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WORK HABITS EVALUATION: A CLOSER LOOK

by

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B. A., Simon Fraser University, 1980

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Abstract

Secondary teachers were asked to indicate their agreement with statements regarding the work habit evaluation mark on the formal report to parents. They were asked three questions: (1) how they define student work habits for the purpose of evaluation, (2) their opinions of the purpose of the evaluation, and (3) the process they used to complete this evaluation. Results from a survey indicated that there was a wide range of terms in use for the definition, that the purpose is unclear and that the evaluation processes are highly individualized. The conclusion is that using a letter grade as a means of evaluating student work habits is problematic. Recommendations are that the letter grade be dropped and available comments be increased in order to report more effectively on student work habits.

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Acknowledgments

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

All students who attend a public school in British Columbia (B. C.) receive at least three formal reports each school year (Guidelines for Student Reporting, 1994). In many secondary schools, a quarterly review of a student's progress is provided during the school year. Most adults are familiar with student reports from personal experience either as students or parents. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education has published guidelines that teachers and administrators are expected to follow when preparing and presenting reports to parents and guardians of B. C. students (Guidelines for Student Reporting, 1994). Achievement on academic outcomes is reported through letter grades, percentages or both. Student reports also carry attendance information, comments from teachers and a work habit evaluation.

Academic letter grades range from A to F, which refer to percentages earned on learning outcome assessments. They are set by order of the provincial government (Ministerial Order 192/ 94). Work habit letter grades are organized on an ordinal basis, usually on a scale of three or five points. These ratings are subjective, and utilize terms such as "Outstanding", "Good", "Satisfactory or "Unsatisfactory". The letters correspond to the terms in use in that district, and may have some variation (Clarification of Student Reporting, 1994).

The work habit mark that occurs on numerous reports in British Columbia appears to be the result of a process that is not clearly defined. The Ministry of Education Guidelines for Student Reporting clearly states that teachers should use written comments about attitudes, work habits and effort. However, probably in the interest of efficiency, many districts have chosen to

include a letter grade for work habits. These letter grades are defined on the report card. The information would look similar to the following:

- O Outstanding
- G Good
- S Satisfactory
- U Unsatisfactory

Not all districts use the same letters, but these are very popular. This terminology seems to have an intrinsic meaning, to be intuitively understandable. It is possible to assume that every teacher has the same notion of what "good" work habits are. In Appendix A (Student Report), close inspection reveals that one student's work habits were evaluated differently despite the fact that the student's achievement percentages were uniformly high. No comment was made to clarify what the differences were. It is evident that different teachers may have different standards, definitions and expectations when it comes to evaluating work habits.

The Problem

Rationale, Significance or Need for the Study

The report on a student's academic achievement offers feedback on that individual's progress in that course. Parents, guardians and students are encouraged to discuss the achievement with the relevant teachers for further information. Some letter grades indicate the possibility of failure in that course. Letter grades and percentages are used to determine honour roll placement for the high-achieving students, as well as credits on the Passport to Excellence. The Passport to Excellence is a B. C. government program that rewards the top thirty percent of students at a particular school with post-secondary financial credits. It is available to students from Grade 9 through 12 in each B. C. public secondary school. Work habit evaluations have

similar applications. A "lower", or less than satisfactory, work habit grade may keep a student off the honour roll even if that student has qualified academically. It will also eliminate the student from the Passport to Excellence list for that school.

These are not the only effects a report may have. There may be consequences at home, depending on the expectations of the parents and the student. Some financial institutions offer a small monetary reward for placement on the honour roll. A low work habit evaluation, which has eliminated the student from honour roll placement, will also prevent the student from earning the financial reward. Low achievement letter grades may be indicators of special considerations for student program placement or the need for modifications or adaptations. A low work habit letter grade may affect how other educators perceive the student. If he or she is not working hard to succeed, as indicated by the work habit mark, he may be viewed differently than a student who makes a greater perceived effort.

On report cards, students are publicly rated as to academic achievement. They are also rated on the dimension of work habits. This information will be as public as a student wishes it to be, but there is no way that he may completely suppress the information. This publicity will have an effect on the student. It becomes a part of the overall view that the student will develop and maintain of himself as a learner. It is a part of the evolving self-image of a young person in our society. Achievement letter grades are products of known processes, and the steps taken to determine those marks are clear and well defined in the secondary system. In each case, the teacher is expected to make sure that the student is well aware of how well he is doing on tests, assignments, homework or projects. Another question that this study focusses on is how the work habit letter grade is defined and explained to students by teachers.

We all remember a time when we opened our own reports with either anticipation or dread at what might be recorded on those pages. These emotional experiences are related to the sense of mystery connected with the marks inscribed on those sheets. Should mystery have a part in the reporting of a student's achievement and progress? Evaluation that is mysterious or misunderstood cannot have a positive effect on a student's awareness of what is needed to improve or maintain the relevant achievement.

Students must understand and accept the process of assessment and evaluation that guides their progress (Guidelines, 1994; Stipek, 1995). Evaluation of performance in the public school system has several purposes. It must both inform and instruct. It must inform in the sense of describing the student's past achievement on learning outcomes and standards, and instruct in the sense of showing where further study is required. The method of reporting those evaluations must be clear and concise (Guidelines for Student Reporting, 1994), and at the secondary level, must also be efficient. If there is a lack of clarity in the process anywhere, the evaluation loses its impact, its ability to instruct and inform. If the definition of work habits varies from teacher to teacher, is this report clear and informative?

An ordinal scale involves the ranking of objects, persons or traits strictly by order. The intervals between the scale values are not equal. The differences described are relative and frequently subjective. In ordinal scales, the dividing line between categories is also indistinct (Sax, 1989). This is in contrast to the commonly used interval scale, based on equal and regular differences between each of the points. The interval scale is used in measuring achievement.

When student work habits are rated using letter grades on an ordinal scale, these limitations apply. Examining these limitations generates several questions. What is the difference between "Good" and "Outstanding" or between "Needs Improvement" and "Unsatisfactory"?

Does length of teaching experience lead to differences in the way work habits are evaluated? Are the differences the same for a math teacher and an art teacher?

Concern about the rating scales is only one part of the question. There also appears to be differences in the way work habits are defined. The Guidelines document separates work habits from effort and attitude, but it does not define what work habits are. When work habits are defined for the purpose of guiding teachers in their evaluations, those definitions offer a wide range of possibilities. Anecdotal information indicates that each teacher has a personal definition of what work habits are and which behaviours are important. Educators at all levels assume that teachers know what work habits are and how to evaluate them.

The purpose of this study is to discover how teachers define the concept "work habits", what they perceive the purpose of the work habit mark to be, how it is assessed and evaluated, and what meaning they believe it has for students and parents.

Statement of the Problem to be Investigated

What are work habit evaluations all about? Is it fair to ask teachers to use a method of assessment and evaluation that is "assumed" to be clear and valid? Are work habits clearly defined and described by teachers? What is the purpose of using a letter grade? Is there any other way to convey teachers' observations and recommendations to students and parents?

Elements to be Investigated

There are several elements that are to be investigated. These elements are what factors of student behaviours are most important to teachers as they define and assess work habits, what they perceive the purpose of the evaluation is, and how teachers feel about the process.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study will focus exclusively on teachers in B. C. who are presently working at a public junior secondary school. These are teachers who work with Grades 8, 9 or 10 students. The participants were restricted to keep the focus of the study manageable and focussed. The participants are voluntary respondents to a survey that was mailed to their school. The schools involved are in eight school districts within B. C. These schools draw from a variety of student populations, including urban, suburban, semi-rural and rural. These schools demonstrate the diversity of the B. C. population, in that there are students and teachers from numerous races and cultures at each. The teachers represent a wide range of ages, years of teaching experience, subject specialties and training.

Definition of Terms

Work habits presently are whatever it is that a teacher considers when preparing the work habit mark for a report to parents. Because work habits are neither clearly defined, nor fully described in any of the sources the researcher was able to discover, one purpose of the study is to define and describe in greater detail the term "work habits".

Work habits mark refers to the letter grade given in conjunction with the achievement letter grade on a formal report. Recently, one school district in B. C. adopted a five-point ordinal scale for secondary teachers to use when evaluating work habits. The descriptive terms are "Outstanding", "Good", "Satisfactory", "Needs Improvement" and "Unsatisfactory". The letter grades which result from these terms and which are used on the reports are O, G, S, NI and U.

Report is the official report to parents or guardians which is mandated by the British Columbia School Act and which must be prepared on a formal basis at least three times per

school year. At many B. C. secondary schools, it is more usual to have four reports to parents during the secondary school year.

Assessment is "...the systematic process of gathering information about students, what they know, are able to do, and are trying to do" (Assessment Handbooks Series, Glossary).

Evaluation is "...the process of making judgments and decisions based on the interpretation of evidence of student learning gathered throughout assessment. Evaluation might be done by the teacher or the student independently or in collaboration" (Assessment handbooks Series, Glossary).

Teacher is an adult who is educated and certified to teach, and presently employed to do so in a B. C. secondary school.

Student is a person between the ages of 12 and 16 years who attends a B. C. junior secondary school.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Overview of the Theory and Research Literature

The assignment of letter grades to work habit evaluations has become standard practice in British Columbia schools. Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly when this practice was introduced, anecdotal reports and personal experiences indicate that it has been ongoing for at least fifty years. The Student Progress Report Order, issued under the authority of the *School Act*, by the Ministry of Education, Skills & Training, Legislation Branch offers this interpretation of the requirements for all written student progress reports:

> 1. Written student progress reports for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 must contain...
>
> (g) a description of the student's behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits and effort. (Student Progress Report Order, E-95, August 21, 1996).

Currently, educators in B. C. are more specifically assisted by "Guidelines for Student Reporting for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan", published by The Ministry of Education of the Province of British Columbia in 1994. While the document focusses primarily on the process of reporting on academic achievement, there are some references to work habit reporting. The section on Specific Guidelines, Intermediate Reports, (Grades 8 to 10), reads

> Formal reports for each student in Grades 8 to 10 must:
>
> - Provide Ministry-approved letter grades as set out in the Provincial Letter Grades Order to indicate the student's level of performance as it relates to the expected learning outcomes for each course or subject and grade

- include written comments, where appropriate, that describe, in relation to the expected learning outcomes set out in curriculum
    a) what the student is able to do
    b) areas in which the student requires further attention or development
    c) ways of supporting the student in his or her learning
- include written comments to describe student behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits and effort.

The Provincial Letter Grades Order sets out the letters that are associated with academic achievement percentages. Since 1995, these have been

A 86-100

B 73-85

C+ 67-72

C 60-66

C- 50-59

IP In Progress. The student is making progress, but it has been determined that additional time is required to meet the expected learning outcomes for the course or subject or grade.

F Failed. This grade may only be assigned after an IP has been assigned.

W Withdrawal.

SG Standing Granted.

TS Transfer Standing. (Guidelines, p. 8)

No letter grades are specified for work habits.

Finally, there is a section in the Formal and Informal Reporting chapter of the Guidelines document, which specifically addresses work habits.

