converse; it is always worth the time (4.5.Q11).

Cal previous to being moved into a single-person assignment was in a building where there were 12 teachers on the faculty. This is one of the largest faculties in all of the S&I system. Cal frequently states that he was never a better teacher than when he could roam the halls during his prep and overhear lessons, or exchange ideas around the lunch table (Personal Communication, October 23, 2014). That would be his preferred setting for teacher improvement, but he said this of participating in the discussions:

I think, you know I've tried inservice, and I've tried to study on my own, and I've, oh mediocre to poor would be how I would say I rate myself at that. This just kind of makes it a formal, you know you go about, in ways of improvement I, I mean it was a, the personal benefit easily outweighs the time and effort that it cost (2.5.Q1).

Jay admitted that he enjoyed the experience so much that he wished that we could have more opportunities to do similar thing because of the situation that we are in (3.5.Q12).

Structure and Framework

McLaughlin (1993) distinguished between a strongly structured meeting and a meeting structured around protocol. A strongly structured meeting is good for moving through agenda items and handling business, but it is less effective at producing discussion about teacher practices. A protocol structure allows for significant freedom for participants to engage and discuss the practicalities of teaching, while still having a sense of accountability. Jay and Peyton both said that the structure of the discussions put pressure on them to get things done but still allowed them the freedom to cancel if they needed to (2.5.Q12; 3.5.Q12). Cal added that he didn't feel that the format was over or under structured (2.5.Q12). McLaughlin (1993) explained that structure is needed to get teachers to explain and discuss their teaching views and experiences. Steven echoed McLaughlin when he was asked which part of the structure he preferred:

Some weeks the article and talk were good, and it was great. We had a great experience with it. Other weeks the article and talk provided the framework that got us into the rest of the discussion, whether it was a lesson or whatever else. You know honestly, if I was to pick, we had four weeks that we discussed. I bet that each one of them: one, two, and three on a different week was the best part."

Leia: “I would have to totally agree with that.”

Zach: “Are there any other comments on that question?”

Steven: “I just think that, all I’m saying is that all of the elements are there, and it provides a framework so that quite honestly what needs to be discussed can be discussed, or what is on our minds can come out. That is the value of it. So is one more important than the other, I don’t think so; however on some weeks, yes (1.5.Q9).

When Cal was asked which part of the structure he enjoyed the most he didn’t think he could pick just one, and if he had to do these discussions every week or once a month he wouldn’t get rid of any one of the three part structure, Peyton then agreed (2.5.Q9).

Discussion of articles/talks/handbook sections/book chapters. The purpose of the article and talk section in the structure was to give teachers an opportunity to discover and discuss the philosophy of teaching.

Article selection. Every article, talk, handbook section, and book chapter that the participants selected to study and discuss is from an LDS context (see Appendix A). Some may question why these seminary instructors didn’t venture into any other avenues of teacher improvement sources. This is easily explainable when one understands the prophetic charge that has been given to these teachers. The most fundamental document in the religious educator’s cannon is a talk given by Clark (1938). In this talk among other fundamental ideas he presented a suggestion that religious teacher be thoughtful about new teaching methods and whether they are really useful in the context that we teach in. From this moment on there have been reminders to teach not only what the brethren teach, but also how. In one of the talks selected by the participants for this study is found such a reminder:

When a teacher feels he must blend worldly sophistication and erudition to the simple principles of the gospel or to our Church history so that his message will have more appeal and respectability to the academically learned, he has compromised his message. We seldom impress people by this means and almost never convert them to the gospel. This also applies to our students (Benson, 1976, p.4).

Another one of these reminders came more recently from Kelly Haws (2013) the Associate Administrator for S&I. He said:

The power of outreaching fundamentals and the practices espoused and taught in our handbook is not found in educational theory. It is found in doctrine. When methods have their moorings in truth and inspiration, rather than philosophy and imitation, then they will have greater power and be more effective (p.4).

For the participants the idea of current or recent addresses was an important factor in the articles that they selected (1.5.Q3; 2.5.Q3; 3.5.Q3). Group 3 Jay and Hugh were not aware that every talk that they chose to discuss was from 2014. Steven selected one talk for his group because he had recently rediscovered it and it was on his mind (1.5.Q3). Jay mentioned that many of the articles that they selected were to kill two birds with one stone, preparing for Principals Meeting, reviewing General Conference, recent inservice focus, and a system priority (3.5.Q3). Walter and Javier frequently selected handbook selections and book chapters because they wanted to focus on improving a specific teaching skill (4.5.Q3; 4.6.Q3). Steven and Leia also selected a talk because they wanted to improve the skill of helping their students to better understand (1.5.Q3). Jay and Hugh also took advantage of the flexible format and selected different talks to read and report what they found (3.5.Q3; See also Appendix A). Steven

selected another talk because it was being considered for use in some area training meetings and he was excited about it and wanted additional thoughts from Leia (1.5.Q3).

Results from article discussion. There was a large variety in the reasons that participants selected the talks and articles that they did. In the end those reasons for article selection also determined the results that each participant received from studying them.

For Walter and Javier the purpose of article selection was so they could have teacher development and skill improvement (4.5.Q2; 4.6.Q2). Walter and Javier both express that they felt that they had experienced an increase in their teaching skills regarding the context and content of the scriptures and the asking of questions (4.5.Q7; 4.6.Q6). Javier mentioned that his teaching skill increased because of a little tweaking to things that he was already doing (4.6.Q7). During one of their meetings Javier and Walter read and discussed some of these little things that needed tweaking in questions. Javier mentioned that learning to really ask good questions to students is the thing that has blessed his teaching more than anything else (4.4.6). Walter expressed that in his first year teaching he used to be annoyed when his mentor would suggest what he called nit-picky changes to the wording of his questions, but now understands that sometime just a few words in a question makes or breaks classroom discussions (4.4.7). Walter mentioned how the process works:

When you talk about questions I think that you are more prone to think about that in your lesson prep. Yeah, I mean I think that is typically the case in life, when we have our minds wrapped around a particular topic we tend to improve our ability to, in a particular way, or whatnot. Yeah, I think because of our conversations we were mindful of these issues and able to implement them in the classroom (4.5.Q7).

Javier said that he could see it happening for him in the classroom after the discussion as his students started to be able to build the bridge between the context of the scriptures and the content (4.6.Q6).

Hugh and Jay selected talks that didn't have teaching as their main topic, but instead focused on doctrine that would be helpful for teacher to teach (3.5.2). One of the reasons that Jay and Hugh chose doctrinal based talks was because of the encouragement of some recent local inservice to incorporate the words of the living prophet into their lesson, not to mention that this is one of the system priorities for all of S&I (3.5.Q7; LDS, 2014). Jay mentioned that because of these discussions with Hugh he started reading three to four additional talks from LDS leaders each week, and because of that he was much more aware of what they had been teaching, Hugh also agreed (3.5.Q6). By studying the talks individually and then sharing insights and thoughts one-on-one with each other Jay noticed that this excitement has influenced nearly every lesson he has taught since by either quoting, summarizing, showing a clip, giving a handout, or sharing a story from the living prophets (3.5.Q7). Hugh used one of the talks frequently in other teaching situations and concluded that being able to make connections from the words of the living prophets to the scriptures is a teaching skill, and that skill increased because of the conversations (3.5.Q7).

All of talks that Leia and Steven selected were on teaching and only one was selected to build a particular skill. Leia describe the reason that they selected talks was to become better teachers (1.5.Q2). Steven then said: "Another reason I think that there is value in it is that as you are going through it and you know you have to do it, there is a purpose in doing it, you are not just reading it and marking it. I think that you start to see questions, or wonder about things, and so it prepares you to learn, quite honestly from the other person" (1.5.Q2). Because Leia and

Steven used the talks to become better teachers their conversations had the most philosophical discussion about teaching. In their second discussion Steven and Leia had an in-depth conversation about the importance for teachers to provide scaffolding and framework to their lessons with a logical flow from scripture context to content (1.2.3). In their next meeting they discussed whether it was more important for a teacher to think about their own spirituality or the spirituality of their students (1.3.3). In that same meeting they discussed how their gospel message could become diluted because of the way they choose to live their lives (1.3.6). In their final meeting they determined that the only safety they can provide for their students is the safety that the students build within themselves (1.4.1). In her exit interview Leia mentioned that the skill that she felt improved was to be able to look at the students and trust them more (1.5.Q7). That is a philosophical change that she experienced. Steven mentioned that he is working on the “skill to teach the scriptures versus using the scriptures to teach. It changes the focus. It changes the questions that you ask” (1.5.Q7).

Peyton said that the article section portion of the structure gave them a direction to head in as well exposure to some smart people talking about smart things. This helped them have smarter conversations (2.5.2). Cal and Peyton both agreed that the discussion of articles didn't show evidence in their classroom teaching, but the ideas that they discovered and talked about were on their minds for days, and some for weeks (2.5.Q6). Peyton said that the difference he felt in his classroom was not in his teaching, but just in how he approached his students with more faith, hope, and charity (2.5.Q7). Cal stated that when Peyton and he studied the section in the handbook about lesson preparation that he changed the way he did a few things (2.5.Q7). Peyton has been keeping a teaching journal all year and he said that after they studied the handbook he noticed that his entries were meatier (2.5.Q7).

Giving and receiving feedback on lesson plans becomes lesson discussions. The giving and receiving feedback on lesson plans was an important part of the structure to help improve regular lessons, and give instructors an opportunity to discuss their practices and to explain the philosophical choices behind those practices, making them more thoughtful in choosing both what to teach and how.

The exchange of lesson plans. I attended and observed nine out of the fifteen total conversations that were held. In my observations I didn't see a single lesson plan exchanged in its entirety. This was the most difficult part of the structure for the participants to implement. They understood that they needed to exchange lesson plans. I as the researcher chose not to push them on this issue. Thus, feedback on lesson plans turned into discussions about lessons. Cal explained to Peyton that he doesn't really write down, or type out a lesson plan, but instead uses his PowerPoint slides (2.2.6). Peyton responded back that he prefers to write his lesson plans down on sticky notes and then disregard them following his lesson, forcing him to reinvest himself in the material each time he teaches (2.2.6). Steven mentioned that he felt a little bad because in his current assignment he is not required to teach a lesson each day, so it didn't totally apply to him (1.5.Q4). Walter had a written lesson plan prepared for each time, but his lesson plans were only discussed and not shared (4.5.Q4).

Lesson discussion helps with content mastery. When lessons were discussed one of two things were discussed. The participants spent a significant portion of the time discussing and trying to understand the content of the scriptures that would make up the lesson block that they would teach. Leia mentioned at three different points during her interview that what she really appreciated learning was how to take a broader view of the whole scripture block and see how there was a logical flow to the principles in the content (1.5.Q4; 1.5.Q5; 1.5.Q6). One of the

places where this is obvious in the discussions is when Leia asked Steven to help her see the broader view on not just one lesson, but the next four lessons (1.3.9-10). On another occasion Leia was not having any luck in preparing D&C 35. Steven hadn't read it so they went through it together discovering the intent of the author and looking for a broader perspective (1.4.2).

Peyton had an experience with Cal early on where he was struggling to find how to teach a very large scripture block. Peyton said:

The lesson that we discussed [of] mine went [in a] completely different direction. Well I didn't even have the direction that I needed until discussed it so that was valuable for me, just because I got to see what another teacher had done, and not just had thought about doing. So that was good (2.5.Q4).

Cal disclosed that after that experience he wrote down more in his preparation, because he knew Peyton would ask him for ideas. Cal said: "I don't know if I was more prepared to teach it, but I was more prepared to share about it, if that makes sense." (2.5.Q4).

Hugh and Jay's conversations were some of the most enjoyable for me as an observer. At one point there was such a great discussion of the scriptures that I forgot to take notes because I was just following along with them (3.1.2). The quality of Jay and Hugh's discussions is evident in several places throughout their discussions (3.1.4; 3.3.4). At one point Jay shared a story that he had shared in class from the curriculum, Hugh cried out "Oh, I totally forgot to mention Mary Whitmer, I should do that" (3.1.3). They then looked at the curriculum together to discover other stories. Later during the interview Hugh mentioned that moment as a great lesson:

One thing that I learned is that I may try my best to teach something and I may totally miss a really good principle or teaching thing, and one that I probably shouldn't have

missed. I remember something that Jay introduced into one of his lessons that I thought to myself ‘Oh my goodness I need to go back and reteach that lesson.’ So that helped me to see that I need to be really careful about covering the important content of a block (3.5.Q4).

Hugh later mentioned that “I just worked harder to know the block and to know the principles of the block, because after my conversations with Jay” Jay also agreed saying “I would echo that motivation, like just feeling more motivated to dig deeper into things was a cool byproduct of all of it.” (3.5.Q6).

In addition to feeling motivated to study harder because of their lesson discussions there is an enjoyment that comes from learning from each other and seeing different insights (1.5.Q1; 1.5.Q2; 4.5.Q9). Jay may have said it the best during the interviews:

I think for me I really loved being behind Hugh on pacing, because I felt like a student when Hugh would teach and talk about his lessons I could feel the Holy Ghost honestly teaching me stuff that I didn’t even teach the students. It was stuff from the block that I didn’t ever emphasize or learn cause I thought he covered stuff so clearly and deeply that there is no way I can duplicate this in the classroom. But, that for me was the best part of giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week number one having Hugh’s eyes on what I was doing, but also for me to take time to be a student and listen and really feel. I remember one day were there was, I don’t even remember what block, it was one of the early blocks in the 17 or 20’s in there, there was just a lot of additional prophetic commentary coming to my mind of ways that it connected in and I planned the lesson the next day and I had it on my notes. I didn’t ever teach it to students it didn’t fit in when it

came down to it, but that was a cool learning experience from me on an individual level (3.5.Q4).

When teachers discuss what they have or will teach it sparks the joy of learning and rekindles their love of the subject.

Lesson discussion helps with the how of teaching. The most common element in all of the discussions that I saw was teachers discussing and exchanging ideas on how to present information to students (1.3.10; 1.4.2; 2.2.7; 2.3.1; 3.1.4; 4.2.4; 4.2.5; 4.2.8; 4.4.9; 4.4.10). A few of the teachers described this as helpful because preparing a lesson day after day it is easy to fall into ruts (1.5.Q4; 4.5.Q4). Walter said: “It is good to discuss specific questions, or the wording of specific questions. I don’t know, I think that my lessons are always better if I get to discuss them with somebody else” (4.5.Q4). Later he said:

There was an accountability that existed there, cause I knew that we would have a discussion. I knew that I need to be prepared. Honestly the better prepared, the more, further out, you are with lessons, the better prepared, the better they seem to have been. Conversations about lesson planning not only effect the preparation, but also the execution of the lesson I believe (4.5.Q5).

Walter also described how preparation and discussing about how you are going to teach with someone else helps.

The better prepared you are . . . obviously the better the teaching is goes in the classroom, having experienced it the other way. More success in the classroom, more confidence in the classroom, greater confidence in being able to teach the intent of the block and answering the questions that the students have and have the understanding for yourself (4.5.Q6).

The discussion of how you are going to teach something with another teacher will only help the classroom experience go better.

Walter and Javier are the only group that got to meet face-to-face for one of their meetings. Walter had been pulled into an apprentice seminar and was allowed to go and watch Javier teach a class. Javier said that he and Walter had struggled to really talk about lesson plans, but:

when he came and observed me. That feedback was priceless because after that I started doing the content different, and I was getting way more from my students. Students that were having a hard, that same class that Walter observed and I did it different I was getting some great participation out of that, because of the feedback that I got from Walter (4.6.Q4).

Javier also said that because of this feedback on how he was using the context to content he spent more time on it in lesson preparation, and in time he started to notice the incremental difference it made in his students (4.6.Q5).

Steven has spent years reviewing lesson plans and giving feedback with another colleague he explained what that does over time by saying:

I think that it expands the preparation too more than one, and it allows you to, I don't even know if I know how to, what I'm trying to say here. You are not alone in the preparation of it, and it creates this ability that you start to think and ponder and you're bouncing it off. So there is a really long answer. I think that it improves inspiration. Now the question would be 'How does it improve it?' I think that you become a little more loyal to the curriculum. I think that you become a little more if you are doing it right and you are talking back and forth it drives you to greater revelation. I think it once

again solidifies a language that you can speak, but that is kind of a hard thing to measure, because the impact that it has on your lesson planning is huge. At least it was for me (1.5.Q5).

The problem of giving and receiving feedback on lessons is one that every teacher has experienced before, and will in no doubt experience again. This happened to Jay one week while he was listening to one of Hugh lessons. He explains:

I took copious notes on one and I did the stupid thing that we have all done before ‘Ah sweet this lesson is going to be planned and I’ve got this down.’ I came back to the notes after the weekend and I was like ‘Ah, crap this doesn’t fit in.’, or ‘This isn’t right.’ or ‘How am I supposed to do this?’ One of those first meetings I thought ‘Oh, this is going to be so rich. I’m going to have these lessons down and I’m going to be saving on my prep time.’ In reality I learned that it was more for me. It wasn’t stuff that I was going to translate to the youth it was cool stuff for me to learn. And, to have in my head, so that when the Spirit would recall it I could bring it, but I couldn’t just duplicate it or copy it (3.5.Q5).

It is almost as if talking about lesson plans with another teacher doesn’t prepare you to teach the same lesson, but to be prepared to teach another lesson further down the line.

One thing that greatly benefitted the participants in this study as they discussed lesson plans was a shared curriculum. This provides larger amounts of time to be spent discussing the content of the subject and the methods that will be used during instruction, rather than having to translate or explain anything. Having a different subject is a complaint I hear frequently from Rod Hurd a public educator who dislikes the fact that the administrator providing him feedback knows very little about his subject and curriculum (Personal Communication, November 26,

2012). This benefit can be seen in the discussion of the participants when they refer to any scripture reference. One moment that demonstrates this is when Cal showed Peyton the readiness activity in the curriculum for D&C 20 (2.2.4). Another occurred when Jay took Hugh to the curriculum manual to show him some of the great stories that he missed (3.1.3). I think Steven puts it well when he says:

I think that there is a natural unity that comes in when you have worked on the same thing. So you are thinking the same thoughts, when you've prepared before that or at least gone through it. I like the fact that revelation can strike in two different places on one thing that will help come together. The other thing, I think it builds a common language, a focus, a bank of terminology, if you can use that phrase that allows you to have conversations, in this case it is in prophetic language. There is power that comes from that (1.5.Q2).

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. The purpose of the ideas, concerns, and questions, and problems section was to give participants the opportunity to divert from the common misconception that teachers are supposed to be able to handle all of problems that they face (Crow, 2008). Walter put it this way:

My favorite was the discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems Because the discussion of ideas and concerns, questions, problems are things that are the forefront of our mind in our teaching, things that we are concerned about and that we want to resolve and implement (4.5.Q9).

The discussion of these issues does not usually result in solutions, because many of the problems are very complex, not very much is known, or more time and information is needed. The various issues discussed throughout the conversations have been divided into categories.

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems about the 2014-15 S&I system priorities. The 2014-15 S&I system priorities are as follows:

- Strengthen Unity: Harmonize our efforts with prophetic priorities and the direction of those appointed to lead us.
- Seek Truth: Help students be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and discern truth from error.
- Elevate Learning: Provide opportunities and establish expectations that inspire meaningful experiences with the word of God.
- Reach One More: Counsel with priesthood leaders to increase enrollment, attendance, and completion; then act on the direction received (LDS, 2014b).

Three out of the four priorities were specifically discussed by the participants during their conversations, only reach one more was not specifically addressed. The fact that there was discussion about how to achieve or understand the priorities shows that there is progress with the first priority listed, and that the priorities have been effectively trickled down through area administration to the local level.

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems relating to students. These issues were among the most touching and devastating. Leia was very excited to have a chance to add a student to her tiny numbers, even if it is a student that the school doesn't want at all (1.3.8). Her excitement continued weeks later as she shared about the progress of that student (1.5.Q8). Javier described his discouragement with the apathy of his former students as he becomes their teacher once more (4.4.5; 4.5.Q8; 4.6.Q8). Walter is currently facing a challenge by having a student who doesn't want to be in The Church, let alone in his class. He is only there because his mother bribes him, and the young man has asked Walter not to try to engage him in class in any

way (4.4.1). The Gospel teaching and learning handbook (LDS, 2012) simply states: “We teach students” (p.x). That is a reminder that whatever teachers do in their preparation, presentation, or professional conversation, the students are the reason that we are employed.

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems about scheduling. These types of conversations were about the different and varying types of schedules that teachers have; ranging from block or A/B, 90 minute, 70 minute, 50 minute, 35 minute, and early out Fridays. This may have been one of the most highly normalized sections of the whole discussion (2.2.5). The other issue that fit into this category was pacing, or the rate at which a seminary teacher makes their way through whatever particular book they are studying that year (2.2.2; 3.3.6; 4.4.11).

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems about technology. This topic has become a popular due to a recent talk from Elder David A. Bednar (2014) asked Church members to use technology and specifically social media to flood the earth with righteous messages. This talk was even selected by Jay and Hugh for the first week discussion. Teachers struggle teaching student how to properly use their devices (4.2.6). Technology also adds an interesting element to the discussion when it is the primary means by which these discussions were taking place. Most of the talk involving technology was about the WebEx system and other electronic devices teachers use in their employment (2.3.4; 2.5.Q10; 2.5.Q12; 3.5.Q8; 4.6.Q10). These conversations also revealed that distance or dislike of faculty is no longer a reason not to participate in meaningful collaboration because of the ease and availability of technology to collapse distances.

The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems relating to personal matters. When discussing issues it is only natural that personal issues will arise. This happened

in every single conversation. There might only be concern if it did not. This is one of the greatest benefits from participating in these types of discussions, you become friends. When people become trusting, vulnerable, loyal, friends every benefit and element of these conversations is enhanced a hundred fold. Steven put it well when he said:

I think you have President Packer's statement "Revelation is scattered among us" this becomes apparent and true through this. Not to mention the fact that you build relationships. You gain a better perspective and appreciation, and love for those that you are around and serving with. As far as my experience with it I like it. It makes me better. It causes me to think, to evaluate where I need to be a little bit better (1.5.Q1).

This concludes the review of the major themes found in the structure of the study and the sections of discussing articles, lesson discussion, and questions, concerns, and problems. This benefit alone should motivate teachers to participate in collaborative discussions as a means to overcome isolation and prevent burnout.

Other Themes

During the data analysis of the field notes and exit interview transcripts other themes begin to emerge. They will be discussed in the following section with implementations to be mentioned in a later section.

Passion. All of the groups expressed a deeper passion, motivation, and increased desire to perform better and improve (1.5.Q4; 3.3.5; 4.1.Q1). The relationship between Jay and Hugh best demonstrated what can happen when both participants really put forth effort to engage in a professional conversation. Hugh describes this by saying:

You know for me, one of the most pleasant things about this was to get to know what Jay was doing in his personal study and preparation to teach. I was excited to see what he

was excited about. The benefit of the time he has dedicated to personally study the Doctrine and Covenants and how it has contributed to his teaching. That was so inspiring to hear him say that, you know, and just the effort and work that is going into this was inspiring and motivating to me because, and just kind of lift my sights and vision to, you know, to what is being done and, by another teacher and the character and the commitment of another teacher was refreshing and motivating. Which I think for me that was probably the top thing that I got from this experience (3.5.Q1).

Several times throughout the interview they mentioned that what made the experience rewarding was that their personal effort resulted in an incredible combined experience (3.5.Q9; 3.5.Q11; 3.5.Q12). Their passion and excitement was so contagious that it made its way into several observer notes:

This was an in depth conversation about language of the scripture block. Jay was honestly excited about what Hugh shared, and Hugh was delighted to have someone to teach the full measure of what he had discovered in his personal study (3.1.2).

This whole section is a wonderful example of the advantages of having two professionals who have an in depth expertise in the scriptures participate in a wonderful back and forth discussion (3.3.4).

Jay's passion and excitement has become infectious Hugh wants to do better in his personal study, which as Jay pointed out will decrease his prep time and also help him teach with more passion. As a side note, it made me want to do the same (3.3.8).

It appears that a teacher can increase their passion and the passion of others if they are willing to put forth personal effort, and share.

The effect of regional inservice. One thing that surprised me was the frequent referrals to regional inservice training that were repeatedly being brought up by each of the different groups (1.3.5; 1.5.Q3; 2.2.1; 2.5.Q3; 3.5.7; 4.2.1; 4.4.9). The researcher is a member of the Area Training Council responsible for the production and instruction of regional inservice materials. It was very exciting to hear. Judith Little explained a lesson that she learned doing many years of research “External professional development was a real resource for teacher communities that were making progress. So that was one lesson for me” (Crow, 2008, p.57). It would appear that there is now more evidence to support this claim.

Challenges to holding meetings. There are no noteworthy findings indicating that it is significantly difficult to participate in these professional discussions. There are occasional challenges, but many of them are common with other life living responsibilities, the one exception is the dependence upon working Internet, phone, and computer service. Isolated locations like those in this study generally also have weaker connections.

Time and effort versus benefit. Javier described the relationship as low time and effort and high benefit (4.6.Q11). All of the other participants agreed that the time and effort to participate was worth the benefit that they received. Teachers must feel that the benefit that they receive is worth more than what they could accomplish on an individual level given the same time (Crow, 2008). Speaking about such meetings Steven said:

These weekly conversations that we have had and that I've had over time the hour or hour and a half, or whatever it took. Easily that time period during the week changed my career. There is no doubt. As far as building my ability, building my confidence, building my vision, it is perhaps the single greatest thing that has taken place, and the weekly things that we have done. Whether you want to call it inservice or talk

discussion, or whatever it is that you want to call it have changed my career, have changed my ability. I don't know how else to say that. It probably, in fact there is no probably these conversations have been worth more than any other training or inservice that I have ever been involved in (1.5.Q11).

The researcher is of the same opinion, and that is the reason why this topic has been pursued.

Accountability. Each of the participants described some level of accountability that they felt by participating in these discussions. The collaborative structure created a minor stress to read the selected article, prepare a lesson, or at least become familiar with the scripture block (2.5.Q2; 4.5.Q5). This accountability to each other caused the participants to do things that they normally would not do (2.5.Q1). Javier described it as though each week the hassle of preparation would give way to insights and discoveries that got better with each conversation (4.6.Q2).

Implications

Structure

There must be a structure to professional discussions between teachers. Without a portion of the structure being devoted to discussing the philosophical nature of teaching, teachers will only discuss quick tips and tricks, focusing only on the how of teaching. The structure must also allow for teachers to spend time discussing the content of their subject and exchange not only ideas on teaching practices, but experiences, and feelings. This depth of discussion will not come unless there is a consistent structure that allows for collaborative conversations and not just calendar, budget, and school policy.

Article

When teachers select an article, talk, handbook section, book chapter, or any other resource for discussion with a colleague, it is the reason the article is selected that will determine what the results of studying it will be. If a teacher is seeking to improve a skill, then they will find skills improved. If a teacher is looking for scriptural insights, that is what they will discover. The thoughtful selection of why one is studying an article is more important than the thoughtful selection of which article to study.

Lesson Discussions

If teachers will simply discuss what they are going to teach with each other, that discussion will increase the teacher's motivation to dig deeper into their own subject. They will become more thoughtful in their own lesson planning. They will also experience greater enjoyment in both the preparation, and presentation of their subject material.

Shared Curriculum

The shared subject and curriculum materials that seminary teachers have in common provide the perfect elements for religious educators to engage in professional conversations with each other. This shared curriculum exists on a smaller scale in an institute setting.

2014-15 System Priorities

The 2014-15 System Priorities for S&I will be discussed by teachers if they are given frequent opportunities to converse with each other. Throughout these conversations teachers will try to understand, question, and seek different ways to implement them.

Passion

When a teacher puts forth effort to prepare well, the product produced is passion. Personal preparation produces passion for learning, teaching, subject, teaching methods, sharing, and students learning.

Regional Inservice

If teachers are given frequent opportunities to discuss teaching then the training that they receive at Regional Inservice meetings will continue to be discussed with the intent to implementation the principles, or practices that were presented.

Gains vs. Losses

Teachers who participate in frequent discussions with their colleagues about teaching experience a greater gain for their efforts in the end than any personal loss of time or effort. There is an exponential growth that comes from the discussions.

Conclusion

I feel personally indebted to the difference that conversations about teaching have made in my professional and personal life. I will let the data gathered be sufficient. When asked if he had any more thoughts on the discussions Steven said:

It is just a great experience. I don't know. There is just value in it, there is value in consistency, there is value in little pieces. There is value in talking about teaching. The more you talk about it the more it becomes a part of you, and it works its way into you. I find it really difficult to, and I'm speaking religiously here as far as from the religious perspective. I find it really difficult for a teacher to ever claim that they are a teacher if they haven't talked about teaching. I think that the only way that you can become a real teacher is to spend time talking and wrestling with teaching. I just don't know how else to say that. Those conversations, anyone can get a certificate to teach, really, you pass a class, fill out some work sheets and you can get a certificate to teach, but I'm not sure everybody becomes a teacher. That comes at least in religious education by consistent discussion of teaching (1.5.Q12).

Leia agreed, and so do I.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Groups, Date of Meetings, and Articles Selected for Discussion

Group 1. Steven & Leia

Meeting & Date	Article/Talk/Book/Conference Discussed
1.1 September 25, 2014	Webb, C. H. (2014). An Invitation to Study the Doctrine and Covenants. <i>Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast 5 June</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
1.2 October 2, 2014	Oscarson, B. (2014). Greater Expectations, <i>Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast 5 August</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
1.3 October 8, 2014	Benson, E. T. (1976). The Gospel Teacher and His Message. <i>Address to CES Religious Educators 17 September</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
1.4 October 27, 2014	Bednar, D. A. (1998) Teach Them to Understand. <i>Ricks College Campus Education Week Devotional, June 4, 1998</i> , ID: Brigham Young University-Idaho.

1.5 October 27, 2014	Exit Interview.
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Group 2. Peyton & Cal

Meeting & Date	Article/Talk/Book/Conference Discussed
2.1 Scheduling Conflict, never met.	Webb, C. H. (2014). An Invitation to Study the Doctrine and Covenants. <i>Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast 5 June</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2.2 October 9, 2014	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2014 October 4-5). <i>General Conference</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2.3 October 14, 2014	Anderson, N. (2014). A Classroom of Faith, Hope, and Charity. <i>Evening with a General Authority, February 28</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2.4 October 23, 2014	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2012). Preparing to Teach 4. In. <i>Gospel Teaching and Learning: A</i>

	<i>Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion.</i> Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2.5 October 29, 2014	Exit Interview.

Group 3. Jay & Hugh

Meeting & Date	Article/Talk/Book/Conference Discussed
3.1 September 25, 2014	Bednar, D.A. (2014). To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood. <i>Campus Education Week at Brigham Young University 19 August.</i> Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University.
3.2 October 3, 2014	Oaks, D. H. (2014). The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood. <i>Ensign</i> May, 49-52. Hallstrom, D. L. (2014). What Manner of Men?. <i>Ensign</i> May, 53-55.
3.3 October 10, 2014	Monson, T. (2014). Guided Safely Home. <i>General Conference October 4.</i> Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hamula, J. (2014). The Sacrament and The Atonement. <i>General Conference October 5.</i> Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of

	Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
3.4 October 24, 2014	Holland, J.R. (2014). Living After the Manner of Happiness. <i>Brigham Young University-Idaho Devotional September 23, 2014</i> , ID: Brigham Young University-Idaho.
3.5 October 24, 2014	Exit Interview.