> Reporting on Student Behaviour
>
> The School Act requires that teachers provide parents with information regarding their children's behaviour, and policy for student reporting in British Columbia requires that in formal reports teachers do this using written comments, including information about attitudes, work habits and effort. Parents are interested in how their children get along with their peers, in their work habits and efforts toward learning, and in their attitudes toward, level of interest in and motivation toward their studies. Assessing behaviour, effort, motivation and interest and including them in a grading system is problematic. Such traits are difficult to define and assess objectively. As much as possible, teachers should use systematic, dependable methods when assessing student attitudes and behaviour.
>
> Often a student's achievement is affected by behaviour and, as an indirect result, the letter grade will be affected. However, reducing grades as a deterrent is unfair and self-defeating. Behaviours and personal traits are best reported to parents through written comments and in conferences. (Guidelines, p. 22)

The Ministry of Education clearly expects educators to report to parents on the effort, attitudes and work habits of their children. According to the Guidelines for Reporting, the preferred modes for this reporting are written comments and conferences. Using a grading system for work habits, behaviour and effort, while not expressly forbidden, is perceived as "problematic", 'difficult to define" and "difficult...to assess objectively".

Report cards in B. C. carry comments from the student's teachers that focus on the individual's behaviour in class, as well as suggestions for ways to improve the academic achievement where necessary. Many also include a letter grade that purports to describe the student's work habits, although this appears to be contrary to recommendations found in the Guidelines document. The authority for this may be found in another Ministry document, "Clarification of Student Reporting Policy and Answers to Commonly Asked Questions". This document is self-described as a summary of a question and answer session that took place in 1994. The participants are not identified. Question 18 reads "Can the comment on work habits for each subject at the secondary level be accompanied by such symbols as "G", "S", or "N"? May these abbreviations be used without individualized comments?" The response to this question is:

> Abbreviations of descriptions of behaviour may be used if descriptions of these abbreviations are set out in a legend that parents can clearly understand. Abbreviations are sometimes inadequate and should be supplemented by more description. The format is a district decision. (p. 3)

Districts may choose to use letter grades for work habit reporting. Each school district in the province has the right to decide what descriptions of work habits may be used and how they will be abbreviated. There is a possibility of numerous abbreviations and descriptions. The abbreviations cited above, "G", "S", and "N" are likely to be the most frequently used, as they relate to the apparently clear terms *"Good"*, *"Satisfactory"* and *"Needs Improvement"*.

Neither the School Act nor the Guidelines document defines work habits. Work habits are one item on a list that also includes the terms; effort, attitude and behaviour. It could be inferred that these are separate aspects of a student's school life. There is a lack of clarity on this issue,

which leads to a variety of assumptions and misunderstandings between student, parent and teacher.

Some school districts have chosen to define the way work habits will be evaluated by their teachers. Given the authority to determine a grading system, and also given that teachers of secondary students may be required to evaluate as many as 200 students at reporting time, boards have opted for a stream-lined approach. In one school district, this issue has been addressed by the development of a district policy directing that behavioural abbreviations be utilized and suggesting that each secondary school develop a set of grading criteria. Some examples of school-based criteria are to be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Work Habits Criteria Policy from Three Secondary Schools

Categories	School # 1	School # 2	School # 3
Responsibility	class work homework organization catch up after absences attendance punctuality preparedness sets own goals safety	assignment completion well organized observes deadlines very punctual maintains an orderly notebook	completes assignments punctually is organized (brings materials, prepares for class) is punctual
Attitude	cooperative respectful positive enthusiastic attentive contributes to the class	is cooperative and respects others	cooperates with teacher and other students participates in class
Effort	self-motivation active learner/engaged self-improvement quality of work productivity	gets extra help promptly is an active learner	seeks help when needed

Note. These categories were taken from School # 1's published suggestions. Published criteria from the other two schools were then sorted according to that set.

The published criteria are accompanied by suggestions for consideration when assigning work habit letter grades. They are given in Table 2.

Table 2.

Work Habit Mark Assignment Policy in Four Secondary Schools

Letter Grades	School # 1	School # 2	School # 3	School # 4
O Outstanding	All			Not in use
G Good	Missing one	The student has very good to excellent work habits and has mastered most or all of the items mentioned in the above criteria. In addition, the student must complete at least 95% of the assignments given.	Good work habits are a goal for all students.	Does his/her homework and assignments carefully
				Works in class when given time to do so.
				Listens to the lesson carefully and asks questions when he/she doesn't understand.
				Comes to class prepared, with all the materials needed.
				Puts his/her best effort into work, assignments, and study.
				Shows a positive attitude in the classroom.
				Catches up work missed on days absent, in his/her own time.
S Satisfactory	Effort has been consistent but more attention to details is required.	The teacher believes that the student can improve in some or all of the areas listed above. In addition, the student must complete at least 75% of the assignments given.	The student meets most of the criteria listed above but there is room for improvement.	Homework and assignments are usually completed.
				Class time often used effectively.
				Usually pays attention to the lesson, or seeks help
				Regularly comes to class prepared.
				Consistent effort in work, study, and assignment completion.
				Attitude is usually positive.
				Work missed on days absent is often completed.

Table 2 is continued on the next page.

NI Needs Improvement	Can be used both as "comment" and/or as encouragement. This student would most likely be missing several points in each R-A-E categories (sic).		Improvement is needed in a number of areas listed above. An NI work habit mark in any term eliminates a student from Passport to Education (grade 9 and 10) Honour roll and recommendations .	Homework is poorly and/or rarely done. Often off-task and disrupting in class. Does not pay attention to the concepts being taught. Usually comes to class unprepared. There is little or no effort put forth in work, study habits. Attitude is usually positive. (sic) Work missed on days absent is not completed
U Unsatisfactory	If student is lacking in any one of attitude, or effort categories, a "U" should be assigned.	Work habits are not satisfactory in areas listed above and the student's marks are being seriously affected. There may also be a significant risk of failing the course. In addition, the student has completed less that 70% of the assignments given. Poor attitude, poor behaviour, and poor organization skills are often contributing factors.	Work habits are not satisfactory in the areas listed above. An unsatisfactory work habit in any term eliminates a student from Passport to Education (grade 9 and 10, Honour roll and recommendations . It is recommended that students who exhibit unsatisfactory work habits receive interim reports each term.	Not in use.

***Where the box is blank, no policy has been published.**

The previous tables demonstrate the variety that exists within one district with regard to the definition and evaluation of work habits. Each school has developed its own set of definitions and criteria. There is some overlap, but there are also gaps and differences. Each school has used

terms which allow for flexibility in assessment such as "may consider", "most", "some or all of the areas". Some schools are more directive than others are; some departments within schools are also more directive. Definition, assessment and evaluation of work habits is ultimately allotted to the autonomy and responsibility of the individual teacher.

Theory and Research Specific to the Topic

Literature that focuses upon the topic of the definition and evaluation of work habits is not extensive. A thorough search of ERIC, using a variety of terms, elicited few leads. Appendix B contains a list of the terms used, and the number of results under each heading. The *Dissertation Abstracts International* was equally silent on the topic, as was a close inspection of several textbooks used in teacher education. While reporting on students has been studied thoroughly, the focus of this reporting has been on academic learning. The manner in which a student goes about the business of being a student is frequently described with reference to learning styles, behaviour or physical circumstances. Work habits as a separate dimension of evaluation appear to have been overlooked.

W. A. Napthali did one particularly relevant study in England. The subjects of this study were teachers of students aged 13 to 16 years, which is the same student age group of the teachers in the present study. He tried to discover how teachers define work habits (Napthali, in Woods, 1987). Sixteen teachers identified the criteria each used to describe behaviours that would contribute to student success. They generated fifty-six distinctively worded descriptors. Some of the descriptors were subject-specific, for example, mapping skills in geography, and others were more general in nature, such as behaviour and work output. These were then grouped into twenty-two derived constructs. These constructs were classified into three psychological categories; cognitive, affective and motivational. In this study, there were more constructs in the

affective domain (n=10) and in the motivational domain (n=8) than in the cognitive (n=4). Napthali concluded that teachers were likely to differentiate between pupils on the basis of six derived constructs. These are, in no particular order of importance:

a. The involvement of the pupil in the learning situation.

b. The ability the pupil has in the subject.

c. The overall ability of the pupil.

d. The behaviour of the pupil.

e. The quality and tidiness of work presented.

f. The interest displayed by the pupil in the subject. (p. 23)

Napthali also concluded that teachers do vary considerably in what they look for and that what they see and what they value is crucial as well as idiosyncratic. Finally, in a statement that has direct bearing on the concept of subjective evaluation, he finds "each teacher will mix the ingredients (ability and application) in a personal way and will differ over the weights they give to each" (Napthali, 1975, p. 24).

Fuchs, Fuchs and Phillips, (1994), investigated the importance that teachers placed on student work habits, how those work habits are connected to achievement, and what effect student work habits might have on teachers' planning. They revisited the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy and extended it to include work habit behaviour. They were particularly concerned with the possibility of differential treatment and expectations as inclusion of special needs and learning disabled students increased in mainstream classrooms.

The authors had 121 generalist elementary school teachers complete a scale that included the following items:

- students listen and comply with teacher instructions and directions

- students have *good work habits* (italics added) and make efficient use of class time
- students have independent study skills
- students attend consistently to assigned tasks
- students cope with failure in an appropriate manner and don't give up
- students assume responsibility for having materials
- students produce work of acceptable quality given their skill levels
- students follow classroom rules
- students work without disrupting the rest of the class. (Fuchs et al., 1994, p.335)

This appears to be a thorough and well-detailed list of student behaviours that should lead to academic success if followed. It is interesting to note that the authors appear to believe that work habits are activities distinct from the other behaviours that they describe. There is a question, then, as to what these work habits might be. Descriptors such as "listen to and comply with directions" or "make efficient use of class time" define specific, observable, and measurable behaviours. The authors have assumed that teachers know what work habits are, and how they are distinct from the described behaviours in the study. They did find conclusively that a teacher's high standards and expectations for student "work habits" led to higher student achievement.

The authors of Guidelines for Student Reporting have made an assumption similar to the one mentioned above. In this document, teachers are asked to report to parents with information regarding their children's behaviour.... Including information about attitudes, work habits and effort (p. 22). There are no precise definitions for educators to follow, but again, work habits are

seen as separate from attitudes and effort. In this instance also, there is the assumption that teachers will both be able to identify and agree upon what work habits are.

Most of the assessment of student learning is focused on academic objectives. How are these assessments and evaluations affected by student deportment? Pedulla, Airasian and Madaus, (1980) investigated how teacher ratings and predictions of achievement on standardized tests were affected by student behaviour. They supplied 170 elementary school teachers with twelve behaviour constructs and asked them to rate their students ($\underline{n}$ = 2,617) on those behaviours and then predict scores for IQ, English and mathematics standardized tests. The teachers' assessments were thus limited to the criteria that the authors had selected. The authors grouped these constructs into two factors. Factor 1 is described as relating to classroom behaviours and is similar to motivational behaviours mentioned in other discussion. Factor 2 is related to social or personal student behaviours and is similar to affective groupings found in previous studies.

They found that teacher judgment of students' IQ, English, and mathematics performance are confounded with their judgments of other academically related behaviours, such as attention span and persistence (p.307). Teachers indicated they believe that a student who seems to be paying attention or who works hard has innate ability to succeed academically. On the other hand, students who showed strength in social, or affective, constructs were not deemed as able as their more attentive peers (Pedulla et al., 1994). This finding could have widespread implications. For example, very social students who are more interested in interacting with their peers may be underrated on an intellectual scale. A student who appears diligent and hard working may be over-rated. Some students are less able to pay attention for sustained times or

have less interest in completing assignments. They may be perceived as less able to succeed and diverted into programs that do not offer them the challenges of which they are capable.