Group 4. Walter & Javier

Meeting & Date	Article/Talk/Book/Conference Discussed
4.1 September 25, 2014	Packer, Boyd K. (1991). <i>Teach Ye Diligently</i> (chapter 26). Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.
4.2 October 2, 2014	Packer, Boyd K. (1991). <i>Teach Ye Diligently</i> (chapter 26). Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.
4.3 October 9, 2014 Meet in person in Price.	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2012). Understanding the Context and Content of the Scriptures and the Words of the Prophets, p.23-26. In. <i>Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

	Saints.
4.4 October 23, 2014	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2012). Questions, p.58-62. In. <i>Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4.5 October 30, 2014	Exit Interview with Walter.
4.6 October 31, 2014	Exit Interview with Javier.

Appendix B. Field Notes from Group Discussions

Group 1. Steven & Leia

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
1.2 October 2, 2014 4:30-5:15	Oscarson, B. (2014). Greater Expectations, <i>Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast 5 August</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Observations	Observer's Comments
1.2.1 They were talking about the new doctrinal assessment. Steven had his 12-year-old take the assessment. He only struggled with the scripture mastery parts. If they don't teach the scripture mastery then there are holes in their doctrinal understanding.	The Doctrinal Assessment is a new requirement for receiving credit in seminary. The nine basic doctrines and 25 scripture mastery are key in the assessment. Steven made the point that if students don't understand the scripture mastery there are holes in their doctrinal understanding and therefore they might struggle with the assessment.
1.2.2 They talked very specific about the different text of the talk that they had. "We need . . .you need" Expect more of the students and expect more of the teacher.	As these two teachers really spent time discussing and examining the talk that they chose to read it became apparent that they were discovering that more is expected of them as teachers if they are going to expect more from

	<p>their students.</p>
<p>1.2.3 As Steven watches classes the students are often unguided “read this and write down anything that stands out.” We have teachers who send out the reading and then when they come to class they just ask, “what did you find.” There needs to be some kind of framework with it. Leia said they need to understand context to understand content. She shared an example of a student who drove her crazy but he understood the context and explained it. Steven shared about how a teacher that he watched today didn’t use context to understand the content.</p>	<p>This is a great discussion about how important the logical flow is of understanding the context of the scriptures will lead a teacher to help their students search the content to discover principles and doctrines. A teacher that doesn’t understand the context will ask a very unguided search question, but a teacher who understands the context will ask a guiding question that will unlock the content for the students. This discussion applies daily in the classroom of scripture study. Understanding of the context and content is the first fundamental in teaching a lesson.</p>
<p>1.2.4 They referenced 2 different books that they had been reading. Steven shared a story about attending conference and being at Deseret Book and listening to ordaining women and then bought the Henry B. Eyring book. President Monson never tales a story without a purpose.</p>	<p>These two teachers are passionate learners, and not content to just teach their subject. They both actively read additional materials to help them have a better understanding. This creates in them a passion to share what they are learning with each other.</p>

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
1.3 October 8, 2014 3:30-4:20	Benson, E. T. (1976). <i>The Gospel Teacher and His Message. Address to CES Religious Educators 17 September</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Observations	Observer's Comments
1.3.1 They discussed the topic of inoculation of students with difficult doctrines. A document that outlined possible spots in the D&C where these topics could be discussed was shared and the pros and cons were discussed. There was good discussion about who would get it.	Steven the Assistant Area Director for the Utah Are shared with Leia a document that the area was considering sending out to the teachers and he asked Leia what she thought about it. This was a huge act of trust and a great example of listening. Ultimately the area did exactly what Leia suggested. That probably boosted her confidence.
1.3.2 Discussion of the article "The Gospel Teacher and His Message" by President Benson. They discussed the role that our spouses play in the teaching that we are involved in. Prepare yourself spiritually, and teach only the doctrine. Steven mentioned that this talk is very similar to the "Charted	Much of this discussion centers on the idea that what we are and what we teach matters more than how we teach it. Personal morals, relationships, and preparation determine our success more that great methods or skills. What you are as a teacher will be remembered long after what you have taught has been

Course”.	<p>forgotten.</p> <p>“The Chartered Course” is the foundational document for S&I religious education.</p>
<p>1.3.3 Steven asked “When it comes to Seminary teachers do we spend more time worrying about our own spirituality or about the youth that we teach?” The talk then talked about Enos and Alma, that when they were assured of their own spirituality they spent all their time focusing on the welfare of others.</p>	<p>The question that Steven is posing is not about method or skill of teaching, but about the basic philosophy of a teacher. Should the teacher care more about the spirituality of their students than themselves? He then used several scripture references to describe the pattern that he found. This is the type of deep thinking that often teachers don’t have the opportunity to discuss with other colleagues.</p>
<p>1.3.5 The primary sources that we teach are the scriptures and the words of the prophets. Leia talked about ways to better use the Conference talks in classroom teaching, even use their stories rather than our own.</p>	<p>This is a reference to applying some resent training in a regional inservice meeting.</p>
<p>1.3. 6 “Be careful of relying on your secular training and vocabulary that you dilute the gospel message. Live as you teach you represent the 1st Presidency, dress, grooming, and language. Do not live on the fringes”</p>	<p>While there are many things that we have in common with public education there are some fundamental differences on our employee standards of conduct.</p>

<p>(Benson, 1976 p.8). Steven: “Good reminder to me of how to live and teach.”</p>	
<p>1.3.7 Steven discussed that he might want to send this out the apprentice teachers. Steven shared with Leia the experience of reading every talk given to CES/S&I with another colleague, and how it took them a year.</p>	<p>Again Steven included Leia in a discussion about an administration decision. This lets her know that he values her opinion, and makes a lone teacher feel included in the bigger program.</p>
<p>1.3.8 Leia told Steven about a new student that she just got enrolled. He is big and hairy, 11th grader. The principal told her that he was sorry for bringing him into seminary. Leia talked about some of the questions that he is asking and how the other students are responding. Steven quoted E. Holland “If you can’t teach them today, love them, and maybe you can teach them tomorrow.</p>	<p>Steven normalized Leia concern and also suggested a specific principle to help her in the situation. Leia replied in a hopeful manner and sounded encouraged.</p>
<p>1.3.9 Leia is teaching D&C 22-23. She asked a question about a readiness (a role play) for D&C 22 that is suggested in the manual. Steven shared some thoughts about how it worked because he has seen a couple of other classes. Steven shared that in one class one of the students didn’t know if he was baptized, at</p>	<p>Leia repeatedly seeks counsel and guidance this shows how she is willing to be vulnerable to improve her teaching and knowledge. Steven was able to draw on his experience watching classes to describe how to do it well and what to watch out for.</p>

<p>the first but by the end of the role-play concluded that he was, but never Confirmed a Member.</p>	
<p>1.3.10 For D&C 23 Leia talked about sharing brief biographies about each of the five people mentioned in the section. Steven wanted to make sure that she gets to the point that the Lord knows what we will face in the future. Steven suggested a couple of questions that Leia could ask. “If the Lord was going to give counsel to you, what do you think he would say?” They talked about Samuel and that he is not called to preach right now, but he will be in two months. “What difference can two months make?” “What effect will the next two months have on you?” They went ahead and talked about D&C 24-26, and D& C 25 important for women and how important they are in the Church. They discussed the video clip options that are available for section 25 and that are on the approved list for S&I.</p>	<p>Leia didn’t just discuss one lesson she talked to Steven about the next three lessons that she had and received several little details that would improve, but not change her lesson. Steven often offered up a great question, or a variety idea, like a video clip, which Leia had forgotten about. This section of the discussion is wonderful to show how much Leia is utilizing the discussion to help her in the classroom. This whole discussion is one of the best it covered philosophical questions and ideas about teaching, and also incorporated everyday methods and tactics for teaching. I believe that this is the case because Steven has participated for years in similar discussions on a weekly basis and really helped guide the conversation.</p>
<p>1.4 October 27, 2014 3:30-4:15</p>	<p>Bednar, D. A. (1998) Teach Them to</p>

	<p>Understand. <i>Ricks College Campus Education Week Devotional, June 4, 1998</i>, ID: Brigham Young University-Idaho.</p>
<p>1.4.1 “In the Church we are really good at teaching information, but not at teaching people to understand” (Steven). “The only safety that our children have in the world in which we live is what they have built within themselves. They must be able to stand with in themselves. If they know the why they will be able to stand” (Marion G. Romney).</p> <p>Steven: “As teachers I think that we try really hard to build it with in them, rather than let them build it with in themselves. One of the purposes of this talk is to help us know the materials so that we can help students build within themselves.”</p> <p>Leia “The next paragraph ‘We do not spend as much time with the why as we need to’”.</p> <p>Steven: “How well do you think we teach the why?”</p> <p>Leia: “I don’t know, I thought I was doing well</p>	<p>This is a great general principle stated by Steven, which hints at a very deep philosophical idea, about teacher only presenting information, and not helping students gain understanding.</p> <p>This is a fundamental question of teaching. What exactly is the role of a teacher? The answer to this question will drastically alter the way things are done in a classroom, and how students are addressed. This whole discussion is another evidence that it is beneficial for teachers to discuss articles that make them think about the reason they are doing what they are doing. Leia starts to understand that what she thought about teaching needs to be reexamined and evaluated.</p>

<p>until I started to read this talk.”</p> <p>Steven: “I think Dave and Chad Webb have done a very good job of helping us to wrestle with this topic. How well is this getting into our classrooms?”</p> <p>Leia: “I could do better.” “Teach the children/students to understand, understand, understand, I don’t think I did it. I’m going to do a better job of helping students understand.”</p>	<p>Steven makes a connection that this is what leaders have been trying to get us to do for a while now. If teachers have a clear understanding of why they are teaching the way they are it will help their practices in the classroom better to match up to the principles that they believe about teaching.</p> <p>Leia, now understanding a principle about teaching wants to improve.</p>
<p>1.4.2 Leia: “Got any thoughts on D&C 35, I haven’t given any thought to it yet. I’ve read through it. I could teach them some things that I’ve learned, but I haven’t given any thoughts about what is going to change them in here.”</p> <p>Steven hadn’t looked at D&C 35. He offered one little thought “becoming sons and daughters of God.” Leia then went to the curriculum and started reading it through.</p> <p>Steven asked about what the curriculum said, and Leia broke down the three sections.</p>	<p>Leia has really learned to rely on Steven for helping her see how the principles of the scriptures can lead to greater application in the lives of the students. She is not thinking about teaching the scriptures; she is focused on changing her students, and helping them live these principles.</p> <p>Here is a benefit of having a shared curriculum, not only in what they teach, but also in the manual that helps them understand the how. I think that Leia and Steven could have spent a little more time here on trying to understand the why of the section before they jumped into the how.</p>

<p>They spoke a little about the greater work that God had yet for Sidney Rigdon to do. Steven: “We have promised God in the premortal life we would do this work, and just in case we missed it we recommitted to do this at baptism, when we get the priesthood, and when we go to the temple.”</p> <p>Leia “We are commanded to keep all the commandments.”</p> <p>Steven: “This is when Sidney is called to be scribe.”</p> <p>Leia: “Sidney was prepared before he had ever heard of the Church, by teaching people about the bible, like John.”</p> <p>Steven: “Which gets back to us? What has the Lord been preparing you to do? Holy Ghost, miracles, 2nd coming, scribe, study scriptures, support the prophet. Build Zion.”</p>	<p>I love the way that Leia and Steven start to work through the section together. First identifying a principle and then talking about how it works or is manifest in our personal lives. This process is the same type of process that we want students to go through. If we are always in our offices separated from others we may forget how this works. This discussion also helps both of them develop a better understanding of the context and content of their subject. This deepening of understanding will better help them be able to logically put together the lesson.</p>
<p>1.4.3 Steven: “Did you see the two new articles that the Church put out, and the video about garments?”</p> <p>Leia: “Yeah,</p>	<p>This question by Steven is asked because it reflects ongoing recognition with one of the 2014-15 system priorities of S&I to help students seek truth. This summer such articles as the ones mentioned above were the object of</p>

	<p>several cluster meeting to become familiar with content that some find destroy faith in the Church.</p>
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Group 2. Peyton & Cal

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
<p>2.2 October 9, 2014 3:00-4:00</p>	<p>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2014 October 4-5). <i>General Conference</i>. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.</p>
Observations	Observer’s Comments
<p>2.2.1 Peyton showed a document that he and his region are working on to better understand how they can use the words of the prophets from General Conference in class. Peyton asked “How can we better use the words of the prophets in class?” Cal mentioned his Bluetooth shower devise and how that nearly every day a talk that he listened to gets used in class.</p> <p>Peyton “It seems that students are using the</p>	<p>Again this is a response to regional in-service training. At first it would appear that Cal is not answering Peyton’s question but Cal identified how his personal commitment to understanding the words of the prophets spills over into his classroom teaching, because their stories and examples are fresh on his mind.</p>

<p>prophets and quoting from them more.” Cal “I think that is the use of electronics.” A talk from the 12 Apostles = 15-20 minute shower for Cal, a talk from a 70, or other leader = 10-12 minute shower. Peyton’s showers are about 24 minutes.</p> <p>Peyton “I set a goal before conference to go through every talk, and I was always grabbing the Ensign during class to share things from what I had learned.”</p>	<p>This is a great example of trust and fun between two teachers as they talk.</p> <p>Peyton and Cal are using the same strategy for using the talks in class. They are acquiring the material and then dispensing it to the students. Peyton’s question hints that so are his students.</p>
<p>2.2.2 Peyton “What else are you doing?”</p> <p>Cal “I really struggle keeping up with the curriculum. I want to tell the stories, I can’t move through a section without giving the background & stories. So, I’m always fighting the pacing guide. So when I hear Kelly Haws say use the brethren, I just don’t know how.”</p> <p>Peyton “I’m like you; I’m just battling how to do it.” “There are a lot of prophet’s quotes in the curriculum.” “How do we inspire more reading and studying of the conference talks?”</p> <p>Cal shared about “Harassment from texting, after about 2 months and youth teacher would</p>	<p>Here both teachers are admitting that they don’t really know how to implement the counsel that they have received. They are wrestling with options and seeking for ideas.</p> <p>This is one of the real values of discussing how to teach with another teacher, you present some ideas and they do also. This discussion is causing the teachers to think deeply about teaching better.</p> <p>There is also a great moment of honesty when both teachers admit that they struggle keeping up with the pacing guide.</p>

<p>be sending the text out on what talk to read.”</p>	
<p>2.2.3 Phone call interruption.</p>	<p>This phone call that lasted for about 3 minutes really killed the discussion about how to improve the student’s conference reading. They never returned to this discussion.</p>
<p>2.2.4 They are both on D&C 20. Cal “I like the ‘We know that . . .’ in the curriculum I thought that it was a good readiness. I also liked the Oak’s quote.” Cal walked through: 8-17 and identified what the things are that we know.</p>	<p>The benefit of having a shared curriculum and teaching the same subjects is that there is very little that has to be explained. Peyton and Cal also have a shared teaching vocabulary; they can say “readiness” and instantly understand how that teaching term applies.</p>
<p>2.2.5 Cal is on the A/B schedule, he has taught this most of this career. Peyton is on a 10 period schedule. Cal expressed his sympathy to Peyton for trying to get through everything in that amount of time. Peyton also has short Fridays were they are out at 1:00. Peyton talked about how last year he was on the seven periods, and liked see the student every day. Peyton teaches six classes with a big difference in class size 6/33 students.</p>	<p>Cal normalizes Peyton’s concern about having to cover the material in 70-minute classes rather than 90-minute classes.</p> <p>Often times there are really small and large classes when there is only one seminary teacher. This requires the teacher to have to differentiate their approaches, even though the material will be the same.</p>

<p>2.2.6 Cal talked about how he struggles to write a lesson plan, or type it up but likes to use Google screen, copy & paste, and PowerPoint. Peyton also likes to use his PowerPoint as his whiteboard. Peyton shared with Cal an Idea that he got from Jason Willard who wrote his lessons on sticky notes and then would throw them away when he was done teaching. This forced him to rethink his teaching every four years.</p>	<p>Seminary teacher are often encouraged to write new lesson plans for each class, rather than to reuse or update lesson plans from four years ago. Cal and Peyton were able to share a mutual understanding about the need to prepare a lesson, but not to have a separate lesson from their slides. More important than an actual document is the logical thought process that a teacher must go through to prepare a lesson each time rather than rely on old material.</p>
<p>2.2.7 Peyton asked: “How are you getting through all of section 20 in two class periods?” Cal said that I look at where the three “amens”. 1. What we believe. 2. The offices and their duties. 3. The ordinances. I’m going to summarize the responsibility of officers and their parts. “Maybe I’ll have a Priest demonstrate how to baptize.” Peyton “What I am lacking now is some good questions. If I could find some then maybe I would be excited to teach it.” Cal: “Brother Springer taught this and mentioned that none of the students could identify the 3 things that we promise during the</p>	<p>Peyton’s question allowed Cal to demonstrate how he had divided up the scripture block into three reasonable chunks. To be able to do this as well as Cal did takes reasonable amount of time and close reading. This blocking helped save Peyton a good amount of time, but Peyton also lost a chance to re-familiarize himself with the block and go through it well enough so that it made sense to him. Three great questions can made a seminary class wonderful, a good search, understand, and apply. The question by Brother Springer is</p>

<p>sacrament.” Cal referenced the curriculum (p. 95) and where he got a good question from. Cal “I want to link baptism and the sacrament together.” “If you could be baptized what would you do to prepare for it? So how come you don’t prepare for the sacrament like that?” Peyton “Oh, that is a great question?” Peyton “side note on (p.97), does Elder Widstoe look like Coronel Sanders?” Peyton shared an idea that at the end of a lesson he would list several principles from the lesson on the board and then ask “Of these principles that we learned today which one do you find most beneficial, and why?”</p>	<p>a great understand question, and can easily be turned into a search question. Then Cal added a great apply question. These questions really help a lesson and discussion. Peyton received some great help from Cal about things that relate directly to the classroom.</p> <p>Once Cal got Peyton going he added another apply question to what Cal had given him. This question allows students to share thoughts, feeling, and maybe even a little testimony.</p>
<p>2.2.8 They talked about how many children that they have and what their ages are. They mentioned how hard it is to find time to be at home, and how far that they have to drive to attend sporting events. They discussed where they grew up and where their wives are from.</p>	<p>Discussing personal things is an essential part of forming a relationship of trust. They recognize that they are more than just teachers. As teachers start discussions they are drawn into caring more about the other individual, this is how unity is created.</p>

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
2.3 October 14, 2014 2:30-4:00	Anderson, N. (2014). A Classroom of Faith,

	<p>Hope, and Charity. <i>Evening with a General Authority, February 28</i>. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.</p>
Observations	Observer's Comments
<p>2.3.1 Peyton shared his lesson for D&C 20. Where he identified several principles and has them projected on a screen. Students would then pick the principle that best represented what they read and believe from the section, and then bear testimony of it. Cal asked him how is it going to work in each of Peyton's different hours. Peyton suggested that he developed the lesson thinking about his 5th hour, which is his rough hour.</p>	<p>This type of lesson requires a lot from the students, they are not just sharing principles that they discovered in the scriptures or relating impressions. Peyton is asking the student to share their personal beliefs. Cal recognized that this lesson is going to go better in some classes than others depending upon the class make up. Peyton then related that in his lesson prep he considered his 5th period class, which is his most difficult class. Cal's question made Peyton have to give a planned out reason why he was organizing the lesson the way he did. Peyton's answer reveals that he was thoughtful and careful in his lesson prep.</p>
<p>2.3.2 Cal shared a story about a freshman who skipped class, and now he is really stepping up in his sophomore year and being a contributor.</p>	<p>Cal shared this story to normalize Peyton's experience with his 5th period class, and instill hope.</p>

<p>2.3.3 Cal wanted to see how Peyton was going to do with the sacrament. Peyton said he was going to tie it to baptism.</p>	<p>Last time they talked Cal shared some things that he had learned about the sacrament in this section. Cal wanted to see how Peyton was going to teach it now that he teaching it. Peyton shared that he was going to use part of the idea that Cal taught last time they meet.</p>
<p>2.3.4 They discussed using the iPad in class. Cal used it today and lost one whole Power Point slide. Peyton “I know there are just some things that I can’t do on an Ipad that I can do with a laptop.</p>	<p>Peyton expressed the same frustration as Cal and normalized the experience and created trust.</p>
<p>2.3.5 In the discussion of Elder Anderson’s talk Cal was intrigued by the line “Let us remember that those who sit in your classrooms are some of the most spiritually sensitive sons and daughters of God that have ever entered mortality.” (p.1) Peyton also likes this quote and put it into a poster in his room. So students would know this and he would remember it.</p>	<p>This was a great moment when both teachers recognized the same line from the talk as important. This recognition helps to validate their study abilities and creates a unity about the importance of the principle. Peyton shared a specific application of how he had applied this to his own teaching by wanting the student to know this and remind him.</p>
<p>2.3.6 (p.6) Peyton brought up Brother Osguthorpe’s story and said I think that his is telling us that we don’t need to worry about</p>	<p>This discussion is really about the purpose of S&I, which says, “We teach students”. Peyton and Cal both believe that teaching students and</p>

<p>lesson plans so much as conversion.</p> <p>Cal used the next paragraph that talks about the “mighty change” he then said that some of the worst freshman will end up being some of your biggest allies. Cal mentioned that it is usually the sophomore year that students struggle. Research shows that 14-16 years go from looking at the things outside of the home to rely on. We have lots that get ordained teachers that never get ordained priests. Cal mentioned that his own son is one of the struggling sophomores.</p>	<p>helping them rely on the atonement is more important than getting through their lessons.</p> <p>This part of the discussion was about the real purpose of why they teach and what they are hoping to bring about. This type of discussion is hopeful and will motivate both of these teachers to work better with youth 14-16. Cal showed incredible vulnerability when he mentioned that even his own son is in the group of struggling students.</p>
<p>2.3.7 Peyton said “this talk is the antidote to priestcraft; we talked about during one-person meeting in the summer.” This relates to Elder Johnson’s talk “Priestcraft”.</p>	<p>This is a reference to a summer professional development course that was offered to all of the one-person faculties. Cal was unable to attend this summer. Peyton now had the opportunity to share with him some of the insights that he gained and increase Cal’s desire to attend this upcoming summer.</p>
<p>2.3.8 Cal said you must have rapport so you</p>	<p>Elder Holland said: “If those students are</p>

<p>can look students in the eye and tell them how you really feel about them. Peyton shared how he told a struggling student “You really are a good kid” the student said “No way”, Peyton persisted, and the young man came on time today.</p> <p>Cal told a story about a young woman who was a runner up in homecoming and Cal told her “I’m not the only one who notices how good you are.” Since then she has been acting like my seminary president.</p>	<p>unresponsive, maybe you can’t teach them yet, but you can love them. And if you love them today, maybe you can teach them tomorrow” (LDS, 2012). How we feel about students really does determine their own classroom experience day after day.</p>
<p>2.3.9 “This talk becomes greater each time I read it. I wonder where this talk will go down in CES history.” Cal mentioned that for the past three years a member of the Stake Presidency has quoted the EGA in Stake Conference.</p>	<p>Peyton has a very good knowledge of our current handbook and its history. He understands that these talks don’t go away and that they have a tendency of building upon another.</p>

Group 3. Jay & Hugh

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
3.1 September 25, 2014 3:30-4:30	Bednar, D.A. (2014). To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood. <i>Campus Education Week at</i>

	<p><i>Brigham Young University 19 August.</i></p> <p>Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University.</p>
Observations	Observer's Comments
<p>3.1.1 I came into this discussion in the middle of the meeting and found them discussing the basic doctrine of the "Dispensations".</p>	<p>"Dispensations" is one of the nine basic doctrines that S&I educators are to make sure that students understand. These basic doctrines work as threads that are woven into several lessons throughout the year.</p>
<p>3.1.2 "The Lesson manual is helpful" (Hugh). They got into the test of the lesson block. Hugh's personal lesson prep from 1 Nephi 13 added an insight to D&C 18. –This was rather long, and Jay didn't do much talking-. Jay just said that he was making some x-ref as they were going through the verses. Jay asked, "Did you teach that?" Hugh: "I tried. I taught it in pieces. These intricacies are a testament that Joseph didn't just make this up in 60 days."</p>	<p>Several times during the explanation of his lesson Hugh said, "The Lesson Manual is helpful." One of the benefits of having not only a shared subject, but shared curriculum.</p> <p>I got so into following along that I forgot to record what was really said.</p> <p>This was an in depth conversation about language of the scripture block. Jay was honestly excited about what Hugh shared, and Hugh was delighted to have someone to teach the full measure of what he had discovered in his personal study. It was easy to see both teachers passion for the scripture block being</p>

	manifest.
3.1.3 Jay D&C 14-17 “I wanted to use the Revelation in Context”. He used stories and Hugh said, “Oh, I totally forgot to mentioned Mary Whitmer, I should do that.” They then went to the Teacher Manual looking at some of the background stories.	Hugh had already taught this lesson and when Jay shared a particular story it reminded Hugh that he hadn’t yet done that in class. Even though Hugh was ahead of Jay it was still beneficial for him to review Jay’s lesson. This discussion also drove them to discuss other stories that were in the Teacher’s Manual.
3.1.4 Jay said that he would be short on time preparing D&C 18, and asked Hugh for what ideas he had. There was a lot of discussion about the text of the block, questions that he asked, and principles that were identified. “That is really cool Hugh. I’ve just been writing furiously, this is so helpful, because I haven’t taught this yet.” (Jay)	Jay gets some great direction from Hugh on an upcoming lesson that he didn’t have a lot of time to prepare for. Hugh gave Jay some great questions, which normally take incredible effort to sculpt. There appears to be an advantage for the teacher who is behind in the pacing of lessons. They get a lot more help from the other teacher, but the other teacher is given a chance to review what they already taught and think reflectively on what worked and what did not. Perhaps they then are the ones with the real advantage.
3.1.5 Jay then talked about how many of the	The whole area just had regional inservice

<p>words of the prophets can be included in these lessons. Hugh said that he could do better at that part of his teaching. They talked more about readiness. Hugh sent Jay a picture of a Baptist preacher that he had and a little bit of a journal entry explaining his thoughts about it.</p> <p>–I have loved hearing these 2 teachers discuss these topics and lessons. They decided to pick 2 different talks for next week and come together to talk about it.</p>	<p>training on who to better incorporate the words of the prophets into their lessons. This idea has been all over the discussions. Here is a take away lesson: “The once a month lesson about teaching is effectively being communicated.” Here is another lesson: “Weekly discussions among teacher allow them to frequently refocus on the monthly lesson and share their progress in applying it to the classroom.”</p>
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Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
<p>3.3 October 10, 2014 3:00-4:15</p>	<p>Monson, T. (2014) Guided Safely Home. <i>General Conference October 4</i>. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.</p> <p>Hamula, J. (2014) The Sacrament and The Atonement. <i>General Conference October 5</i>. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.</p>
Observations	Observer’s Comments
<p>3.3.1 Jay “I couldn’t tell you what D&C 95 is”, but he used several talks from last Conference</p>	<p>Jay is admitting that one of the difficulties to using the words of the prophets is that he</p>

<p>in his current teaching.</p>	<p>doesn't know the D&C well enough to see how conference will help him in his teaching. That was very honest.</p>
<p>3.3.2 He used Elder Hamaula's talk to teach D&C 20:77, 79 and also 25:13. This talk had great quotes on the sacrament. Jay then read it to Hugh. Jay "That is a great cross reference I'm going to put that in my scriptures."</p>	<p>Jay pays very close attention when Hugh is speaking about the scriptures. This is about the third time that Jay has commented about writing down a scripture the Hugh used.</p>
<p>3.3.3 Hugh mentioned Elder Callister's talk about putting on your armor daily through morning prayer. Jay asked Hugh about his families experience with conference. Hugh's family stayed at home and his children are finally starting to take notes.</p>	<p>Good discussion is about relationships. These two teachers care about each other. Jay's question allowed Hugh to discuss his personal even family experience with Conference.</p>
<p>3.3.4 Hugh started to talk President Monson's talk about the "Bismarck" Hugh: "I get the feeling that high adventure is on our way, and that we need to stay in the boat and hold on tight." Jay "It is our responsibility to take charge of our lives and making good choices." Jay "What other themes did you see?" Hugh "Prophets, the sacrament and its healing powers. D&C 27 is a great place to teach some</p>	<p>This whole section is a wonderful example of the advantages of having two professionals who have an in depth expertise in the scriptures participate in a wonderful back and forth discussion. The close reading and analysis of D&C 27 also shows the value of having a shared subject and vocabulary. If Hugh were to carefully put his thoughts into writing he has an idea and commentary on D&C 27 that could</p>

<p>of these things. The last and great sacrament meeting.” Hugh mentioned that in times past he pasted over the Keys that were restored. Hugh talked about the specific wording of a few of the verses: 16-17. : 16 truth =: 5 Book of Mormon. “My thought is that there is an intimate connection between the armor of God and the restoration of the priesthood keys. The whole armor in my mind now is the whole restoration of the gospel. Thus not just any Christian religion can put on the whole armor of God, because they have not had priesthood keys restored.</p>	<p>be published in a commentary or in the <i>Religious Educator</i>. The whole idea that good discussion demands good content. This type of discussion creates an expectation for future discussions and kindles and excitement to have it again.</p>
<p>3.3.5 Jay mentioned that as he has really dug into the revelations in the D&C that his preparation time has decreased, making it easier to prepare lessons. Jay mentioned that for his personal study he used the Seminary study Manual and he tries not to think about the students, but to just think about himself. Then when He starts to prepare it he can look at it through the lens of the students.</p>	<p>Jay’s personal practice and study at home is an example of how if a teacher daily is filling their tank with information and experiences not just to teach, but also just because they are passionate learners, lessons and ideas are generated easier. To be a good teacher, one must be a passionate learner.</p>

<p>Jay talked about how there have been a couple of very hard situations, student's death, and another really bad 4-wheeler accident; he went and talked with a student who saw everything and just felt drained afterwards. He feels that his tank is being filled by really digging into his personal study and conference and it unlocks his passion and excitement about teaching. Hugh agreed with Jay. Jay shared how he was a little burnt out after the first two weeks of school, but when He really started to pay the price to know the context and content of each section in the D&C it got a lot better, Hugh agreed.</p>	<p>Again evidence of trust and care. Jay was talking about things that were very sensitive and difficult.</p> <p>Hugh and Jay do a really great job of letting the other person talk. There is hardly ever interrupting. They are very eager to learn from what the other person is experiencing and saying. Hugh does a great job of showing care and empathy.</p>
<p>3.3.6 Hugh mentioned that he taught D&C 30 and should have also taught D&C 31, Jay chimed in and validated how hard it is to cover material on early out Fridays. Hugh discussed his pacing and being a little behind. Jay, said that his first year teaching he didn't even finish the book of scripture, which was the Old Testament. Jay "It is always a love hate thing with the pacing guide." Hugh "I always try to</p>	<p>Many of the teacher talk about their relationship with the pacing guide. They always want more time with each section, but if they do that they never complete the whole book. Going through the book slowly in class usually results in the students going through the book slowly in their personal reading.</p>