Allal (1988) studied 45 elementary teachers in Switzerland to determine how they went about determining grades and making promotion decisions about their students. She discovered that there are qualitative and quantitative components to each mark given to students by teachers. No work habits marks are given as a separate evaluation, but the observations are an intrinsic component of the overall evaluation done. Adjustments in an achievement rating were frequently made if the teacher felt that the average, arithmetically derived, mark did not reflect the "true capacity" of the student. These adjustments were the "result of a more qualitative type of synthesis based on a variety of elements: assessment of effort or of perseverance ...unrecorded and intuitive observations of the child's attitudes and work habits, global judgments...and so on." (Allal, 1988, p. 47). Teachers and supervisors in that system considered this practice reasonable, valid and reliable. The previous studies did not explicitly state that factors such as work habits, effort or behaviour would affect a student's achievement grade, but it is possible that this "fudge factor" is a component of any evaluation that a teacher does on a student.

Research in Cognate Areas Relevant to the Topic

One term that recurs when defining work habits is "effort" (Fuchs et al., 1994; Guidelines, 1994; Napthali, 1987; Pedulla, 1994, Tables 1 and 2 above). How is effort defined? Effort is variously described as leading to full use of ability (Nicholls, 1976), perseverance and active engagement during instruction (Mac Iver et al., 1991), diligence (Jagacinski and Nicholls, 1990), how hard a person works (Ames and Archer, 1988) and persistence (Gayer, 1994; Schunk, 1982). There is general agreement that effort is under volitional control (Covington,

1980; Covington and Omelich, 1979; Jagacinski and Nicholls, 1990; Mac Iver et al., 1991; Nicholls, 1976; Schunk, 1982, Weiner, 1979).

Effort is what a teacher *perceives* as effort, and is measured by observation. Teachers expect students to make an effort to learn enough at least to pass the course (Covington, 1980; Covington and Omelich, 1979; Nicholls, 1976; Pedulla, 1980; Schunk, 1982) and so do parents (Ames and Archer, 1987; Covington and Omelich, 1979; Mac Iver, 1991). Teachers are more likely to reward effort with praise and to accept the student's level of achievement if it appears that the student has been making an effort to succeed (Covington, 1980; Covington and Omelich, 1979; Darakjian and Michael, 1982; Nicholls, 1976).

Teachers assess effort by comparing achievement to teacher perceptions of ability (Anderman, 1992; Benham, 1995; Hoge and Butcher, 1984; Pedulla et al., 1994; Swann and Snyder, 1980). Ability may be perceived as either fixed (Covington, 1980; Gayer, 1994; Schunk, 1982) or variable (Ames and Archer, 1988; Swann and Snyder, 1980). This definition varies within each individual according to past experience and relevant classroom orientation. Some teachers believe that an individual has intrinsic ability and will do well in the subject regardless of instructional techniques or classroom orientation, while other teachers believe that specific instruction and support will enhance a student's learning no matter what her (extrinsic) ability. Swann and Snyder (1980) studied male undergraduates in an effort to understand how teachers adapt techniques to meet the perceived needs of their pupils. The "teachers" were led to believe that some of the students were very capable of learning and others would need comparably more instruction. They found that the teachers maintained their beliefs about the students and somehow communicated these beliefs to the students, even in the face of contradictory evidence. Their findings confirm numerous others that are now well publicized in the field of education.

However, it seems important to once again point out the need to be aware of the effect of labeling students.

Students are aware of the need to look like they are making an effort (Covington, 1979; Jagacinski and Nicholls, 1990). Generally, a student will try harder to succeed if he enjoys or is interested in the subject (MacIver, 1991). Effort is also affected by a student's perceptions of her own ability (Mac Iver, 1991; Nicholls, 1976). If a student is confident of success, then she will make a greater effort to overcome challenging tasks (Nicholls, 1976) but if the tasks are too easy, success will not lead to pride and the student's confidence may not be reaffirmed (Mac Iver, 1991).

Covington and Omelich (1979, 1985) and Nicholls (1976) offer some other points to consider when assessing effort. Although their studies were done with university students who likely had very little experience with failure and lots of confidence in their ability to learn, their conclusions are interesting to bear in mind when younger students with a greater range of academic success are the focus. What follows is a summary of their conclusions.

Covington and Omelich (1979, 1985) and Nicholls (1976) claim that students would rather be thought of as lazy than stupid. In our world people with high ability are praised more frequently and appear to be more valued. Even if a person has shown little in the way of success, it is better to be perceived as smart but lazy than not smart but hardworking. It is shameful not to have high ability. Therefore, a student will do everything possible to maintain a perception he would have done really well in that subject or that test, if he had wanted to. Failing the class or the test is due to lack of trying, not caring or wanting to pass, not having time to study for various reasons, being bored by the subject or claiming the teacher doesn't like him. Students are motivated by a desire to "save face" or to protect a self-image. They are also motivated to avoid

punishment. For a student, failing is punishment. The trick in secondary school is to do just enough to satisfy a teacher, and to have plenty of good excuses available to moderate any punishment.

Unfortunately, these tricks may backfire. Too many failure experiences, for whatever reason, will have the effect of reducing the student's ability to succeed. This could be due to lack of knowledge and practice rather than actual ability. What started as a failure-avoiding technique becomes confirmation that failure is inevitable due to lack of ability. The student becomes resigned to failing and continues to reduce his effort, as failing while trying hard would be the final confirmation that he is "dumb".

These factors are diametrically opposite to teacher expectations. Teachers want to see a student work hard, even if she is unsuccessful. They dislike laziness, and are especially provoked by the laziness of an apparently capable student. Teachers want to believe that students are as eager to succeed as they are to have them succeed. They admire students who work hard no matter what their achievement. They also want to know if a student has lower ability so that alternate programming or learning assistance can be offered. For teachers, having low ability is not a shameful condition, but one that must be addressed through different means.

There is an apparent mismatch between student and teacher perspectives on how to succeed in school. This mismatch may result in errors in estimation of ability or effort on the part of the teacher. Hoge and Butcher (1983) found that teachers had a tendency to over-estimate the ability of pleasant, cooperative students and to under-estimate the ability of less cooperative ones. This would be demonstrated on a report by a low work-habit mark or a comment about lack of effort, or both.

Educators and parents are concerned with issues around the effort and motivation of their students and children. Numerous studies have been done which focused exclusively on either the students or the teachers. Studies of teachers of elementary students find that work habits are important and will affect the achievement letter grade (Allal, 1988; Anderman, 1992; Fuchs et al., 1994; Schunk, 1982). Studies of teachers of secondary students find that the work habits are seen as relevant to success and affect the teacher's expectations, but may not affect the letter grade for achievement (Napthali, 1987). Students in both elementary and secondary settings display attempts to confound and mislead their teachers, and feelings of cynicism and dismissal towards the teachers' perceptions (Lapadat, 1997).

Evaluation of work habits is essentially a subset of the spectrum of evaluations that each teacher performs. Skill in evaluation in any area will naturally benefit that process in another. It is imperative to define what is important about the process of evaluation in order to achieve fair and objective outcomes.

The issue of what teachers see and what they value is critical to understanding how work habits are evaluated. The Guidelines document states

> "(a)ssessing behaviour, effort, motivation and interest and including them in a grading system is problematic. Such traits are difficult to define and assess objectively. As much as possible, teachers should use systematic, dependable methods when assessing student attitudes and behaviour" (p. 22).

Assessment and evaluation of student progress and achievement are integral aspects of education. Given this importance, one would expect a great deal of time and energy would be spent on training teachers in these processes and that there would be a great deal of literature devoted to the topic. A cursory examination of the shelves of one university library's education

collection show numerous shelves devoted to texts on either general or particular dimensions of education, but only two sections contained volumes devoted to assessment and / or evaluation. An ERIC search showed similar proportions of other educational topics to assessment and evaluation within the literature. A further search through indices of several assessment and evaluation texts revealed no discussion of the topics of work habits or effort and only occasional references to general attitudes or behavior.

Three universities in British Columbia are presently involved in the education of teachers. At the moment, two require some formal assessment and evaluation instruction, either as a full course or as part of a course. Instruction in defining and evaluating work habits is included in these courses on an informal basis (Simon Fraser University and University of British Columbia instructors, personal communication). Generally, there seems to be few hours of study in work habit assessment and evaluation taken by student teachers during their university education.

Several authors have expressed concern about this perceived gap. Although they are not speaking about the Canadian system and circumstances, it is likely that there are numerous similarities. Richard J. Stiggins, (Stiggins, 1985; 1991; 1995) speaks eloquently on the need for improved assessment and evaluation literacy on the part of educators. He advises that educators need more education in assessment methods, and is concerned that there is no clear definition of academic success at the moment. The consequence of this lack of clarity is the confusion that abounds around how to assess and evaluate learning, achievement and success.

Another advocate for increased education in assessment and evaluation methods is J. R. Hills (1991). He contends that teachers and administrators apparently do not know or do not attend to what are sound and proper assessment practices. Hills comments that grades have been

used for disciplinary purposes, something which is a by-product of using letter grades for work habits on reports. He also suggests increased instruction in assessment and time to develop improved instruments.

There is considerable documentation that teachers receive little formal preparation for the process of assessment and evaluation during preparation or while working (Allal, 1994; Plake and Impara, 1997, in Phye, 1997; Stiggins, 1991). Allal interviewed forty-five teachers in Geneva. She found that teachers were not provided with a systematic approach towards understanding or utilising evaluation methods or theory either in their undergraduate education or from their supervisors. She recommended increased instructional time in assessment and evaluation practices.

According to Hills (1991), approximately 20% of teachers have taken measurement and evaluation courses while at university, and those were taken at least 10 years previously. More have participated in workshops or other professional development opportunities, but these tend to be more informal and based on sharing personal experiences and opinions (Plake and Impara, in Phye, 1997). Plake and Impara conclude that teachers are ill equipped to successfully undertake one of the most prevalent activities of their instructional program, student assessment (p. 67). Some authors argue that teachers do know how to evaluate the achievement of their students (Allal, 1988; Baker, Mednick, and Hocevar, 1991; Hoge and Coladarci, 1989; Pedulla et al, 1980). These studies and others, demonstrate that teachers can be extremely sensitive both in assessing ability and predicting achievement. It is felt that, although many may not have formally studied assessment and evaluation practices, experience, intuition and informal instruction result in teachers practicing reliable and valid evaluation techniques.

We are left, then, with something of a dilemma. Do teachers assess and evaluate work habits consistently and reliably or not? Common practice prompts a positive assumption that is supported by tradition and long-standing practice, but the current trend in favour of increased accountability seeking may require more rigour. It may no longer be acceptable to assume that this is a valid process.

Summary of What is Known and Unknown about the Topic

There are some basic tenets that guide good evaluation. These are:

1. The grading system should be clear and understandable.
2. The grading system should be communicated to all stakeholders.
3. The grading system should be fair to all students, regardless of gender, race, class or socioeconomic status.
4. The grading system should support, enhance and inform the instructional process. (Holmes, 1993)

Government documents indicate evaluation of work habits is required without defining what is to be evaluated. Each teacher is left to decide the purpose of the work habit mark. Achievement reporting, in contrast, has a clear and universally understood main purpose -- to report the achievement on performance or product-based curricular learning outcomes within a specific time span, as determined by the number of terms in each school year. Each term a report on academic progress and achievement, as well as work habits, is issued. If the purpose of this evaluation is to simply report on past behaviour, an instructor may use such objective criteria as frequency of homework assignments completed, preparedness for class, punctuality, attendance, or meeting of deadlines.