<p>stay within a week of the guide. Sometimes I go back in the next day and say this is what we should have read yesterday.”</p>	
<p>3.3.7 Jay “I’m always surprised at what parts of the scriptures stand out to the youth. In D&C 20 I just had teachers who realized that it was their duty to do home teaching. Hugh “20 is great, you could have a sacrament lesson just on the sacrament verses. I find that I just have to keep referring back to section 20.”</p>	<p>This is a great discussion that shows that sometimes what is so well understood by professionals is not understood at all by those we are teaching. Sometime there is a thought that if it isn’t new to the teacher then it isn’t new for the student. This causes us to miss basics on occasion.</p>
<p>3.3.8 Hugh “I’m really excited for you, my passion level rises and falls, but I think that I can take a lesson from you. I can see that it would be good benefit to put a little D&C study into my personal study. That is really good Jay, that is really good.”</p>	<p>Jay’s passion and excitement has become infectious Hugh wants to do better in his personal study, which as Jay pointed out will decrease his prep time and also help him teach with more passion. As a side note, it made me want to do the same.</p>

Group 4. Walter & Javier

Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
<p>4.2 October 2, 2014 3:30-4:30</p>	<p>Packer, B. K. (1991). <i>Teach Ye Diligently</i> (chapter 26). Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.</p>
<p>Observations</p>	<p>Observer’s Comments</p>

<p>4.2.1 They made specific reference to the book chapter and page (p. 210). After reading a few passages Walter asked about how this can apply to the classroom. Javier came back with a scripture about relying on ourselves too much. “I’m just thinking out loud”. “We are to teach the gospel as the gospel has been taught, and any deviation or alteration should not be taught.” Walter referenced some recent training that took place at regional in-service about teaching the prophets gets us away from our stories. “I think you are right on.”</p>	<p>Here is the benefit of both having the text in front of them they can reference what they read and reflect on what they have learned.</p> <p>Here Javier identifies that his thoughts aren’t solid on this yet, but he trying to understand it by verbally articulating it.</p> <p>Here is the regional inservice meeting coming up again in the discussions.</p> <p>This part of the structure allows teachers to really be able to discuss the philosophy of teaching, not just tricks and tips, but trying to wrestle out why and meaning behind it.</p>
<p>4.2.2 Walter: “How do we react when students come to us with questions, should we answer them or try to tie them to the scriptures and the prophets? Not us there is danger if they are tied to us. I don’t know.” Javier: “I think you are right” Javier then shared an experience from his mission about how an elder would do baptism interviews and would ask the people if</p>	<p>This discussion is at the heart of the fundamental principle of teaching and the philosophy of what the relationship should be between teacher, student, and information.</p> <p>The goal of S&I is easily seen in this discussion. S&I’s purpose is to convert students “understand and rely on the teachings</p>

<p>they would leave the church if he did.” Walter validated his comment by saying “that is good”.</p>	<p>and the atonement of Jesus Christ” and not simply to teach them (LDS, 2012).</p>
<p>4.2.3 They moved on to a discussion about General Conference Review. Tech troubles to learn how to transfer power of presenter.</p>	<p>This is part of the learning process. Once they learn they will be confident in the future.</p>
<p>4.2.4 Then Javier showed some prepared questions and ideas that he had about how to prepare for conference. Walter asked how Javier was going to get his students to take notes. Javier: “They will do anything for points.” Javier has put the students into different families like: Smith, Cowdery, Whitmer, and Hale, which is also their seating chart and used to present devotionals together. General conference countdown for the last 20 days.</p>	<p>I remember that Walter asked a lot of questions about why Javier was doing these things. It caused Javier to have to reflect on his reasons for why he was doing what he was doing. For example: Javier put them in families to teach all of his students how family scripture study, prayer, family home evening would go, because some of these students have never had family anything before.</p> <p>When teachers ask questions about the other teachers’ ideas, it forces them to articulate their reasons, and in some cases there reasons are being invented or stated for the first time.</p> <p>These discussions actually help teachers form their opinions and philosophy about teaching.</p>
<p>4.2.5 Walter talked about Power Phrases to have students look for during Conference and</p>	<p>Both teacher presented totally different ideas and were able to increase their toolbox.</p>

<p>then share when they come back. He also talked about the LDS Youth site, clips. He also showed them a talk about conference and then had students practice taking down power phrases to look for. Javier talked about his bingo sheet and how he added a place to have notes. Conference lesson and not just have a review.</p>	<p>Walter presented the idea of teaching the students skills rather than just looking for information and they even practiced it in class together.</p> <p>Javier's discussion of his past bingo sheet was an open acknowledgment of failure and his desire to improve the learning experience for his students.</p>
<p>4.2.6 Walter shared about a study that his wife read about student who read paper vs. electronic and the results of their comprehension.</p>	<p>I wish I had better notes on this part of the discussion. If done well professional discussions have the potential to double our exposure to reports, books, ideas, and information. Colleagues should be one of our greatest sources for great information.</p>
<p>4.2.7 Walter brought up a feedback idea for Javier to have something for those students that didn't watch conference.</p>	<p>Walter' idea would help Javier to differentiate his teaching, so those whose home life is different can still participate in class and have a good experience with Conference.</p>
<p>4.2.8 Javier brought up the idea that we only review conference, but we are not doing a good job of trying to understand, feel the importance</p>	<p>Javier is questioning the mentality of nearly all S&I teachers when he suggest that we review Conference rather than actually teach it. This</p>

of, and apply conference.	is a profound thought, and it deserves a voice.
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Meeting/Date/Time	Article Discussed
4.4 October 23, 2014 3:30-4:15	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2012). Questions, p.58-62. In. <i>Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion</i> . Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Observations	Observer's Comments
4.4.1 Walter has a student that was an ok student last year, but this year he is quit, never engaged, and very somber. The student's mother was concerned and talked with Walter about her son. Walter talked with the student in his office and the student said: "I want nothing to do with the Church. I'm only here because of my mother. Please don't involve me." What would you do?	This is Walter' favorite part of the format because it allows him the chance to ask and discuss the things that are at the forefront of his mind. Younger teacher usually have problems that they have not encountered before and this allows them the freedom to express their feelings and ask for advice of an older teacher. This type of issue came up less frequent with the older teachers.
4.4.2 Javier had students walk in and visited for a few moments.	These type of things are to be expected and often don't distract from the discussion. Walter and Javier remember where they are

	when he returns.
<p>4.4.3 I don't know what I would do. I know that unless his heart softens he won't progress. Javier describes what he does when students come to him when they got a bad grade; Javier offers to give them a better grade if they fix the behavior that led to the grade. Those who work to obtain those little goals you can see a softening in the heart.</p>	<p>Javier expresses a different type of normalizing here. He understands what the problem is and acknowledges that he doesn't have a specific solution, only a general principle. If you want this student to progress you must find a way to soften his heart. He then offers a couple of specific accounts of how he has tried to do that with student who are struggling.</p>
<p>4.4.4 Walter identified that what makes a difference is finding something to help soften their heart. Javier then described that one of the things that he does is write a letter to struggling students to help them know that he cares.</p>	<p>Walter accepts the general principle that Javier has suggested. Javier's seeing that his principle was accepted begins offering more specific examples of how this general principle has helped him.</p>
<p>4.4.5 Javier talked about how frustrating it is to have Juniors and Seniors that smothering out the fire and excitement that they had for seminary. What would you do to help light a fire under these lazy students?</p> <p>Walter: "We want things that are big turnarounds, but most often they don't have big moments, we just have to measure their</p>	<p>Now it is Javier's turn to present a concern that he has. Walter does do some normalizing, but it is not specifically stated with words like: "oh, yeah, we all go through that." Instead he simply states, "we want things that are big turnarounds." Walter then offers a general principle that we need to look for little improvements rather than large ones. If we</p>

<p>progress. Little improvement in participation, or testimony.” Walter mentioned that he is just looking for small things to show improvement. Walter mentioned that this may not apply, but it could be helpful. Javier said you know that is mostly how we live our lives also. Maybe sometimes I have too high expectations. I’ll try looking for little things that they do well.</p>	<p>look for little improvements in our students we will be less frustrated with them, and be able to rejoice over what they have done.</p> <p>Javier accepted the principle when he stated that maybe his expectations are too high. He then states that he is going to try implementing the general principle.</p>
<p>4.4.6 Handbook. Pages 58-62 have blessed my teaching more than anything else in the last two years. When I give my time to questions it changes my lesson and teaching. Questions drive the depth and breadth of discussions.</p> <p>Walter: “How do you practice that?” Javier: “Just thinking about what type of a response I want and then thinking through how the students would answer it. When I really thoughtfully go through questions in my prep I get better at my questions.” This takes up most of my prep time.</p>	<p>This is quite the definitive statement. Javier is describing passionately something that has helped him as a teacher, and explaining the why behind his beliefs.</p> <p>Walter here tries to identify a formula for improving the practice asking questions.</p> <p>Javier reveals a general principle for preparing questions by thinking through how students would respond and changing the questions to get better responses. As Javier states crafting questions takes time.</p>
<p>4.4.7 Walter talked about when he first started to have his lessons reviewed it bothered him when people would nick-pick the wording of</p>	<p>Walter and Javier both identify the general principle that the wording of questions is crucial to the discussion and response from the</p>

<p>his questions, but now he sees the difference in just changing the way a question is worded.</p> <p>Javier “by changing just a few words is makes a huge difference in the results.”</p>	<p>students.</p>
<p>4.4.8 Javier also talked about the importance of giving students time to think and ponder before answering questions. “When I do that, there is usually one student who will raise their hand and then blow me away. Then others will start to comment.” “Some of the best responses that I’ve ever gotten come after I give them time.”</p> <p>Walter: “I could do better at that. I don’t give them enough time to give or answer big questions.”</p>	<p>Javier is identifying a general principle about students’ responses to questions. Students often need time to process a question and then formulate a response. Javier also identified the general principle that when one student responds thoughtfully it increases the likelihood that others will.</p> <p>Walter realized that he could improve this aspect of his teaching by increasing the wait time for students to reply.</p>
<p>4.4.9 Javier mentioned that he really tried to mold his search questions, because of some training that we received in the summer. What have you done to improve your search questions?</p> <p>Walter: “For me the search questions in the D&C are easy, because if you know the history/context, then it is easy to help them know what to look for. He used D&C 25 as an</p>	<p>Here is more evidence that external inservice and professional development make a difference. These discussions help increase the shelf life of such meetings, and give teachers opportunities to further discuss and report on changes that they have made because of the training.</p> <p>The general principle understanding the context leads to an understanding of the</p>

<p>example and the struggles of Emma Smith, reading it with that knowledge Walter was able to see the principle of service to the Church, her Husband and others really helps her get out of focusing on herself. We have talked about context and content before, but context this year has really changed my perspective this year.</p>	<p>content, and that teaching context increases a desire to learn the content. Also that content understood in in context leads to an understanding of principles that students can then apply in their own lives.</p>
<p>4.4.10 They discussed that on Monday Javier is going to be doing a pick-a-part on scripture mastery. Walter mentioned that as he has done it a couple of times this year it really worked well.</p>	<p>This is an example of how teachers have successfully exchanged a teaching method and there has been productive benefit from it.</p>
<p>4.4.11 Javier is behind on the pacing he is in D&C 22-25. Javier asked for advice and Walter mentioned that the background of those sections is so rich and helps us see the importance of the principles that are presented. Javier mentioned that makes his decision even harder, because he doesn't want to clump all those sections together. Walter is a pacing Nazi and doesn't slow down for anything he is</p>	<p>This was an interesting exchange. Javier expressed difficulty in keeping up with the pacing guide. Walter who really dives into learning the context of each section and also is very aware of the content finds time not only to get through the lesson, but adds several additional points of background and context to his students. The difference in the amount of time that these teachers have may suggest that Walter does more teacher presentation than</p>

<p>in section 45 of the D&C. There are a few of those days this year where we discuss the history: Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo, Pioneers, and Mountain Meadow Massacre.</p>	<p>Javier who spends significant of time allowing students to comment and present their thoughts.</p> <p>This is also a great example of the benefit of having a shared curriculum and pacing guide.</p>
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Appendix C. Exit Interview Questions

1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions?
2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week?
3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations. What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected?
4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week?
5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week?
6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching?
7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations?
8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed?
9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems.
10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they?
11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions?

Appendix D. Exit Interview Transcripts

1.5 Exit Interview Transcript of Steven and Leia**1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions?****(:01-3:40)**

Steven: “I think that there are several advantages to it. One, you get another witness; sometimes for things that you have felt, or experienced it is someone else that this saying something similar. In my experience, and in yours, and even in Leia’s you are kind of by yourself so there is value in just making sure that you are in line or aligned with what is expected. I think that there is value as far as the experience. It gives you different perspective. It expands your thinking, sometimes we get kind of narrow, and these discussions, and it opens our minds. We become a little more liberal in the way we see things and our abilities to teach. I think we get insights. I think you have President Packer’s statement “Revelation is scattered among us” this becomes apparent and true through this. Not to mention the fact that you build relationships. You gain a better perspective and appreciation, and love for those that you are around and serving with. As far as my experience with it I like it. It makes me better. It causes me to think, to evaluate were I need to be a little bit better, and allows me to review what talks have been done from the brethren, and to see what matters to Leia and to see what insights she’s had, and to see that they might be different than mine. That is a good thing. I don’t know. That was my initial thought. Leia?”

Leia: “Yea, I agree with that, because there are times that I am really narrow in what I find and what I see. And, it made the relevancy of those things, it really added to that, for me it did. And how not even in your personal life, but for sure in the teaching the things that I missed, whatever that’s worth.”

Any things else either one of you would like to say on this question?

Steven: “Nothing other than the fact that I think it obviously, at least for me, it obviously makes me a better teacher. It, I don’t know how else to say that more clear.”

Leia: “I would second that.”

2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week? (3:41-6:43)

Leia: “I think the benefit there was that you were looking for those things to share, at least for me, as we were reading it and studying it, and obviously looking through those lenses of being a better teacher. That really helped me, rather than just reading it to read it, and to have a purpose for meeting together for a discussion. The End.”

Steven: “Just a couple of things as far as the benefit of having an article or talk. One, I think that there is a natural unity that comes in when you have worked on the same thing. So you are thinking the same thoughts, when you’ve prepared before that or at least gone through it. I like the fact that revelation can strike in two different places on one thing that will help come together. The other thing, I think it builds a common language, a focus, a bank of terminology, if you can use that phrase that allows you to have conversations, in this case it is in prophetic language. There is power that comes from that. Another reason I think that there is value in it is that as you are going through it and you know you have to do it, there is a purpose in doing it, you are not just reading it and marking it. I think that you start to see questions, or wonder about things, and so it prepares you to learn, quite honestly from the other person, because you put forth a little effort prior to.”

Leia: “And for me I came to expect that. Anticipate that learning from Steven in a sense, so that was cool.”