Anecdotal comments from various professionals indicate that on occasion a particular dimension of the student's behaviour will dominate the evaluation. If a student has been particularly annoying, the work habit mark could reflect this, with no direct measure being used. A teacher may use the mark to indicate that a student is doing well academically although, homework is rarely done. Perhaps the capable student is talking too much to classmates, or is cheeky, or arrives late to class. This student could then receive a less than satisfactory rating for work habits.

In contrast, there is the example of a student who is perceived as average or less than average in ability, but who fulfills all the teacher's behavioral expectations. This student may be awarded a higher work habit letter grade than the previous student. To the adults who read this report, it seems clear that the student has been working well and should be proud. To the student, the inference is that the teacher believes the student has low ability and is only capable of very low quality work (Ames and Archer, 1988; Covington and Omelich, 1979; Jagacinski and Nicholls, 1990). Certainly, it is unlikely that the purpose of the teacher was to say anything derogatory or injurious to the student, yet this could be the result.

What is unknown about the topic of using letter grades for work habit evaluation is how these habits are defined by junior secondary teachers, how they are measured and how they are then evaluated. We do not know if there is consistency between teachers at the same school, let alone across districts or the province. It is also unclear if this is a necessary grade to assign. It may be that, given the range of possibilities that exist, this assessment may be more effectively conveyed in another format. Ultimately, evaluation must assist a student in the learning process.

The Contribution This Study Will Make to the Literature

At the moment, it seems that without a clear set of criteria, the work habit letter grade as a mark has dubious value. Professional educators feel that they know what a work habit mark means, but there is no research which supports this feeling. Teachers have the ability to make meaningful judgments about their students and recommendations about their behaviour. While teachers may feel they understand the process of assessment and evaluation, they may not be applying this expertise to the work habit dimension with the same rigour that they are applying it to achievement. After evaluation, it is important to communicate results and planning decisions effectively and efficiently. At the moment, this does not appear to be the case with work habit evaluation.

This study will offer some information on how teachers define work habits, what they perceive the purpose of evaluating work habits to be, and how that determines the way they are evaluated. It will show what teachers value in student behaviour. Some understanding may emerge as to the impact this procedure has on students, and whether there is a better way to communicate praise and concern.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to discover (a) how secondary teachers define and evaluate student work habits, (b) what they perceive the purpose of this evaluation process to be, and (c) if there is similarity among the work habit definitions and the evaluation processes used. The design for this study followed a description in Miles and Huberman (1994, p.41). This design begins with a qualitative exploration of the general topics to be studied. This field data is analysed, and then a survey is developed. The data from the survey is then subjected to statistical examinations. The findings from the quantitative component may then be used in further qualitative exploration. This study may also be described as a combination of two components. These components are analytical (Mauch and Birch, 1993, p.114) and opinion polling (Mauch and Birch (1993, p.118).

Specific Procedures

It was necessary to begin by determining which terms, or constructs, teachers use for each of the constructs (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Napthali, 1987). Six teachers were interviewed in order to elicit current terminology and expressions. They were selected according to the level of interest expressed when the topic was introduced, and readiness to be interviewed. These six were all employed at secondary schools and have three or more years of teaching experience. Their teaching specialties include Humanities, Music, Art, Physical Education (P. E.), Learning Assistance and Science. The interviews were guided by eight specific questions, although more were asked depending on the interviewer's perceived need for clarification. Each interview took approximately one hour. The questions were:

1. How do you define work habits?
2. What criteria do you use?
3. What is the purpose of this evaluation?
4. Do you believe that work habit marks have an effect on student behaviour?
5. Have you ever discussed with your students what work habits are and how you would evaluate them?
6. Suppose a student gets a "C-/G" (on his or her report). How do you think he or she feels?
7. Were you ever taught how to define and/or evaluate work habits?
8. Are you satisfied with the system we are using now?

Four teachers were interviewed individually; two were interviewed together due to time constraints. They had been contacted prior to the interview, so were able to think about the subject ahead of time. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. The elicited constructs were then sorted according to the major themes of interest. These themes were:

1. definition of work habits,
2. purpose of work habit evaluation, and
3. processes used to evaluate.

Fifty-five terms were elicited from the six teachers in the "definition of work habits" category, thirty-four terms in the "purpose of work habit evaluation" category and twenty-terms in the "purpose of the evaluation of work habits" category. These constructs were sorted and "chunked" (Miles and Huberman, 1994). After the constructs had been chunked according to semantic content similarity, constructs from the literature were compared to the derived constructs (Napthali, 1997) in each category. Statements were developed that were succinct,

discrete and concise. A conscious effort was made to keep the number of derived constructs to a minimum in order to create a survey that would be attractive to busy teachers (Palys, 1992).

Surveys allow for quantification of the data, elicit information from a greater number and wider range of respondents, and increase generalizability of the results and conclusions. Surveys also allow responses from a larger number of respondents in the least amount of time (Palys, 1992). Survey responses are less likely to be influenced by a desire to please or impress, as there is no interaction between subject, or respondent, and researcher. The specificity of the questions focusses the respondents' attention on the topic. Surveys allow one researcher to work efficiently with a great deal of data (Palys, 1992; Sax, 1989).

The limitations of a survey are that ambiguities or misunderstandings are difficult to clarify, the anticipated response rate is low and there is a potential for volunteer bias (see Palys, p 416).

As the surveys were going to a well-educated population, literacy was not a concern. It was important, however, to ensure that questions were worded clearly, showed no bias and were succinct enough that the responses would be unambiguous.

Every effort was made to develop directions that were easy to follow. Space was made available for respondents to state their opinions and add to the rating scale response information. This allowed for additional or alternate responses to be considered after the survey has been completed (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 41). Allowing individual responses improved the communication between respondent and researcher, and gave the respondent increased impetus to return the surveys (Palys, 1992).

Fuchs et al. (1994) developed a Likert-type scale that allowed teachers to rate the importance of certain work habits for student academic success. Their scale does not examine

how well individual students are developing these habits. Other researchers (Napthali, 1987; Pedulla et al., 1980) also studied what habits were considered to lead to success, but did not include individual teacher ratings on student work habits. The instrument developed for use in this study includes components from both the literature and interview data.

Table 3 illustrates the development of survey items from the original teacher constructs for work habit definition. In some cases, the survey item is taken directly from the teacher constructs, as it seemed the clearest statement about that construct. In other cases, the item is summative. The middle column shows links to the three studies cited. Constructs from Napthali (1987) are indicated by (N), constructs from Pedulla (1980) are indicated by (P) and constructs from Fuchs et al. (1994) are indicated by (F).

Table 3.

Definition of Work Habit Constructs Leading to Survey Items

Constructs from teacher interviews	Corresponding constructs from literature	Survey item
Handing in junk Orderly presentation of work Legible	Presentation of work (N)	1. Student's work is easy to read.
Neatness Neat presentation of work Dating work	Neatness in schoolwork (P)	2. Student's work is neat.
Quantity of class work completed Assignment completion rate Completes all the parts of each task Homework has been completed Finish all work	Students attend consistently to assigned tasks (F)	3. Student's work is completed on time.
Using time efficiently and effectively Time on task Uses time effectively Stays on task Speed of production (Wanders around room)	Pupil involvement, class participation (N) Students have good work habits and make efficient use of class time (F) Persistence in school work (P)	4. Student uses class time effectively.
Organization of book and binder Keeping track of papers Organizational skills Learning to prioritize Brings materials to class Having a writing "stick"	Students assume responsibility for having materials (F)	5. Student has necessary materials available.
Participation in class discussions Pays attention Focusing	Class participation (N) Speech/use of language (P) Concentration, interest (N) Attention span (P)	6. Student participates in class discussions
Arriving to school on time Arriving to class on time Talking at the wrong time / too much	Attendance (N) (P) Students work without disrupting the rest of the class; follow classroom rules (F)	7. Student follows classroom rules.
Treating someone (badly) Consideration and awareness of other people's needs Working with group Learning manners Not physically hurting anybody	Likeability, behaviour, aggressiveness, maturity (N) Manners; behaviour in school ; getting along with other children (P)	8. Student cooperates with peers.
Making an effort to achieve the goals I have for them Solid effort Try to do the things I teach Trying to do the work I expect Degree of effort Trying to improve If student needs a push	Perceived effort Pupil involvement (N) Students cope with failure in an appropriate manner and don't give up (F) Keenness to get on (P)	9. Student makes an effort to improve.
Attitude Hard work Sportsmanship Showing independence Seeking help when needed Becoming self-directed	Pupil involvement, reliability (N) Students have independent study skills (F) Working with limited supervision (P)	10. Student has a positive attitude.
Achieving within capabilities Trying to do his or her best (Not) doing the best work possible (Not) doing what I want Doing what I ask	Pupil involvement , natural ability (N) Students produce work of acceptable quality given their skill levels; listen and comply with teacher directions (F)	11. Student works to the best of his/her ability.
Quality of class work Working too quickly to produce good work Linked to achievement Does more than required Use of table of contents	Performance in subject, perception of subject, (N)	12. Student succeeds in class.

The next section of the survey focused on what teachers believe is the purpose of the evaluation. Teachers are required to inform parents about the behaviour, attitudes, work habits and effort of the students (Guidelines for Student Reporting, 1994). Teachers are further directed by their districts to perform this process, but a more specific purpose was not included in any document the researcher was able to locate. Teachers apparently develop their own rationale for this required activity.

Table 4.

Purpose of the Evaluation Constructs Leading to Survey Items

Constructs elicited from teacher interviews	Survey item
I use it as a warning that the student has been displaying unacceptable behaviour	15. describe past behaviour
To wake a student up If student needs a push	16. alert the student to concern about his/her progress
To tell the student there is room for improvement To give them a message to do more To get the idea across that they aren't performing as well as they should	17. encourage improvement
To help them perform Positive boost Tell how they measure up to my standards Give a message to keep on trying	18. encourage continuation of satisfactory student behaviour
To reward hard work Appeal to their pride Congratulations (for performing at the best level for a student in that class) Let the student know if he or she has achieved a satisfactory amount of production	19. praise acceptable behaviour
Student is exhibiting habits of a good worker Student is showing attitudes of a good worker To set them up for success in later life To connect behaviour in school to the world of work	20. demonstrate the link between school and workplace behaviour
Message to parents Parents react strongly sometimes Parents are concerned about their child's behaviour	21. communicate with parents
I was told to do it I was told it was part of my job Administrators have told me to do it	22. follow school district requirements
	23. follow B. C. Ministry of Education requirements

A third grouping was made from descriptions of how these work habits are evaluated for the purpose for reporting.

Table 5.