3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations.**What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected? (6:44-10:10)**

Steven: “The first one, Chad Webb’s quite honestly there was probably a couple of reasons. One, I had just read it not too long before that and we were looking at it for Training Council coming down the road. So it was something that was on my mind. It was the fact that when I first heard it given, I had missed the fact that there were two invitations given. I mean, I knew the first part ‘study the Doctrine and Covenants’ and that’s even in the title. I missed the second half of the talk. So as I read through it, it just kind of woke me up a little bit. If you want to boil it down I was kind of excited about the talk at the time, and because of that, that is why it got picked to begin with. It was on my mind. I was excited about it. I had seen some things that I hadn’t seen before, and I was looking for insights from somebody else to help in that process. Greater Expectations, similar in the sense that, and Leia, you add in anywhere you want here. One, of the reasons that was picked was because it was recent, because there has been an emphasis on following the words of our leaders and building unity with them. So because that was a recent talk, that was one of the things that allowed us to be true to the leadership that we have received in the area, and quite honestly from the central office. Not to mention the fact that it helps us to understand our role a little better, and to raise standards and to lift, and the youth today need more.”

Leia: “And, that she was quoted several times in Conference.”

Steven: “Yep, by the brethren too. So we went back through that one.”

Steven: “Ezra Taft Benson: Gospel Teacher and His Message. I really like that talk, and I had just been doing some other stuff here in the office and had come across it again, and so it had been a while since I had studied it. So I thought there would be some value in going back

through it. David A. Bednar, very similar thing, a little older one. Part of the reason for Elder Bednar was the fact that it was specific to, I guess all of them are, but specific to teaching and teaching a specific skill, as far as understanding and what we could do with that. And how to better help them understand, and not just know.”

4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week? (10:11-12:56)

Steven: “Well I feel a little bad on that because it was only one lesson, and it was hers. So as far as me receiving feedback other than, I don’t know, it doesn’t really apply to me.”

Leia: “You know what it did for me? I started looking, just like I said that second lens, it helped me to start thinking and seeing other things, to look for. Cause I get stuck in my same old rut, of looking for the same thing. That helped me, even though I wasn’t always ‘Ok this is exactly what I am doing’ I never had that, but it helped me prepare with a more broad look. How’s that?”

Steven: “Just one other thing. What it is going to do I can tell you. And that is that I’m going through the Doctrine and Covenants right now and I’m almost done, I’ve got a few sections, and I’ve looked at it totally different I didn’t go through looking for principles or necessarily how to even teach it. All I went through was looking for what it taught me about Heavenly Father, I was looking for characteristics, and I did it digital so that it was marked a certain way. So my intent now is that once I get done with the Doctrine and Covenants, I’m going to start back over and this time it will be a little bit different. As far as I’m going to approach it looking for intent of the author, and the context, and content, and try to expand a little bit from a little bit more from a teacher perspective. So doing this lesson thing, in as much as anything fueled a greater desire to do that. Take that for what it is worth.”

5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week? (12:57-16:51)

Leia: “I think that’s what I said with the last one. That I was able to look for different things or a broader view, as other things were pointed out. And with questioning, same thing. Especially with the application, with what is going on with the kids, the students. As Steven would share, well that’s a great way to, you know *inaudible* Lord ‘What would he tell me?’ I think was one of them I remember. To give me a revelation, you know, it helped me that way.”

Steven this would again be a little hard for you to answer so I’m just going to change it for you. We have done this for years. How did those conversations we had effect your lesson planning during the weeks when you were preparing lessons?

Steven: “Well I can give you a few things initially. I found myself in my lesson preparation going what would Zach say about this? Or in other words what’s their perspective on this? We have talked about this enough, or you learn skills in the process. You know that we wrestled with three or four years ago about expanding this and looking at the context and content and being true to the whole block, and we had some hard conversations with regard to that. So every time I would go to a block I’m thinking all right how do I do this. The other thing that it does is that I would make notes on questions and sometimes during the week I would go ‘Oh, we can talk about that on Friday. Hey what do you think this is talking about?’ I think that it expands the preparation too more than one, and it allows you to, I don’t even know if I know how to, what I’m trying to say here. You are not alone in the preparation of it, and it creates this ability that you start to think and ponder and you’re bouncing it off. So there is a really long answer. I think that it improves inspiration. Now the question would be ‘How does it improve it?’ I think that you become a little more loyal to the curriculum. I think that you become a little

more if you are doing it right and you are talking back and forth it drives you to greater revelation. I think it once again solidifies a language that you can speak, but that is kind of a hard thing to measure, because the impact that it has on your lesson planning is huge. At least it was for me.”

**6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching?
(16:52-20:07)**

Leia: “Well I think that is where it has to end up, if it made a difference in preparation, through the lesson and through the week. Then that difference because it wasn’t just ‘Oh, this sounds like a good question.’ It was like ‘Ok what is a better question?’ or a better way to look at this, or a broader view. I think that it even helped the kids to see more hopefully. I’ve been able to help that, it felt like there was more there.”

Steven: “I have a classroom too, but it is usually a classroom of one. Meaning that when I go to a classroom and the lesson is over, it is expected that I give some feedback, positive or negative as the case may be. So you have a classroom of one. So in what ways did these conversations help? It brings skills to your mind that you notice more. I think it brings principles to mind that you can see. I think wrestling with what words of prophets have said expands your vision. I think it increases your ability to discern when you are sitting in the back of a class. The first year I spent a lot of time watching the teacher. Now I’m starting to pay more attention to students. Not because of anything other than the teachers are generally doing really well. So having said all of that when the class leaves and it is just the teacher and I it has expanded my ability to give some feedback, because of what we have talked about and wrestled with, and gone through, and I have seen that in the last month.”

Leia: “I think having those talks fresh on you mind, you know you are thinking about it. Like today ‘Am I teaching to understand or am I just teaching?’ Just to remind you I guess.”

7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations? (20:08-22:12)

Leia: “I don’t know if it is a skill or not, but the first thing that came to me was Sister Oscarson looking at that and that whole expectation that the way that you view the kids or even treat them, look at them. Like I said I don’t know if that is necessarily a skill, but to be able to trust them more and know that they are ready, and to know that is what the Lord wants for them.”

Steven: “The other thought that I have is and I’m still wrestling with it is the idea that Chad Webb said to make scriptures a more central part. I think that is a skill. A skill to teach the scriptures verses use the scriptures to teach. It changes the focus. It changes the questions that you ask. So once again it is a classroom of one for me, but I start to discern or see skills, and that gives you a language to provide feedback for.”

Leia: “That is good.”

8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed? (22:13-27:07)

Steven: “You talked about, in one of our first meetings, you talked about a kid who basically the school didn’t want, but they didn’t want in seminary or something.”

Leia: “Yeah.”

Steven: “And you were having a great experience with him last I heard, maybe that’s changed.”

Leia: “Yeah, he told us the other day, he tells everyone that he is a Mormon, because he’s mom was pregnant with him when she got baptized. Ha, ha, ha. That’s what he tells them when they ask if he is going to get baptized. I tell him ‘Good try Colt.’ Yeah, he has been great, but that was . . . You know the other little, we talked about her too, you know the non-member they are actually cousins. You know some of the best testimonies of Joseph Smith have come from her. I was thinking to about the mom, ‘Hey what are you doing to get my kid to come to church?’”

Steven: “Oh, that’s right.”

Leia: “And that story has been so good to, Bruce R. McConkie’s son to tell them. That one that you shared, you know that?”

Steven: “Yep.”

Leia: “That was good, I’ve used that quite often.”

What is the story, because I wasn’t in on that conversation?

Steven: “Joseph Fielding McConkie, I don’t remember how old he is, I’ll have to go and find it, but he is in his teenage years, and he decides one Sunday that he is not going to go to church. Of course his dad is a member of the twelve. So he announces to his father ‘I’m not going to church today.’ And he said ‘my dad didn’t get mad or anything, he said “That’s fine Joseph if you don’t want to go. You have one of two choices. You can either walk or ride in the car.”’ And, he goes on to say ‘I realized latter that what my dad was saying was you don’t have a choice in this, you gave up your agency when you were baptized. You’ve already made that decision. You can’t renege on it now. So that was the story associated with it. Talking about, that decision has already been made. You don’t have the choice to unmake it. So to speak, you’ve already determined that.’”

Leia: “Yeah, I like that said that when you interviewed those eight year olds bring their parents in, ‘Hey, you’re going to be to church every week. Adults don’t realize that.”

Steven: “Whenever someone was getting baptized their parents would come in and I’d ask the kids questions and sometimes they are just saying yes and no, and sometimes they would talk like crazy. So I just asked them what they were covenanting to do. ‘I don’t know.’ ‘So I’m going to ask you some questions a about what your covenant is. Do you promise to be in church? Do you promise that when you are twelve you will get the Priesthood, or you will go to Young Women’s? Do you promise to get your Young Womanhood Award? Do you promise that you will be obedient? Do you promise that you’ll go on a mission? Do you promise that you will get married in the temple? Do you promise that you will be faithful your whole life? “Yeah.” Then that’s what you are covenanting to do. That is what you are promising right now. So if you are willing to do that, then you can be baptized, cause that’s the covenant.’ It is always interesting to watch parents during that, because some of those questions were a little more sensitive for them. Especially if they hadn’t been married in the temple, or if one of them hadn’t gone on a mission, as far as the father. But, that is the covenant. That is the story and the situation of it.

Leia: “Yeah, that was good.”

Anything else on that question?

Steven: “No, but that doctrine of infant baptism is awesome.”

Both: “Laughing.”

9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. (27:08-29:28)

Leia: "You can only choose one?"

Steven: "I can give you a political answer, which is true, but it might not be what you want to hear. It depended upon the week."

Leia: "True."

Steven: "Some weeks the article and talk were good, and it was great. We had a great experience with it. Other weeks the article and talk provided the framework that got us into the rest of the discussion, whether it was a lesson or whatever else. You know honestly, if I was to pick, we had four weeks that we discussed. I bet that each one of them: one, two, and three on a different week was the best part."

Leia: "I would have to totally agree with that."

Are there any other comments on that question?

Steven: "I just think that, all I'm saying is that all of the elements are there, and it provides a framework so that quite honestly what needs to be discussed can be discussed, or what is on our minds can come out. That is the value of it. So is one more important than the other, I don't think so; however on some weeks, yes."

10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they?

(29:29-31:22)

Leia: "Remembering, ha, ha, ha,"

Both: "Laughing."

Leia: "Remembering 'Hey, we have got to do that.' For me that was it because I would leave Steven with a lot of that burden just because I, you know, especially in the beginning. For some reason, oh we are doing this once a week, I thought it was once a month. So once I got

that, you know. Just really that, for me at least, cause I think scheduling we did all right, once we got going. At least it worked good for me, I don't know about Steven."

Steven: "It was fine, and I don't do anything all day, so it was fine for me to set up stuff. Honestly I felt a little bad, because I know that you are done at like noon, and you have to come back at Three-thirty. As far as any real challenges, no. Obviously if this was going to be really consistent you would want to do it consistently on the same day. We messed up last week because we had a break and you had a grand baby. But, that is just normal life, nothing abnormal."

Leia: "Yeah, yeah, I would say really not any challenges for me that's for sure."

Steven: "Plus it was during work time, normal work hours that made it easy and convenient."

11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them? (31:23-35:40)

Leia: "Well I would say that the personal benefit I received far outweighed the time and effort that I put in preparing. Maybe that doesn't say much for my preparation, but that was a key to . . . whether I didn't have the time or didn't take a lot of time I read through it looking for some things. But where it really happened was then talking together. Does that make sense, I don't know. It did in my head when I was thinking it."

Steven: "I'm going to answer that question based on the last four weeks with the understanding that I'm also operating from eight years of experience of doing this. But, these weekly conversations that we have had and that I've had over time the hour or hour and a half, or whatever it took. Easily that time period during the week changed my career. There is no doubt. As far as building my ability, building my confidence, building my vision, it is perhaps the single

greatest thing that has taken place, and the weekly things that we have done. Whether you want to call it inservice or talk discussion, or whatever it is that you want to call it have changed my career, have changed my ability. I don't know how else to say that. It probably, in fact there is no probably these conversations have been worth more than any other training or inservice that I have ever been involved in."

Leia: "That was powerful. That is awesome. I would agree with him, but that is probably why you are doing this project."

12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions? (35:41-38:22)

Leia: "Thank you. We did four weeks. I don't have eight years, or however many you guys, but I can definitely see that it has been really nice to have that conversation, that I usually don't have. So thanks Steven and Zach for including me."

Steven: "It is just a great experience. I don't know. There is just value in it, there is value in consistency, there is value in little pieces. There is value in talking about teaching. The more you talk about it the more it becomes a part of you, and it works its way into you. I find it really difficult to, and I'm speaking religiously here as far as from the religious perspective. I find it really difficult for a teacher to ever claim that they are a teacher if they haven't talked about teaching. I think that the only way that you can become a real teacher is to spend time talking and wrestling with teaching. I just don't know how else to say that. Those conversations, anyone can get a certificate to teach, really, you pass a class, fill out some work sheets and you can get a certificate to teach, but I'm not sure everybody becomes a teacher. That comes at least in religious education by consistent discussion of teaching."

Leia: "That's good. I agree."

2.5 Exit Interview Transcript with Peyton and Cal

1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions?

(:01-1:29)

Cal: "I think it has been from a one-man seminary point of view quite helpful to kind of have an inservice. To kind of have a, to know I need to prepare something, to kind of be able to get ideas, and get impute form somebody else's point of view and creativity."

Peyton: "Repeat all of that, and I liked the accountability too. It causes you to get some things done, that normally you would not do, because you have accountability to somebody else."

Cal: "We could expound quite a bit, but I think that covers it."

Peyton: "I agree no need to make the transcript huge in being redundant."

2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week? (1:30-3:14)

Cal: "I think we covered it on the first one, that you have accountability, but I also think it kind of keeps your mind dialed in, and you get inspired by things. I don't know."

Peyton: "The article, it is not this, ah, um, the article gave us direction. We weren't just talking, and editorializing over nothing. The article gave us some clear direction on where to go. And it is also a pretty intelligent talk, or the whatever we read, knew what they were talking about so it was good to have that in there as well. Oh, boy I couldn't spit out what I was trying to say there. Understood though, or not?"

Cal: "Ditto."

3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations.

What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected? (3:15-4:51)

Cal: “We started with Neal L. Anderson’s, but we never discussed that one. Right? Oh, no we did once.”

Peyton: “Yea, we did, briefly.”

Cal: “We did Chad Webb’s.”

Peyton: “We did his, and we did Elder Anderson’s and then we did chapter four.”

Cal: “That’s right.”

Peyton: “Part of why it was selected was because it was current, and what we consider the latest research on the subject. Brother Webb was the August 2014, Neal L. Anderson was February 2014, and the Gospel Teaching and Learning is as current as you get. So that is what I liked. We could have gone back to the 70’s but we wanted to, I think there is value in discussing what is most recent in our field.”

Cal: “I’d say ditto again, and also to me I, well I don’t know what else to add to that.”

4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week? (4:52-5:53)

Peyton: “I’ll start that one, because the lesson that we discussed mine went a completely different direction. Well I didn’t even have the direction that I needed until discussed it so that was valuable for me, just because I got to see what another teacher had done, and not just had thought about doing. So that was good.”

Cal: “I think I kind of made sure that I wrote down a few more things to prepare that lesson. I was probably more prepared for it because of accountability. I don’t know if I was more prepared to teach it, but I was more prepared to share about it, if that makes sense.”

5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week? (5:54-7:03)

Peyton: “Any thoughts Cal? You want to start that one?”

Cal: “Probably affected a whole lot, but just, a little extra attention to the curriculum. As well as kind of how to teach it, I don’t know. Not a great deal of effect, but a little bit.”

Peyton: “I would kind of echo that. My uh, the additional ideas, that was valuable, um, as for the quality of lesson planning not so much. You know, well the effort in lesson planning, not so much. The quality was greater because of addition, but the effort would have been the same regardless.”