Evaluation Process Terms Leading to Survey Items

Constructs elicited from teacher interviews	Survey item
I record task completion rate I keep some very objective records	26. rely on recorded data
I use a visual image of the student I call up a mental image of the student in my class I think of my impressions of the student over time	27. rely on my memory
It is a totally subjective evaluation It is kind of a niceness thing Includes how much I like this kid It is linked to the personality of the student Includes the way my teaching style and management style interact with the kid's learning and behaviour style	28. evaluate subjectively
I take an objective measure of the percentage of tasks completed	29. evaluate objectively
The mark is always linked to achievement Even if a student is doing his or her best, a low academic achievement will lead to a satisfactory work habit letter grade, never any higher	30. combine subjective and objective criteria
I take a holistic view of the student It is linked to my opinion if that student can do better The mark is an individual thing I take other variables into consideration I considered he was trying to stay on a team I knew the parents would overreact to a low grade I knew the parents would give me a bad time if I gave him a bad (work habit) grade	31. consider the student holistically
I discuss with the kids what I am looking for, but there is overlap with academic achievement Not discussed as well as I should	32. using criteria that have been described to the students
Never described the work habit criteria Although I didn't do it, I can see that it would be necessary to express criteria at the beginning of a course	33. assume students know what criteria are used

Note. The gaps in the numbering occur as two spaces were left blank at the end of each section to accommodate write-in suggestions.

The final five items in the Summary section were intended to offer some insight as to the confidence teachers have in their methods of assessment and evaluation and whether they believe the process is useful.

The questions were set up in a Likert-type scale that rated each item in seven gradations from such polarities as "Never to Always", "Least Important to Most Important" or "Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree". A seven-point scale was used to increase the range of possibilities and to reduce any tendency to cluster around the midpoint (Sax, 1989). Every effort was made to develop directions that were easy to follow.

Research Population

The population studied was secondary teachers in British Columbia. A sample of the population was selected by means of a random purposeful strategy (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28). Another aspect of the selection was convenience. The study involved only those sites that included a contact person known to the researcher.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was done in a junior secondary school. Seven teachers completed the draft version of the survey. Following their suggestions and comments, modifications were made. A new survey form was shown to three of these teachers and no further changes were suggested. A copy of the final survey is found in Appendix C.

Data Collection

Two limitations of using a survey were considered. In that most teachers are required to evaluate work habits for the purpose of ascertaining a letter grade for reports, it seemed likely that volunteer bias would elicit more volunteers who had strong feelings about the process, either positively or negatively. The other concern was the low return rate for surveys (Palys, 1992; Sax,

1989). It was decided to address these concerns by locating a confederate at each school. This confederate was asked to locate possible respondents. The researcher and the confederates discussed the most effective means of improving the return rate. The variables deemed relevant to the confederates were (a) the likelihood of the subject completing the survey responsibly and (b) looking for subjects with a range of experience and subject specialties. Each confederate was asked how many surveys he or she would be willing to distribute. The number ranged from five to ten. This enabled the researcher to bundle surveys and have them bundled in return mail, keeping the mailing cost down. The surveys were sent in large envelopes, accompanied by stamped, pre-addressed envelopes. With each confederate taking responsibility for distributing and collecting a few surveys, the process became more personal and more manageable at each site. An envelope accompanied each individual survey. A copy of the letter that also accompanied each survey is found in Appendix D. A copy of the letter sent to each confederate is found in Appendix E. The large return envelopes were addressed to an assistant, who removed the completed surveys and discarded the return envelopes. This ensured that no survey could be traced to its school of origin, so respondent confidentiality was secure.

Research Sample

The surveys were distributed to twelve schools in eight school districts in B. C. These schools range from large urban schools to small rural schools. The student populations are multi-cultural, and include students ranging in age from twelve to eighteen years. A total of one hundred-fourteen surveys were distributed. Seventy-eight were returned--a 68 % return rate.

Treatment of the Data

All of the returned surveys were numbered for later ease of identification. The data were entered on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

One hundred fourteen surveys were distributed. Seventy-eight surveys were returned, a 68% rate of return. All were usable. Fourteen respondents added one or two personal terms in the category of definition factors, two included their own criteria for the purpose of the evaluation and five suggested additional processes. Forty included further comments about the process either overall or specific aspects. These comments will be discussed following the presentation of the numerical data.

Analyses

The first statistical treatment was an item analysis. This was done to determine if any items were ambiguous or nondiscriminating (Sax, 1989). Miskeying is not an issue as there are no correct or incorrect responses. The discrimination between items relates to agreement with the other respondents rather than agreement with a key. The data were analyzed in two steps. One step was to do a within-groups item analysis. The mean and the variance were calculated on that dimension. Next, an item analysis was done on the entire set of questions. The numbers have been allocated to match the frequency tables that follow. The survey was numbered from "1" to "40", with each section including two blank numbered places for respondents to add their own contributions. The following tables show the mean score and variance for each item, as well as a correlation for each item within the scale and one for the whole survey.

Table 6.

Item Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of the Factors in Work Habits Definitions

Item	Item mean	Standard deviation	Item-Scale correlation	Whole-scale correlation
1. Student's work is easy to read	4.65	1.83	.57	.52
2. Student's work is neat.	4.74	1.60	.63	.59
3. Student's work is completed on time.	6.22	1.02	.19	.21
4. Student uses class time effectively.	6.54	0.89	.53	.43
5. Student has necessary materials available.	6.31	1.09	.52	.40
6. Student participates in class discussions.	5.34	1.42	.49	.41
7. Student follows classroom rules.	6.09	1.32	.62	.54
8. Student cooperates with peers.	5.97	1.28	.72	.67
9. Student makes an effort to improve.	6.17	1.10	.57	.54
10. Student has a positive attitude.	5.97	1.28	.70	.60
11. Student works to the best of his/her ability.	6.45	1.08	.49	.47
12. Student succeeds in class.	4.87	1.80	.36	.20

In the item-scale correlations in Table 6, there were no small effects ($d = .2$ $r_{pb}=.10$). Medium effects ($d = .5$ $r_{pb}=.24$) were found in one item, and all others showed large effects ($d = .8$ $r_{pb}=.37$) (Cohen, in Kirk, 1996, p. 751). In the whole scale item correlation, two items (3 and 12) showed medium effects, while the other ten showed large effects. Item 3 showed the lowest correlation but a high frequency of agreement, so it was retained.

Table 7.

Item Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Teachers' Opinions of the Purpose of Work Habits Evaluation

Item	Item mean	Standard deviation	Item-Scale correlation	Whole scale correlation
1. to describe past behaviour	4.53	1.94	.63	.55
2. to alert the student to concerns about progress	4.73	1.55	.66	.60
3. to encourage improvement	6.16	1.07	.30	.24
4. to encourage continuation of satisfactory behaviour	6.49	0.96	.53	.43
5. to praise acceptable behaviour	6.27	1.02	.66	.44
6. to demonstrate the link between work and school	5.25	1.50	.51	.39
7. to communicate with parents	5.99	1.40	.66	.58
8. to follow school district requirements	5.84	1.43	.72	.69
9. to follow B. C. Ministry of Education requirements	6.04	1.19	.57	.56

In Table 7, the correlations between the statements within the scale and among the entire set showed medium to large effects (Kirk, 1996).

The mean scores for items 1, 2, 6 and 8 place these items within the middle range of ratings. Item 7 is included in the range of highly rated items. No items had means in the low range. Item 3 showed very low correlation values for both within-scale and whole-scale correlations, although it showed high frequency of agreement.

Table 8.

Item Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

of Evaluation Processes used by Secondary Teachers.

Item	Item Mean	Standard deviation	Item-Scale correlation	Whole scale correlation
1. I rely on recorded data.	5.30	1.80	.36	.43
2. I rely on my memory.	4.66	1.86	.45	-.03
3. I evaluate subjectively.	5.03	1.64	.63	.18
4. I evaluate objectively.	5.30	1.41	.25	.37
5. I evaluate using a combination of subjective and objective criteria.	5.57	1.70	.68	.38
6. I consider the student holistically	5.65	1.31	.51	.30
7. I use criteria which I have previously described to the students.	5.65	1.59	.47	50
8. I use criteria that I assume is understood by the students.	4.19	2.27	.40	.03

In Table 8, two items show extremely small effects for whole scale correlations, although they were within medium to large effect range for the within-scale correlation. These were (2) I rely on my memory, and (8) I use criteria that I assume is understood by the students. Item 3 dropped from a large within-scale correlation to a small whole scale correlation. The mean for all items places these factors within the middle range of ratings.

Table 9

Item Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Summary Statements.

Item	Item Mean	Standard deviation	Item-Scale correlation	Whole scale correlation
1. Work habit letter grades help students with the task of learning good work habits.	4.29	1.91	.84	.51
2. Work habit letter grades help teachers with the task of teaching good work habits.	4.31	1.80	.81	.36
3. Work habit letter grades help parents with the task of teaching good work habits.	4.45	1.73	.84	.44
4. The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is valid.	5.69	1.25	.58	.44
5. The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is efficient.	5.54	1.30	.53	.37

Table 9 treats two distinct concepts, one related to the usefulness of the evaluation mark and the other related to the process.

Items 1, 2 and 3 performed similarly, with similar means and within-scale correlations. The difference in overall correlations is significant for items 1 and 2. It is greater than the difference between a large and medium effect (Cohen, in Kirk, 1996, p. 751). The means for all items place the overall ratings within the middle range.

Elements Relating to the Research Questions

The data were grouped into four sections in the survey. These sections are: factors in work habit definition, purpose of the evaluation, process used and summary statements. The data were grouped from a seven-point scale into three discrete units. These are low (ratings of 1 or 2), middle (ratings of 3, 4 or 5) and high (ratings of 6 or 7). This was done to give a clearer picture of trends that may occur, and to simplify interpretation (Kirk, 1990; Sax, 1989). The results are in the following tables.

The first section was concerned with the factors used in defining work habits and how important each was to individual teachers. The factors are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

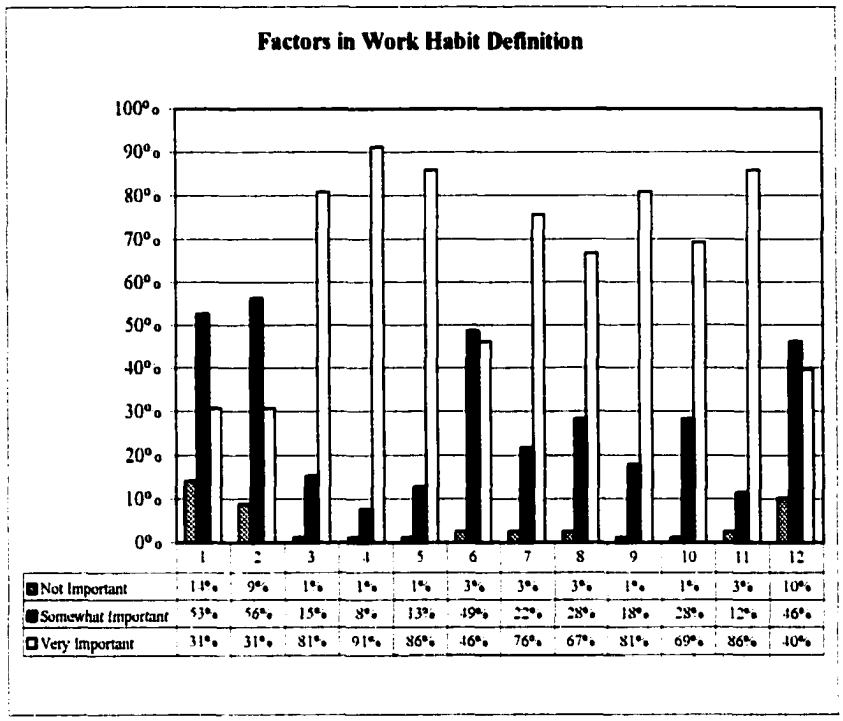
Work Habits Definition Factors

Number	Statement
1	The student's work is easy to read.
2	The student's work is neat.
3	The student's work is completed on time.
4	The student uses class time effectively.
5	The student has the necessary materials available
6	The student participates in class discussions.
7	The student follows classroom rules.
8	The student cooperates with peers.
9	The student makes an effort to improve.
10	The student has a positive attitude.
11	The student works to the best of his/her ability.
12	The student succeeds in class.

Table 11, on the following page, illustrates the percentages in each category for each of the factors.

Table 11

Percentage Agreements Ratings of the Work Habits Definition Factors



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Not Important	14%	9%	1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	3%	1%	1%	3%	10%
Somewhat Important	53%	56%	15%	8%	13%	49%	22%	28%	18%	28%	12%	46%
Very Important	31%	31%	81%	91%	86%	46%	76%	67%	81%	69%	86%	40%

The factors that were rated "Very Important" by the greatest number of teachers were (4) using time effectively, (5) "has necessary materials", (11) "works to the best of his/her ability", (3) "completes work on time", and (9) "makes an effort to improve". At least two-thirds of teachers rated (7) "follows class rules", (8) "cooperates with peers", and (10) "has a positive attitude" as very important. Factors that were considered "Somewhat Important" were (1) "work is easy to read" and (2) "work is neat". Items (6) "participation in class discussions" and (12) "succeeding in class" were rated somewhat to very important. The range used for rating the

factors as very important was from 31% to 91%. Factors 3,4,5, 9 and 10 are seldom considered to be "Not important".

The next section focusses on the opinions of teachers about the purpose of the mark. There are nine suggested reasons. These are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Purposes of the Work Habits Evaluation Mark

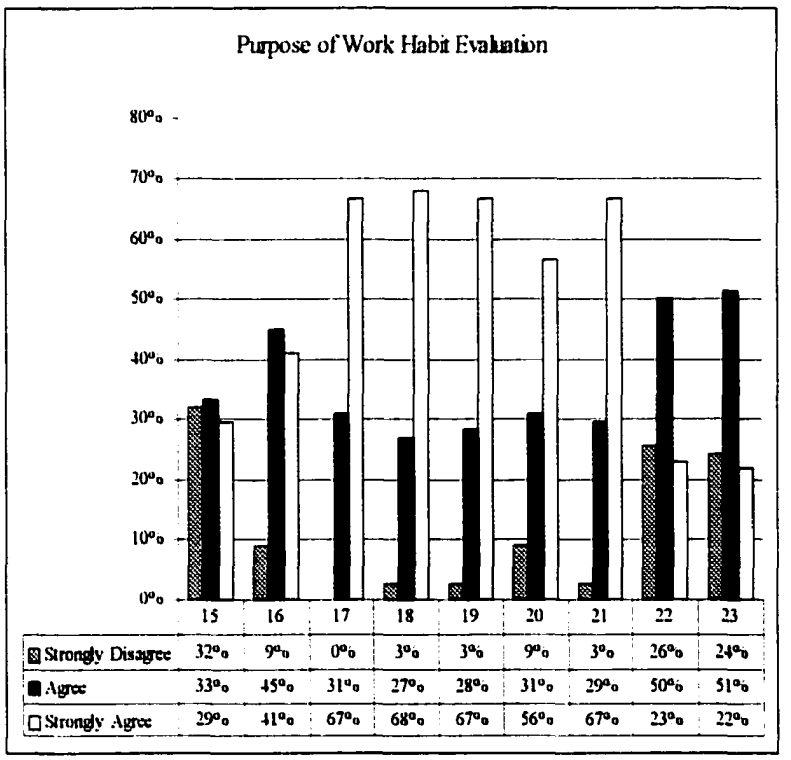
Number	I believe that the purpose of evaluating work habits is to ...
15	describe past behaviour.
16	alert the student to concern about her/his academic progress
17	encourage improvement.
18	encourage continuation of satisfactory behaviour.
19	praise acceptable behaviour.
20	demonstrate the link between school and workplace behaviour.
21	communicate with parents.
22	follow school district requirements.
23	follow Ministry of Education requirements.

Table 13, on the following page, illustrates the frequency percentages in each category for each of the factors.

Table 13

Percentage Agreements Ratings of the

Purpose of the Work Habits Evaluation



	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Strongly Disagree	32%	9%	0%	3%	3%	9%	3%	26%	24%
Agree	33%	45%	31%	27%	28%	31%	29%	50%	51%
Strongly Agree	29%	41%	67%	68%	67%	56%	67%	23%	22%

"Strongly Agree" was selected by the greatest number of teachers for the following factors: (18) "to encourage continuation of satisfactory behaviour', (17) "to encourage improvement", (21) "to communicate with parents", and (20) "to demonstrate the link between workplace and school behaviour". Teachers showed moderate agreement with the suggestion that the purpose is to follow (22) "school district" or (23) "Ministry requirements". Teachers showed moderate to strong agreement with (16) "alerting the student to concerns about academic

progress" and (20) "demonstrate the link between school and workplace behaviour". No trend emerged for (15) "describing past behaviour". The range for strongly agreeing with the suggested purposes for the evaluation is from 22% to 68%.

The third section examined ways teachers evaluate a student's work habits. The options in this section are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Processes for Evaluating Students' Work Habits

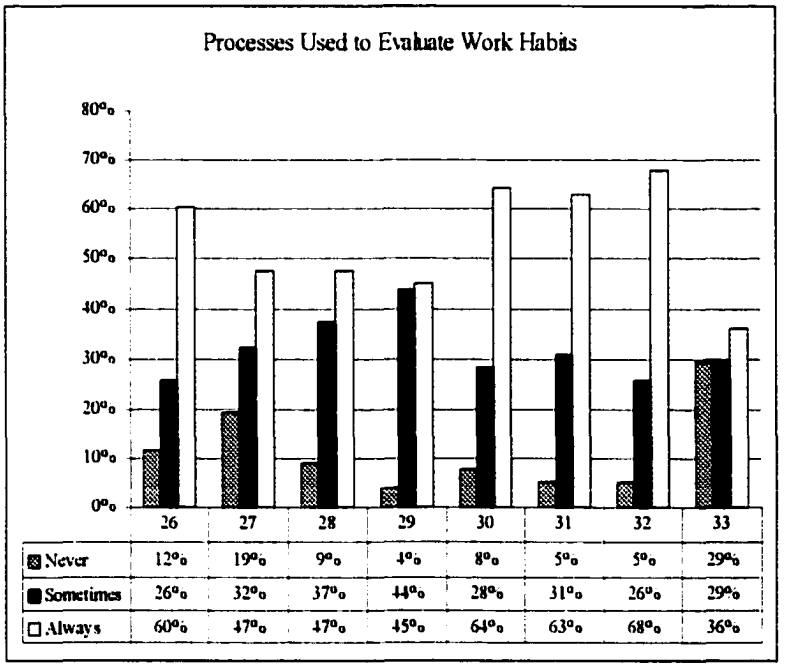
Number	When I give the report mark for work habits for a student, I ...
26	rely on recorded data.
27	rely on my memory.
28	evaluate subjectively.
29	evaluate objectively.
30	evaluate using a combination of subjective and objective criteria.
31	consider the student holistically.
32	use criteria which I have previously described to the students.
33	use criteria that I assume is understood by the students.

Table 15 illustrates the frequency percentages in each category for each of the factors.

Table 15

Percentage Agreements Ratings of the

Work Habits Evaluation Processes



	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
Never	12%	19%	9%	4%	8%	5%	5%	29%
Sometimes	26%	32%	37%	44%	28%	31%	26%	29%
Always	60%	47%	47%	45%	64%	63%	68%	36%

Close to two-thirds stated that they always (30) "use a combination of subjective and objective criteria", or that they (31) "consider the student holistically". Eighty-six percent always or sometimes (26) "rely on recorded data", while 79% always or sometimes (27) "rely on their memories". Less than half always use (28) "subjective evaluation" or (29) "objective evaluation". Sixty-eight percent always (32) "describe the criteria for evaluation with their students". There is some equality across frequencies between (33) "using criteria that I assume is understood by the students".

The fourth section consists of five summary statements. Teachers were asked to express opinions on the utility of the work habit letter grade. The statements are presented in Table 16.

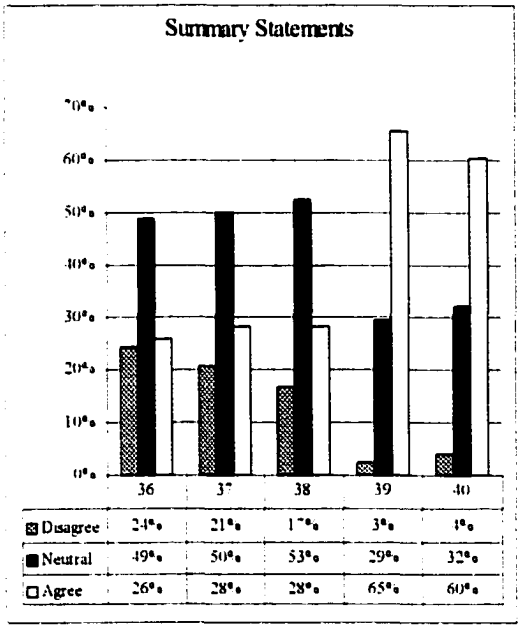
Table 16

Summary Statements

Number	Statement
36	Work habit letter grades help students with the task of learning good work habits.
37	Work habit letter grades help teachers with the task of teaching good work habits.
38	Work habit letter grades help parents with the task of teaching good work habits.
39	The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is valid.
40	The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is efficient.

Table 17

Percentage Agreement Ratings of the Summary Statements



Most teachers are neutral, or not convinced, that the mark (36) "helps students learn good work habits", or (37) "helps teachers" or (38) "parents teach good work habits", although the trend does not represent the majority in all statements. Over 20% of teachers disagreed that the mark is helpful. There is confidence that the methods used are both (39) "valid" and (40) "efficient".

Evidence that Supports the Research Questions

The data were then examined for modal agreements. The responses given were tracked for agreement with the modal score on each item. The items with small effects were not included in this examination (Kirk, 1990; Cohen, in Kirk, 1996).

Individual agreement with the modal scores ranged from 19% to 90%. Twenty-six percent of respondents agreed with the mode more than 80% of the time, 19% of teachers agreed with the mode 67% of the time. Eight percent agreed with the mode less than 50% of the time.

Subsets were examined according to information given on the returned survey forms. Some information was not given in various categories, so the numbers do not add up to $\underline{n} = 78$ in all categories.

Teachers' years of teaching experience were used in the assessment. The groupings used were 1 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years and 21 plus years of experience. When contacted, representatives at the B. C. Teachers' Federation responded that their statistics did not use a standardized set of parameters; the ranges varied according to specific requirements of the survey. Therefore, using a conventional grouping of decades of service was considered reasonable and informative. Table 18 shows the comparison between the ranges.

Table 18.

Years of Teaching Experience by Agreement with Modal Groupings

Years of Teaching Experience	n	Lowest Agreement Rate	Highest Agreement Rate	Difference
1 to 10 years	33	43 %	90 %	47
11 to 20 years	21	33 %	86 %	53
21 plus years	23	19 % (33%)	90 %	71 (57)

One individual out of the 78 was consistently anomalous in the statistics. The difference for the age grouping of 21 plus years is shown with that individual included, and in brackets, if that person was excluded from the data. There were only two individuals with 90% agreement so the same consideration could be made at the higher end of the two categories where 90%

occurs. These individuals were all retained in the data as their number is small and it may be that they are representative of others who would show up in a larger survey.