**6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching?
(7:04-8:32)**

Peyton: “I was thinking of Elder Anderson quite honestly for a few days before and afterwards. So I was thinking about those three things: faith, hope, and charity. President Uchtdorf identified that the opposite of faith is fear, and the opposite of hope is despair, and I don’t know if we talked a little bit about the opposite of charity is priestcraft. And so I had those opposites on my mind, think for those things I wanted to do in the classroom to be better because of the conversation.

Cal: “I agree 100 percent. I don’t know how much it actually affected what happened in my classroom, but I know that it was on my mind. Also I listened to Brother Webb’s talk on the way to Principals Meeting even though it wasn’t one that we discussed there, but the meeting with you was a kind of second time in a couple of weeks. With what I call the second half of that talk the bloody nose section for me I, that’s been on my mind ever since, more.”

7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations? (8:33-13:04)

Peyton: “Mine was probably more ideology more than it was skills, or methods. You know. So not a great deal of the skills that were used, but the purpose and the vision of teaching. Just going back to the idea of my accountability to my students and loving them, and having faith in, and hope for them. You know what I mean? So if that translates into skills then yeah, but it, I approached my students differently, but my methods I don’t know how different they were.

Cal: “The one word that might, in your question you said teaching skills, and in my mind we studied chapter four which is preparation skills. I don’t know if that makes sense, but I see my preparation because of that I’ve done a couple of things different in my preparation that has improved. And I guess in my teaching skills I have done a couple of things more, I actually, since our quarter break, I rearranged my classroom and had students seated a little different. I’ve been having them more interactive with each other than I did before. I was kind of planning on that before the conversation anyway, but studying chapter four kind of solidified how I wanted to go about a couple of things. I also changed the structure of my class leadership this quarter break. Trust the students, and that is why I got the class leadership. I am kind of turning more over to them, letting them kind of do things. That is something that kind of stuck out to me. Of course there is the list: pray for the students, foster climate, I also tried to implement those things but I think they have been a little bit more on my mind. I’ve got a couple of student that were struggling about to drop seminary, and I thought of those things and kind of had a talk with them and stirring a couple of them, I don’t know if that would have happened without this, I think it would have, but I was a little more sharp, being focused on things *inaudible*.

Peyton: “You know Zach, I have to take that back. You know after reading the handbook and listening to it. There are quite a few things that I did do differently. So even from the idea of, one thing I really thought about was teacher improvement because of chapter one. And I’ve

been keeping a teaching journal. So I guess that my skills and practices have been different because of that.

So Peyton did the teaching journal did that really start because of going through the handbook in preparation for the conversation?

Peyton: “No I’ve been keeping this teaching journal since the beginning of the year, but the entries are a little more meaty since listening to the handbook again.”

8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed? (13:05-14:12)

. . .brief difficulty with the slides.

Cal: “It seems that we talked about the new graduation requirements and how Peyton’s gone about getting that out, and gave me a couple of ideas of how to I guess approach that.

Peyton: “Yeah, ditto.”

9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. (14:13-15:53)

Peyton: “I’m going to go with number one the article and talk, because that led to number three as well the application, that was the most rewarding for me.

Cal: “I don’t know that I would weigh one over the other. They were all valuable. I probably got more out of the article and talk because I guess it was, you know my lesson prep wasn’t this full on what would happen in the classroom, but the talk was totally because of this conversation. I liked, say Dave assigned us to do this every week or twice a month as an inservice I don’t think I would get rid of any of the three.”

Peyton: “Well said.”

**10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they?
(15:54-18:42)**

. . . Brief discussion of why and how Peyton kept switching the slides, lots of laughing.

Cal: “Obviously the format is a challenge, but when video ability first came out, I don’t know if you can see this little thing up here? *He held up a webcam.* This is a little webcam that they bought each seminary, and we tried to do inservice on the webcam and the audio was the biggest problem because of the feedback. It didn’t isolate each speaker like this does, and like the newer ones do like Hangout, and stuff does. And so we just tried it once and it was a failure, maybe once or twice, it was really horrendous. But this was, and I’ve been, and maybe it is because there is just one of us here, I don’t know if there were three or four of us on each line, but I think it would still be the same because you noticed it shows who is talking, and it kind of mutes everybody else’s microphone and you don’t get that feedback. I was kind of impressed by the logistics of the electronics.”

Peyton: “Much improved I think. The reason that I use my phone is because my computer sound is not as good. The microphone and the volume, but that is not a big deal you just have WebEx call you. You know what I mean? Obviously ideally in person is what I would prefer, but this is actually really good technology to do this at a distance, which we are. That is all I have to say.

11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them? (18:43-20:57)

. . . Laughter and joking around, not related to any questions.

Peyton: “I’ll start. I think it is worth it. I had a weird schedule last week, and I apologize for that, but for the most part this isn’t overwhelming. I think the benefit outweighs it, even a

little bit of a social benefit to where we are kind of secluded in our own little areas. I'll have a lot of days were I don't talk to an adult until I get home."

Cal: "Yea, tomorrow my secretary doesn't come, and I am all alone. I agree. I think, you know I've tried inservice, and I've tried to study on my own, and I've, oh mediocre to poor would be how I would say I rate myself at that. This just kind of makes it a formal, you know you go about, in ways of improvement I, I mean it was a, the personal benefit easily outweighs the time and effort that it cost."

12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions? (20:58-26:30)

Peyton: "You had it well set up Zach so it was; we knew exactly what we were to do. Had it been set up poorly I don't know that our feedback would have be this positive. You know what I mean? We knew exactly those three things that we were to discuss. Anyway."

Cal: "It wasn't overly structured, but it wasn't under either. It was very simple and straightforward. I thought that it was kind of a fun experience."

. . . Lots of laughing and discussion unrelated to the study in any way.

Cal: "Do you remember the large phone discussions that we tried a few years ago?"

Peyton: "Yeah."

Cal: "I think this would be an improvement on that I think it would be a good thing to organize as an area, maybe once a month or something, maybe trade partners or something. I think it is a good format for one-man."

Peyton: "I don't think that you can get the groups too big. That is when it gets frustrating. You have no voice, because you're like 'I don't even dare come in at this point.' You know what I mean?"

Cal: “I think two or three of us would be an interesting test trial.”

Peyton: “I was thinking you might even be able to get away with four, maybe? Three is probably just right.”

Cal: “I don’t know how well you guy’s laptops are, but the iPad is just awesome for this.”

3.5 Exit Interview Transcript with Jay and Hugh

1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions?

(:0-2:17)

Jay: “I think for me the experience has been valuable, because of the situation that we are in being in an isolated or more isolated program. It’s been a blessing in my life to interact with other adults in the same situation. I’ll find myself often times throughout the week going to the high school to interact with personal, just to get out of the office. So this has been a good experience to do the same thing without having to leave the building. That’s my two senses there.

Hugh: “You know for me, one of the most pleasant things about this was to get to know what Jay was doing in his personal study and preparation to teach. I was excited to see what he was excited about. The benefit of the time he has dedicated to personally study the Doctrine and Covenants and how it has contributed to his teaching. That was so inspiring to hear him say that, you know, and just the effort and work that is going into this was inspiring and motivating to me because, and just kind of lift my sights and vision to, you know, to what is being done and, by another teacher and the character and the commitment of another teacher was refreshing and motivating. Which I think for me, that was probably the top thing that I got from this experience.

2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week? (2:18-5:46)

Hugh: “Well I think that one of the neat things about having an article to talk about is that when we read them there are just beautiful points that are just really powerful, that speak to you. You are excited about them; you are excited to share them. It is a very directed on gospel doctrine and principles that can be helpful to teachers. So we did it in two ways. There were times when read . . . I don’t know that we ever read the same article, except this week when I was supposed to read the same article. But, you still end up talking from your mutual understanding of a talk and its focus on these powerful and applicable principles. I think that is transitional, um, just the excitement about them and the insights about them, and the application, because we bring applications from context from our various context.

Jay: “I liked, I’ll just jump in. I liked having the talk, and for me it wasn’t really about the talk. Obviously it was just that common ground, or uh, discussion starter to lead us in a direction, but often times I learned more from Hugh when it was . . . the talk would spur us off in a different direction or off on a tangent to take us in a different direction, and you just can’t start a conversation like that, you just don’t go in a different direction you kind of have links that piece you together when you doing that. To me it was a tough thing because I sometimes, and it was not like a huge stress, but sometimes it was like oh man I got to get that done, or I’ve got to get that read, or I forgot what we were going to do, and now I have to do this. And, in that sense it was kind of hard having a talk, but at the same time you had to have that to get anything else out of it, I guess that would be my opinion.

Hugh: “That’s a good point you just can’t start with nothing, I think.

Jay: “If we jumped in every week. ‘Hey how was your week? Good, well that was good.’ I don’t think there would be any depth to the conversation, or any of the essential stuff, that really makes up the meat of a good meeting or discussion.

3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations.

What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected? (5:47-9:50)

Jay: “I think that most of our talks were for the purpose and maybe I’m misspeaking here, but I think that most of our talks were for the purpose of two birds and one stone. Elder Bednar we were asked to read that for Principals Meeting, and in Principals Meeting we talked a lot about prophetic priorities and words of the prophets. That’s were the last General Conference Elder Oaks, and Elder Hallstrom. The most current General Conference was President Monson. And then this last talk was just I don’t know if there was any reason or history behind that one, Hugh you can jump in. I think we just heard about it and I had it on my reading list.”

Hugh: “Yea, that one was just more random.”

Jay: “I don’t know that there was any specific focus this is a lack, and let’s do this. I think it was more of a we have been asked to do this to improve.”

Hugh: “Well there is one thing and that is it was current, and I think we were looking for something that was very current that has been said. It is always very exciting to look at what is currently said, because you get a feel for what’s on the mind of the brethren, and then you get a feel for what is on the mind of the Lord. So I think that is one reason that we went there is because of how current it was.

Jay: “All of them or just this last one?”

Hugh: “Just that last one, the devotional.”

Jay: “I definitely agree with that.”

Hugh: “I remember wanting to share from Elder Oaks’ talk: Keys and Authority of the Priesthood because I just remember how insightful that was. There were just things in his talk that I have never even thought of and it just taught me. It was such a teaching talk for me that I was excited to share some things from it.”

Jay: “And a lot of those when they were General Conference talks the reason that there was a couple was because we both kind of chose the one that we were impressed with and that is the October 3rd and October 10 and that is why there was a couple of different talks there, which I liked. I thought it was good to have some looseness in choosing, yet there was still that foundation of purpose.”

4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week? (9:51-12:29)

Hugh: “One thing that I learned is that I may try my best to teach something and I may totally miss a really good principle or teaching thing, and one that I probably shouldn’t have missed. I remember something that Jay introduced into one of his lessons that I thought to myself ‘Oh my goodness I need to go back and reteach that lesson.’ So that helped me to see that I need to be really careful about covering the important content of a block.”

Jay: “I think for me I really loved being behind Hugh on pacing, because I felt like a student when Hugh would teach and talk about his lessons I could feel the Holy Ghost honestly teaching me stuff that I didn’t even teach the students. It was stuff from the block that I didn’t ever emphasize or learn cause I thought he covered stuff so clearly and deeply that there is no way I can duplicate this in the classroom. But, that for me was the best part of giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week number one having Hugh’s eyes on what I was doing, but also for me to take time to be a student and listen and really feel. I remember one day were there was

–I don't even remember what block, it was one of the early blocks in the 17 or 20's in there, there was just a lot of additional prophetic commentary coming to my mind of ways that it connected in and I planned the lesson the next day and I had it on my notes. I didn't ever teach it to students it didn't fit in when it came down to it, but that was a cool learning experience from me on an individual level.”

Hugh: “That's kind of how I feel about Jay too the things that he shared from his teaching were just really neat and insightful and helpful to understand the block better especially the parts that I missed. So I feel the same way.”

5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week? (12:30-14:56)

Jay: “Just what I said last time for number four, I would just reiterate that again it didn't really effect it because I tried at the first. I took copious notes on one and I did the stupid thing that we have all done before ‘Ah sweet this lesson is going to be planed and I've got this down.’ I came back to the notes after the weekend and I was like ‘Ah, crap this doesn't fit in.’, or ‘This isn't right.’ or ‘How am I supposed to do this?’ One of those first meetings I thought ‘Oh, this is going to be so rich. I'm going to have these lessons down and I'm going to be saving on my prep time.’ In reality I learned that it was more for me. It wasn't stuff that I was going to translate to the youth it was cool stuff for me to learn. And, to have in my head, so that when the Spirit would recall it I could bring it, but I couldn't just duplicate it or copy it.

Hugh: “I think for me that the general thought it that I just worked harder to know the block and to know the principles of the block, because after my conversations with Jay I would realize that I missed some things that are really important like I mentioned before. And, then just

probably in my –my conversation with Jay added some motivation to my own personal scripture study as well. Those two things were beneficial.”

Jay: “I would echo that motivation, like just feeling more motivated to dig deeper into things was a cool byproduct of all of it.”

6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching? (17:32-19:00)

Jay: “I feel like I am answering all of these questions ahead of the time when the question comes up. But, I would just reiterate the same thing again of words of prophets and apostles and the way that they made a difference in classroom teaching, even if it wasn’t the exact talk I was more aware, even though Hugh and I would choose a different talk I would read three or four talks. I would study different talks so that I was just a lot more aware of words of prophets and apostles. On top of that the material and preparation had a huge difference, and having those conversations that would spark my thoughts and things like that has made a difference.”

Hugh: “Now, I’ll second that.”

7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations? (14:57-17:31)

Hugh: “That is a tough question Zach.”

Jay: “I would say that the first for me is that the conversations, it is hard to say like pinpoint what was it. We have had inservice meetings on prophetic priorities and prophetic commentary, and incorporating that and I think that just having these talks as a foundation and walking through it with Hugh one-on-one. I would say that there is not a lesson that has gone by since we started these were I’m not either writing it down to explain it or summarizing it, or giving a handout from a most recent General Conference. Having those words of the prophets

and apostles in my lessons more, and I think that has come as a result of the talks that we chose to study, but also because of the conversations that we have had. It has just been more on my mind.”

Hugh: “If a teaching skill is to be able to incorporate the words of a living prophet, then that is a definite. I remember after Elder Bednar’s talk about flooding the earth, I used that talk in institute, I used it in seminary, I connected it to the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that are talking about missionary work and the fulfillment of the prophecies that it would go to all the world and so on and so on. I don’t know if that is so much a skill though, or if it is an awareness of the current teachings of the prophets that fits with the scriptures. But, I guess that you could say that the skill is to make the connections. So there was an increased ability to make connections after the conversations.”

8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed? (19:01-20:57)

Hugh: “Jay, did we discuss any question, problems, or challenges?”

Jay: “I can’t think of any that come to mind. I mean it was good to have discussion on other topics, like today we talked about placement interviews, but I don’t know that we had any real specific examples of challenges or questions. I know that Hugh talked about family, we talked about challenges with conference and Hugh talked about some things he does with his family taking them up to conference.”

Hugh: “Maybe once when Jay talked about the challenge of using the i-pad.”

Jay: “Yeah, we did.”

Hugh: “Which I’m still having. It’s not even the iPad, it is getting the projector to recognize the signal from my computer or my iPad when I plug it in.”

Jay: "That's with the remote, right?"

Hugh: "You plug it in and you try to switch the impute, but there is no signal. That is a challenge that we discussed a little bit."

Jay: "I really can't think of anything else on that."