Teaching area was then considered. Teaching areas used were Humanities, or English and Social Studies; Sciences, which includes Mathematics; Physical Education; Applied Skills, which includes all Shop and Home Economics courses as well as Business Education; Fine Arts, which includes Art, Drama and Band; and Other, which included Learning Assistance, CAPP, and Languages.

Table 19

Teaching Area by Agreement with Modal Groupings

Teaching Area By Subject	n	Lowest Agreement Rate	Highest Agreement Rate	Difference
Humanities	34	33 %	86 %	53
Sciences	14	19 %	90 %	71
Physical Education	5	52 %	86 %	34
Applied Skills	6	62 %	90 %	28
Fine Arts	6	43 %	81 %	38
Other (e.g. Languages, Learning Assistance)	10	52 %	86 %	34

Again, one individual has a large effect on the range. In this case, the effect is seen in Science.

The next inspection was around how many formal courses in educational measurement or evaluation teachers estimated were taken during their training. Several teachers responded with question marks to this question. In order to quantify this response, they were assigned a "0", following the logic that if a person was unable to remember taking a course, it was unlikely one was taken. One respondent indicated that 200 courses were taken. As most undergraduate degrees usually involve about 40 to 50 courses, this seemed an overestimate. Instead, it was presumed that one course was taken at the 200 level.

Statistics from American research suggest approximately 20% of teachers have taken courses in educational measurement (Wise, Lukin and Roos, 1991). Less than half of colleges and universities surveyed in the USA offered courses in measurement and evaluation, and a small number of them required completion of one such course for certification. Information from one provincial university indicates that approximately one eighth of a course would be formally devoted to evaluation techniques and statistical interpretation. Another university offers courses but they are not mandatory. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the high numbers reported actually refer to measurement courses. It seems more likely that the figure includes methods courses as well. The true number of courses is therefore an estimate for many respondents. Table 20 shows the outcomes when data are sorted according to estimates of measurement courses taken.

Table 20

Number of Formal Measurement or Evaluation Courses

Taken During Education by Agreement with Modal Groupings

Number of Courses	n	Lowest Agreement Rate	Highest Agreement Rate	Difference
None	16	52 %	86 %	34
1	21	33 %	86 %	53
2	27	19 %	90 %	71
3	9	52 %	81 %	29
4 or more	1	62 %	81 %	19

Note: the average number of courses taken by teachers during their education is 1.4.

The range is least for the teachers with the most measurement courses, and greatest for those who have taken two courses. The percentage of teachers who have taken courses is 80%, four times the number predicted using American estimates.

Table 21

Gender of Teachers by Agreement with Modal Groupings

Gender	n	Lowest Rate	Highest Rate	Difference
Male	40	19 % (33%)	90 %	71(57)
Female	38	52 %	86 %	34

The great range for male teachers is due in part to one individual, who responded uniquely to most questions. Even without one respondent, the range for male teachers would be from 33 % to 90 %, a difference of 57 %.

The anecdotal data gathered from written comments on the returned survey is presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Contributions from Surveys

Definition factors	Purpose Factors	Process Factors
Indicates self-monitoring of understanding	Identify attitude or approach	Use criteria set with students
Attempts to get help	Feedback on habits as seen by others	Solicit students self-evaluation
Asks questions		
Asks questions about criteria for assessment		Criteria provided by my school
Communicates needs to teacher		
Asks for extra work or practice		
Books are organized and neat		
Leadership skills		
Shows empathy for others		
Not disruptive		
Does not discourage others		
Regular attendance / on time Getting to class on time		Consider attendance Rely on attendance record
Assignments (not) handed in		
Getting on with assigned task		
Homework and assignments completed on time		
Honours agreements on work		
Makes corrections for tests /quizzes		
Edits work for completeness and accuracy		

From this table, it may be seen that there are numerous ways that teachers would describe work habits that are meaningful to them. They have been clustered into similar groupings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). There may appear to be some overlap with the twelve factors provided in the survey, but that overlap was not obvious to the writers of the contributions. This indicates that even the terms may have different interpretations for individual teachers.

Two additions to the purpose section were made. The interpretation of the first one in this table, "identify attitude or approach" is not immediately clear, but again had meaning for the contributor.

Of the five additions to the process section, two are similar. It may be noted that attendance is reported in other places on the formal report.

Of the anecdotal comments returned with the surveys, most offered reasons for the choices made in the numerical data. Some indicated that as students progress through Grades 8 and 9 they receive more guidance and direct instruction in study and work habits than do the older students. Many expressed cynicism about the letter grade system: "...it is my experience that the only thing considered on the report is the academic grade", "Work habit grades do not teach anything", "I'm not sure a letter grade gives students sufficient feedback on their work habits". Some comments were clear; "Students are expected to sit down, be quiet, listen to me and do what I say", "Attitude is of no moment, only work counts" or "Simple rule; always do what you are supposed to do (or try to). Never do what you're not supposed to do." There was no pattern or theme that emerged from these comments, although they offered insight into respondents' decision-making processes.

Unanticipated Results

Unanticipated results include the change in the ranges between less experienced and more experienced teachers. The researcher's expectation had been that there would be more agreement among teachers, as they became more experienced, rather than the reverse. As science teachers have more training in mathematics than do most other teachers, it was expected that there would be more agreement among Science teachers. Applied Skills teachers show greater agreement than any other group, possibly because the assessment is more performance-based than content-based, and that is where work habits are most likely to be a part of the overall evaluation. It also appears that having formal training in educational measurement or evaluation has little effect on agreement in ratings. There is a wide gap for both male and female teachers, but the gap is wider for men than women.

Using modal agreements to assess the data revealed that there is variability in the way teachers define work habits, why they believe this evaluation should be done and how it should be done.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

A survey was developed from information received in several interviews. This survey is a relatively untested instrument, so it was important to determine if it was measuring what it was intended to measure. An item analysis of the survey responses showed high correlations for most items within the scales. The range of correlations, as seen in Tables 6 through 9, indicates that there is a strong connection between the items in each scale. The standard deviations are small in most cases, indicating that there is little fluctuation in the response pattern and that the items had clear meaning for the respondents. The survey has face validity because the items appear to be both relevant and important to respondents, and content validity, because the item content corresponds with the objectives (Sax, 1989).

The first section of the survey dealt with the definition of work habits. The items were designed to determine if there is a common set of terms or factors in the working definition of student work habits that occurs across schools and teaching disciplines. The study also was trying to discover if all teachers use the same factors when they evaluate and how important each factor was in the evaluation.

The item-scale correlations range from .19 to .72 for the factors in work habit definitions. With the one exception, this level of correlation shows strong interrelationships between the items. The exception is (3) "student's work is completed on time". It had a .19 item-scale correlation and .21 whole-scale correlation. The frequency agreement was either "Very Important" (81%) or "Somewhat important" (15%), which is why it was retained with the others in the assessment. It is clearly an important factor in evaluation considerations for teachers. It is possible that it is not as related to work habits evaluation as it is to academic evaluation. Many

secondary teachers subscribe to a practice of reducing marks for handing in assignments late. They may feel that it is not acceptable to have the same action affect two marks.

Over 80 % of teachers agreed that work being completed on time, effective use of time, having necessary materials, and working to the best of one's ability are very important. These appear to be the most important factors in the definition. Some teachers consider all of the items very important. Some teachers consider some factors more important and others less. Fewer than 5% responded identically to the twelve items.

Several additional factors were contributed by the respondents. This indicates more factors are in use than were included originally. If these had been the first people interviewed, the survey would have used those as the starting point.

These results show that there is no standardized definition of work habits being used by teachers for the purpose of evaluation.

The second purpose was to determine what teachers believed was the purpose of the work habit evaluation marks. A set of suggested purposes was provided in the survey, and teachers were invited to share their own views of what the purpose might be. The intent was to discover if all teachers are evaluating student work habits with the same purpose in mind, and what the significance would be if there were any differences.

Teachers' responses to the items within the purpose factor scale showed high item-scale correlations. This indicates that these are all recognized as reasonable, possible purposes. The frequency was evenly split on item 15 in the survey " to describe past behaviour". This is intriguing because that is what the evaluation is rating – it is not possible to evaluate future behaviour, and impossible on a report to rate present behaviour. This result was possibly due to poor wording on the item, or to the obviousness of the statement.

Other purposes were endorsed with greater enthusiasm, such as encouraging continuation of satisfactory behaviour and demonstrating the link between workplace and school behaviour. There was also strong agreement that the evaluation is intended to communicate with parents, but there is less agreement with the linked summary statement that the evaluation helps parents teach good work habits. Teachers were in agreement that this evaluation was done to meet Ministry of Education requirements, although the Ministry specifically steers teachers away from using letter grades for this evaluation.

One item that had a low item-scale correlation was the third in the list of suggested purposes for work habit evaluation. It was (17) in the survey, "(to) encourage improvement". The item-scale correlation was .30, the whole-scale correlation .24. For this item also, there was close to 100% agreement that this was one purpose of the evaluation. The item mean was 6.16 out of 7, with a standard deviation of 1.15. The reason that this may not be as related to the other purpose factors could be found in the comments teachers added to the surveys. Several suggested that work habit letter grades were one more way of praising good students and one more way of punishing poor students. It was unlikely that a poor student, or one who requires encouragement to improve, would respond favourably to a less than satisfactory mark. There is a sense of optimism that this "might work" tempered with pessimism that it would have no effect on the student.

These results show that there are mixed feelings about the purpose of a work habit evaluation, especially when represented by a letter grade. The range of opinion indicates that there has been no direction as to the specific purpose. With such a variety of beliefs about the purpose, there will be a range of beliefs about the efficacy of such a process. If a teacher

believes there is one specific purpose and the student who receives the mark interprets it from a different perspective, there is little chance for effective communication.

The third purpose of the study, reflected in the third section of the survey, was to learn how teachers go about generating these marks. If the purpose and the definition are clear, the process should follow logically. For example, if the purpose of work habit evaluation is to communicate with parents how often a student hands work in on time and participates in class discussions, the mark could readily be obtained by a simple tallying of times the behaviours did or did not occur. Given the lack of unanimity of definition factors and purposes, it is not surprising that the processes are also highly individualized. Most teachers agreed that they use a combination of subjective and objective criteria and consider the student holistically. Items on the process scale were highly correlated, with one exception. The frequency of agreement on use of all six processes suggested was 45% or greater.

The final item that showed a low correlation was the fourth one on the list of process possibilities, "evaluate objectively". The item-scale correlation was .25 and the whole-scale correlation was .37, one of the few whose correlation increased in the whole-scale. The frequency agreement was split evenly between "Sometimes" and "Always".

One theme that emerged from comments and the numerical data is the integral use of subjectivity in the work habit evaluation process. Teachers seemed to feel uncomfortable with the notion of an evaluation that is subjective. Subjective evaluation carries negative connotations due to the possibility of accusations of personal bias or favouritism, as well as the sense that it is highly contextual. They defended their position with the claim that they were unable to evaluate work habits on a totally objective basis due to time constraints. Objective evaluation is time-

consuming and must be focussed on precise variables. As already pointed out, this is not a viable aspect of work habit evaluation.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Limitations of the Study

One strength of the study is the variety of respondents. The respondents work in eight school districts in B. C. These districts are not contiguous, and range from the south to the northwest of the province. Another strength is the independence of the respondents. There is little likelihood that there has been much communication between interested parties on any level on these topics. This study may also be seen as representative of the province. There were similar numbers of respondents from each district, so that no one district dominated the numbers, or skewed the results in any way. Another strength is that the teachers who responded were volunteers who were interested enough to complete the survey, add comments and in some cases, include other documents that they considered informative.