9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. (20:58-23-14)

Hugh: "I don't know that we were too ridged on giving and receiving lesson feedback. Ours was more of a case of just discussing the scriptures. What that did in my mind was it made the discussion of the article or the talk as about the same as the discussion of lessons, because we are talking about scripture in both cases. Although I noticed that it was more fun for me when I owned the material, if I really got into the talk it was more engaging to discuss it. If we were talking about a section of the scriptures that I got into on my own I guess it was more rewarding to talk about it. So I think that is the recipe for rewarding or the reward."

Jay: "I think it is good Zach that you have us doing this together, because I would just echo that same thing. To me you can pull one without the other. If we didn't have that talk, I don't think we would have had any lesson connections. For us it was not a ridged one, two, three, but it was just a fluid thing. I think that the format of it, it could be that they are all interconnected. When Hugh uses the word recipe, you know that a recipe makes a product and the product of the discussion was the most rewarding part. Not necessarily the one ingredient I guess. I agree with what he said."

10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they? (23:15-25:05)

Hugh: “For me it was only the challenge of getting connected. I would try originally with my computer and my computer was missing something that didn’t allow me to download the program, so I switched to iPad, and I had to make sure that my iPad had batteries. Then I had to turn on my e-mail, and it seems like my e-mails were always disappearing, or at least the ones that always had the link. I would have to comb through and find them, and then I once I found the link again I was ok.”

Jay: “For me I think that the challenges in participating were the issues of always doing it on Friday. Scheduling on Friday is tough, I don’t know about you, but my mind is sometimes fried come Friday. That would be the only challenge. I think if we did it first thing Monday morning it would be different. But, that is just kind of life; it was not a challenge with anything about the set up.”

11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them? (25:06-27:01)

Hugh: “I can tell you that I got more out of the conversations than I personally put in. I read the talks and I came prepared to share, but then just coming to share you just get so much more out it talking to another person about it. That is kind of the benefit of teaching as well, you get more out of the gospel when you teach it, and you share it, and talk to someone about it. That is my thought.”

Jay: “I agree with Hugh, for me the preparation was really cool, because it just made the discussion better. Once you had the discussion, it made the preparation even more worthwhile, or purposeful. Because you had done the preparation the conversation was even better. You would get more out of the conversation that you did the preparation, but if you hadn’t done the preparation I don’t think that you can have that conversation without it. But, I thought it was a

great, great benefit there without a lot of intense effort, but the effort was needed to put into it, just some forethought.

12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions? (27:02-28:50)

Jay: “It has been a really cool experience I appreciate it. You almost kind of wish that you would be able to have this more of an opportunity in our situation and setting, and maybe even be able to rotate around or just get that experience with other people. I liked the way that you put it up that it needs to get done, but I didn’t feel any pressure to get it done. It was ok to cancel every once in a while and when we needed to reschedule. The value and the focus were there, but it wasn’t the over your head, this has to get done sort of thing, and I just think that is really cool.”

Hugh: “it is just nice to be able to talk to someone about the scriptures and the words of the prophets who is excited and who has found applicable things, things that can help. That has been good.”

4.5 Exit Interview Transcript with Walter

1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions? (:01-1:17)

Walter: “They are beneficial. They are great. I got to associate with a teacher that I don’t typically get to speak with, didn’t know very well. He brought in a new perspective, he has a new style, more, different strengths that I don’t have. Talking with him I’ve seen a new perspective, I think it only enhanced, or opened up more ideas and options on how to deal with different teaching dilemmas that we’ve discussed, and concerns that we’ve had, and issues that

we've had with students and what not. It is just a beneficial experience to talk with another teacher.

2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week? (1:18-2:15)

Walter: "Well one it just makes me, teacher development, it compelled me to spend time within an article looking in to topics that will benefit what we do in teaching. Then apart from that just seeing what Javier's perspective was, things that he might have noted that I didn't see. Just made more of it comes to life, than what I noted on my own, when I studied the article, or the topic.

3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations. What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected? (2:16-3:53)

Walter: "The first one both of us just had an interest in studying that book and neither of us had completed it. So we just, heard from many other teachers that it is one of the most beneficial resources, so it is obvious that it is worth spending our time and that is kind of where the first one came about. 'Understanding Context and Content' was a topic that Javier expressed concern with that he wanted to be better with the context of the scripture. So that was kind of his choice. The last one was my choice 'Questions' from the handbook starting on page 58, and whatever, five, six pages. Was about asking good questions. As we already know are critical to getting the students to open up and to understand and make application. It is something that I am not particularly amazing at, and I want to do better, so that is why we chose that."

4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week? (3:54-5:03)

Walter: “Again just another perspective is always good. Sometimes I think our brains get into a rut or a single track. When we are in a mode of a lesson we see a direction or a principle, you know maybe our intent and we run with it and build off of it, and sometimes we miss things. It is good to see a different perspective. It is good to make a preparation, prepared with lessons in advance to be able to work on their own. It is good to discuss specific questions, or the wording of specific questions. I don’t know, I think that my lessons are always better if I get to discuss them with somebody else. It is that principle of bringing multiple minds together, yeah, that is my answer.”

5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week? (5:04-7:15)

Walter: “Um, I don’t know that there was a whole lot of anything different for me personally with that question. I don’t think that anything really changed, for me. I think that because I’ve had this ongoing with you talking about lessons I’ve been kind of ahead of lessons. It wasn’t that I really had to go out of my way to prepare a lesson. You know, I had lessons planed in advance, and I was used to kind of doing this same sort of thing, I was talking to somebody else about lessons. There was an accountability that existed there, cause I knew that we would have a discussion. I knew that I need to be prepared. Honestly the better prepared, the further out you are with lessons, the better prepared, the better they seem to have been. Conversations about lesson planning not only effect the preparation, but also the execution of the a lesson I believe.”

6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching? (7:18-8:00)

Walter: “I kind of answered that a second ago, but the better prepared you are the obviously the better the teaching is goes in the classroom, having experienced it the other way. More success in the classroom, more confidence in the classroom, greater confidence in being able to teach the intent of the block and answering the questions that the students have and have the understanding for yourself.”

7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations? (8:01-9:15)

Walter: “Well I think we did a, I’m not very good at measuring growth and progress, but I think it definitely effects the topics that we talk about each week. When we talk about context there is an emphasis in your lesson preparation that comes out. When you talk about questions I think that you are more prone to think about that in your lesson prep. Yeah, I mean I think that is typically the case in life, when we have our minds wrapped around a particular topic we tend to improve our ability to, in a particular way, or whatnot. Yeah, I think because of our conversations we were mindful of these issues and able to implement them in the classroom.”

8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed? (9:16-11:38)

Walter: “Some of the challenges, one challenge we discussed was, we talked about, um, the age of students and the, younger students typically have a greater desire to participate and engage cause they are new and more on fire. That is not always the case, but we were talking about how through, as students progress through high school, and again it is not always the case, but for some they just become a little more, I don’t know what the correct word is, they seem to loss a little bit of interest in the gospel. We talked about how we can keep the different age groups engaged and how we might prevent some of that. That was an idea that Javier had. I

know that I had concerns with electronics and electronic use and how to use it appropriately in the class. I know the problem that I'm going to discuss with him tomorrow. What do you do with a student that says 'I don't want anything to do with the Church, and I'm only here because my mother makes me, and I have rewards that I get because I'm here, and I would appreciate it if you didn't call on me to be engaged whatsoever.'? That will be one that we discuss."

9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. (11:39-12:53)

Walter: "I would just reverse your question and that is the order. My favorite was the discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. Then giving and receiving feedback on lessons, and finally discussion of articles and talks. Because the discussion of ideas and concerns, questions, problems are things that are the forefront of our mind in our teaching, things that we are concerned about and that we want to resolve and implement. Lessons I love that next because of the preparation that it gives you in the class. The foresight, the knowledge of another teacher. Getting the perspective of someone else, you're probably better able to discuss a topic, a section, and a chapter in the scriptures together. And the articles and talks are good too, but I would put them in that order."

10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they? (12:54-13:27)

Walter: "Scheduling. Scheduling, I think is the only challenge. We're different programs, we're far away, we have different schedules, getting on the same page that was the only challenge that I saw."

11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them? (13:28-14:21)

Walter: “They’re worth it. I think especially for me in my situation. I’m the only faculty member in a program. I think it is beneficial to communicate with someone else and to do it often. I think there are dangers of getting stuck in less beneficial patterns and habits if you are not constantly striving to progress and improve, and I think that is probably more of a threat when you’re all by yourself in the middle of nowhere. So, I think it is always beneficial to converse, it is always worth the time.”

12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions? (14:22-14:56)

Walter: “No, unless you give me a prompt on the board of something that you want me to say. Then I’ll say that. No, I’m good.”

4.6 Transcript Exit Interview with Javier

1. Would you please describe your experience in participating in these discussions? (:01-1:56)

Javier: “Um, I can see, uh, that a structured time to meet weekly, and doing this often like a week, every week, uh, will only continue to help better you as a teacher in so many ways. I think about when I what helped me the most was observing when I was in preservice. I was able to see things that I just wasn’t able to see before, but since being in a one-man situation, it is hard

when you are not in Utah valley to say ‘I’ll go visit this teacher, or I’ll go visit that teacher.’ I can see how this can help me replace that, and just make me better, all around, not just as a teacher, just as a person, an individual. This is good I felt that.”

2. What did you find beneficial about having an article/talk to discuss as you came together each week? (1:57-3:09)

Javier: “That is a great question. It stretched me, I can answer that it is easy. Uh, even though at times I felt like it was a hassle. After I was done talking about it, it wasn’t. At the time I was like ‘Ah, man. I have so much to do,’ but and even when I would be reading it I would be rediscovering it, and it was even better, and got better every single meeting when I was able to get together and talk about it and discuss it every single week. Perspective and insights are totally different, or better, or opens the window more than I could have ever gotten out of something, or I wouldn’t even have done it, if I didn’t, if we didn’t have that, what would you say? Challenge each other to do it. I got to get it done because I’m meeting with Walter on this day and I want something that I can take to him, something that I found. It was good, it stretched me.”

3. Here is a list of the articles/talks that you discussed during your conversations. What can you tell me about why each article/talk was selected? (3:10-5:10)

Javier: “Boyd K. Packer I think we did that because I think that is what Walter wanted to do, so we went after it. I don’t think there was any real reason why we did it. I don’t even remember exactly what we went through and talked about with Boyd K. Packer. Understand Context and Content, we chose that because I asked to. I said, “I’m not bringing D&C alive.” And so it was good for me and I got some good feedback when Walter observed me and he helped me to understand some things. Even today he gave me some good feedback on that

chapter. Questions, I don't know why Walter chose that, but he helped me see one part when it talks about, on page 59, at the very bottom when he was talking about Emma Smith: who, what, when, how, where, why? When he brought Emma Smith alive by talking about it, I wanted to jump into D&C 25. I was like 'I want my students to get the same thing, and I want to get the same thing out of that.' I think that is mainly why we went over questions, because of, to bring more depth, but I think that is why we selected it. For the most part."

4. What do you feel you learned by giving and receiving feedback on a lesson each week? (5:11-6:32)

Javier: "Um, I would say that we did ok on that, but I can't say that we did great on that, because we talked about lessons and gave feedback, but I feel like, you know what every time that, for the one time it was good, but the other times I just feel like we didn't do this as well as we should have, but when he came and observed me. That feedback was priceless because after that I started doing the content different, and I was getting way more from my students. Students that were having a hard, that same class that Walter observed and I did it different I was getting some great participation out of that, because of the feedback that I got from Walter. And so that was good, other times we did it, I didn't feel as though it was super effective. I don't think that we were really prepared to talk about lessons, so it was just ok."

5. How did these conversations affect your lesson planning during the week? (6:33-7:47)

Javier: "Uhm, I thought about, that is a good question. I think I spent more time on things that we talked about. I spent more time on things that I didn't spend more time on before, because I realized were my lessons were lacking was not spending my time were I should have,

and it helped me balance and deepen my lessons, and once I did that I saw a direct result. It was great. It wasn't instant, but it was continuous, and better than it was before."

6. In what ways did these conversations make a difference in your classroom teaching? (7:48-8:49)

Javier: "Just what I said before, I was able to get them [students] understanding the content of what was going on faster, and then they were excited about what was going on with the context. The cool thing about that was I would often hear students say 'You know what I think about Joseph when he is going through this, or I think about Oliver when he has been asked to do this, I'm thinking about Martin Harris.' And I'm like oh, the bridge is happening between context and content, and that is cool when they are able to see. They are talking about Joseph, they are talking about Oliver, and they are starting to apply that to their life also, and that was cool, that was something fun that I saw when we were going through all of this stuff."

7. What kinds of improvement, if any did you see in your teaching skills because of these conversations? (8:50-)

Javier: "I would say probably improvement in my approaches, being that I needed to change and do something different, doing it and seeing the direct result. It was usually the improvement of tweaking the little things, context make it so, it brought things. It painted the picture better, and I don't think that I could have done that on my own, I don't think I could have figured it out on my own."

8. Can you give me some examples of the kinds of challenges, ideas, questions, or problems that you discussed? (8:51-14:37)

Interruption by visitors.

Javier: “We talked about one, what do you do when a kid doesn’t want to be in the Church any more. He wants to take his name off the record, he doesn’t want to be active, he has no desire. Just hearing about that, was good. We discussed what we could do so there could be a softening of heart or how could we help him in whatever way. I think it was good, cause when I had feelings of frustration with juniors and seniors he was able to give me some good feedback and say you know what you should just look at the small things that they are doing, instead of thinking ‘You should be changing overnight.’ And that was good that he was able to tell me to step back and look at a bigger perspective and say ‘*inaudible*, bless and stride, and they shouldn’t be as far as you think they should be.’ That was helpful balancing perspective and his ideas off of that was really helpful.”

9. Which of the 3 parts of the structure did you find personally most rewarding to engage in and why? 1. The article/talk. 2. Giving and receiving lesson feedback. 3. The discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems. (14:38-16:04)

Javier: “Uhm, not two, because I don’t think that we did that the best, we could have done better, that could have been one of the best ones. Articles and talks, one and three would have been a tie. If we had the right article and talk, and I put enough time into it to make it effective, it was that. But, three discussion of ideas, concerns, questions, and problems, uhm. No, it was number one, it was number one, because we got, you are reading stuff from the brethren, you are reading from the Teaching handbook, as you are reading those things, they are inspired materials, that, that is what you want your student to know about. And Walter helping me discover some of those gems was awesome, so I would say number one.

10. If there were any challenges in participating in these conversations, what were they? (16:05-16:57)

Javier: “Trying to keep it going, and coordinating a time when it works for us, and I got sick, or uh, or WebEx is not working. It could be frustrating to think ‘Ah, should be keep doing this, or is it worth it?’ So there is that, but you always end the conversation saying ‘That was worth it.’ I’d say ‘Yeah, I’m staying 30 minutes after’, nah it is worth it. That is just, or better than maybe lesson prep, because it helps you with lesson prep and to become a better teacher. Yeah, just trying to keep it going.”

11. What do you feel about the amount of time and effort that you put in to participate in these conversations vs. the personal benefit that you received from them? (16:58-18:04)

Javier: “The time and effort that I put into it could have been better to be honest, versus the personal benefit that I received from it. Low time and effort, but high benefit, but it’s always higher. And I don’t know if Walter feels the same way, but I always received more and eventually it wasn’t always because Walter said something or showed me something, but I was taught something by the Spirit. That probably wouldn’t have happened if I wasn’t talking to Walter. I wrote something down, or I may be noticed something and I look into that for the rest of the week because of something that I felt during that time. So yeah, high benefit, low effort.”

12. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience participating in these discussions? (18:05-18:43)

Javier: “Uhm, . . . No, I can’t think of anything else.”