One possible weakness of the study is the instrument, which is new and untested. In the first trial, it appears to be a valid measure of teachers' opinions of the work habit evaluation process. There are at least three items that performed differently in the scales, and more work should be done on the items before using this instrument in its entirety again.

Other questions that could have been investigated are:

- Have you ever given a work habit mark based on your expectation of parental reaction?
- Have you ever been pressured to change a work habit mark for any reason?
- If yes to the previous question, what was the reason?
- Have you ever seen a student change behaviour over the long term based on work habit marks alone?

- Have you ever met a student who was interested in his / her work habit mark?

Of course there are many more ways that this could be investigated. These are a few that would add to the depth of the study.

One limitation of the study is the relatively small number of respondents. There are around 40,000 teachers in the province of B. C. There were 78 respondents. They may represent only those teachers who care about how this process takes place, how it ultimately may affect students and parents, or who like to fill in surveys. More than eight districts could have been involved. Another limitation is the length of the survey. At best, a short survey can only examine in a superficial way. It can only test the surface of the concepts in question. The number of items was chosen based on an estimate of a length that was likely to be attractive to busy respondents. It may be that the respondents felt strongly about the topic and that a longer, more involved survey would have been possible.

Implications for Professional Practice or Decision-making

There are numerous implications for professional practice or decision-making. The work habit definition is personal, the purpose vague and the process unstructured. It is based on an unknown set of weights and measures. The implication is that the evaluation letter grade is not a valid or reliable assessment, no matter what the teachers in this study may claim. It would be impossible for any teacher to interpret any other teacher's work habit mark with clarity and specificity. It would also be difficult for a student or a parent to interpret the mark with any degree of confidence unless the teacher had given clear directions. If a mark does not convey clear and precise information, then it is not useful in any way to the reader of the mark.

Legal issues may also become a consideration. There have been challenges in the U.S. to any evaluation of a student that is not based on strictly academic criteria (Hills, 1991). It is

advisable to reconsider activities in the light of legal rights, responsibilities and consequences, especially when they concern minors.

Implications for Future Research

Part of a child's self-concept derives from scholastic progress. Academic achievement and evaluation is based on a precise, observable and measurable set of criteria, and defines the way students rate themselves (Nicholls, 1976). If a student believes that she has limited ability, she may chose not to try very hard (Mac Iver, 1991; Mueller and Dweck, 1998; Nicholls, 1976). A report mark follows a student for the duration of his life. It must be arrived at fairly in ways that would be followed in any other similar location. This cannot be said about the present work habit evaluation mark. Research into the effect of the work habit mark on students is indicated.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in several areas is indicated. It was beyond the scope of this paper to include the other two stakeholder groups in this study. Involving parents and students in the assessment of this process and hearing their recommendations for change would be beneficial.

It seems advisable to examine the legal implications of this evaluation process before expensive challenges are made.

Recommendations for Changes in Professional Practice

Teachers in B. C. are provided with a set of Integrated Learning Plans (IRP'S) that describe the learning outcomes for each course. Student progress is evaluated in relation to these learning outcomes. There is no provincial IRP for work habits, therefore no provincially prescribed criteria for learning outcomes that are exclusively in the domain of work habits. There is no IRP, so one could be developed. This would involve a great deal of time and expense. The

results would likely be disappointing as the implementation would require training and add to the evaluation burden of professionals who are already over-burdened.

Recommendations for Modifications in Accepted Theoretical Constructs

Evaluating work habits with a letter grade is common practice in many jurisdictions. As educators are increasing their accountability to the public, it seems reasonable to examine any practice that exists simply due to custom.

Recommendations Concerning Changes

Using letter grades to evaluate work habits is a procedure fraught with problems. The Ministry of Education recommends against it and there are no learning outcomes on which to base the evaluation. Anecdotal descriptors are already elicited through the comments available in the computer-based reporting programs used in secondary schools. The first step recommended is dropping the letter grade for work habits on the report to parents. The next would be to add to the list of comments already available, based on suggestions from the staff who will be using them. Another suggestion is to include the possibility of a teacher-generated comment, of a restricted length, that would meet a teacher's desire to make a unique comment or observation. This recommendation would involve some time for revisions and little expense to implement.

Several teachers expressed a desire for change of some type. Many were unable to articulate exactly how they wished to change things, but some indicated a checklist would be one way. Use of a checklist for behaviours would add to the record keeping of teachers, and require the development of new forms or increased photocopying. This is recommended with reservations, as the focus of any change should include efficiency and economic considerations.

Summary

With the advent of the now infamous year 2000, educators must examine current practices for their utility and applicability. Reporting on a student's work habits, behaviour and attitude, as required by the Ministry of Education, is reasonable. All of our students are expected to enter the work force at some point. Educators must help to prepare them for the demands they will face. Work habits are part of the *Gestalt* of an individual. Evaluating a child's growth as a worker is as important as evaluating his growth as a learner. The system used to evaluate must be precise, measurable and pertinent to the purpose. This study suggests that the present system of defining and evaluating work habits is none of those. This "problematic" reporting system may be easily modified. With very little work, this practice can become efficient, effective and (almost) enjoyable.

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Appendix A Student Report Sample

REPORT CARD

1028 College Heights Secondary

HOMEROOM 31
ROOM 248
MR.

APP 93

001 07 EN 8 MRS.
It is a pleasure to teach such a pleasant co-operative student.
TRM % 96 1
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB S

Well done.

010 07 SS 8 MRS.
It is a pleasure to teach such a pleasant co-operative student.
TRM % 87 0
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB S

One of the top students in the class.

020 07 MA 8 MR.
One of the top students in the class.
TRM % 91 3
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB O

It is a pleasure to have such an excellent student in this class.

030 07 SC 8 MR.
One of the top students in the class.
TRM % 90 0
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB O

Well done.

071 04 PE 8G MR. R.
It is a pleasure to have such an excellent student in this class.
TRM % 86 4
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB O

076 06 FN 8
TRM % 99 0
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB O

079 02 TX 8
TRM % 86 0
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB O

097 01 BA 8
The test pieces have been well prepared.
TRM % 100 3
LTRGRD A
WRKHAB G

Musicianship is excellent.

Congratulations

Honour Roll

TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OF:

Appendix B ERIC Search Terms (including Psychlit)

Nothing found	Fewer than 5 titles found	More than 5 titles found
Ability perceptions Ability ratings	Assessment of students	Ability assessment Ability testing
Behaviour perceptions Behaviour ratings Behaviour reports		Behaviour (of) students Behaviour descriptions or descriptors
Determination (of) students Determination descriptions Determination ratings Determination perceptions		
Deportment (of) students		
Effort assessment Effort evaluation Effort perceptions Effort ratings Effort reports		
		Evaluation (of) students
Motivation assessment Motivation description Motivation evaluation Motivation observation Motivation perception Motivation ratings		Motivation (of) students
	Reporting to parents Reporting on students	Reporting techniques
Student effort Student effort assessment Student effort evaluation Student reports Student report guidelines Student work habits	Student assessment Student evaluation	
Work habits assessment Work habits description Work habits evaluation Work habits (reporting)		Work habits (all related to adult working behaviour)

Appendix C Survey (page 1)

University of Northern British Columbia

STUDENT WORK HABITS EVALUATION SURVEY

I. Demographic and education questions

For each of the questions asked, please fill in the blank, check the appropriate box, or circle the appropriate answer beside each question.

A. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

B. **Years of Teaching Experience:** [____]

C. **Subject Specialty:** ☐ Humanities ☐ Sciences ☐ P. E. ☐ Fine Arts ☐ Applied Skills
☐ Other (please identify) [_____]

D. **Current Grade/s:** Please circle the grade/s you are presently teaching. **[Grade: 7 8 9 10 11 12]**

E. **For each of the different types of learning noted below, please indicate the number of courses or estimate the number of hours you have spent learning about educational measurement and/or evaluation:**

1. [___] courses Formal courses taken during your initial teacher education program.
2. [___] courses Formal courses taken after your initial teacher education program.
3. [___] hours Workshop or seminar hours spent after your initial teacher education program.
4. [___] hours Informal reading on the subject since you completed your initial teacher education program.
5. [___] hours Informal discussions with school and/or district colleagues after your initial teacher education program.

II. How important are the following factors for your definition of students' work habits?

Please answer each question by circling the degree of importance you assign to each factor when you evaluate students' work habits.

01. The student's work is easy to read.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
02. The student's work is neat.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
03. The student's work is completed on time.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
04. The student uses class time effectively.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
05. The student has the necessary materials available.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
06. The student participates in class discussions.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
07. The student follows classroom rules.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
08. The student cooperates with peers.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
09. The student makes an effort to improve.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
10. The student has a positive attitude.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
11. The student works to the best of his/her ability.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
12. The student succeeds in class.	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
13. _____	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important
14. _____	Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Important

Comments

Appendix C Survey (page 2)

III. What in your opinion is the purpose of work habit evaluation?

Please indicate your response to each question by circling the number opposite that question that best expresses your opinion.

"I believe that the purpose of evaluating work habits is to ..."

15. describe past behaviour.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
16. alert the student to concern about her/his academic progress.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
17. encourage improvement.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
18. encourage continuation of satisfactory student behaviour.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
19. praise acceptable behaviour.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
20. demonstrate the link between school and workplace behaviour.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
21. communicate with parents.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
22. follow school district requirements.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
23. follow B. C. Ministry of Education requirements.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
24. other? _____	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
25. other? _____	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

Comments

IV. How much do you use the following processes to evaluate students' work habits for their reports?

Please circle the number opposite each process that best expresses the extent to which you use that process to evaluate students' work habits.

"When I give the report mark for work habits for a student, I ..."

26. rely on recorded data.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
27. rely on my memory.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
28. evaluate subjectively.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
29. evaluate objectively.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
30. evaluate using a combination of subjective and objective criteria.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
31. consider the student holistically.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
32. use criteria which I have previously described to the students	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
33. use criteria that I assume is understood by the students.	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
34. other? _____	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always
35. other? _____	Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Always

Comments

Appendix C Survey (page 3)

V. Summary questions

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below by circling the number opposite each statement that represents your opinion.

36. Work habit letter grades help students with the task of learning good work habits.	Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree
37. Work habit letter grades help teachers with the task of teaching good work habits.	Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree
38. Work habit letter grades help parents with the task of teaching good work habits.	Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree
39. The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is valid.	Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree
40. The method I use to evaluate students' work habits is efficient.	Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree

Summary Comments

Please note below any summary or general comments that you would like to add to this survey

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Appendix D Copy of letter that accompanied each survey

Dear colleague.

Thank you for the interest you have shown and for taking the time to support my research. This survey, when completed, will provide me with important data for my graduate thesis.

I am a graduate student at UNBC in Prince George. I am also a full-time teacher-counsellor at Blackburn Junior Secondary School. My thesis question is "How are work habits defined and evaluated for the purpose of reporting in B. C.?" As you know, work habit marks have a number of implications for a student's future. My interest is in how professionals define the particular behaviours that they perceive as work habits and how they then assess and evaluate these behaviours.
In addition to the survey, you have been given an envelope. After completing it, please place the survey in this envelope and return it to the person who gave you the survey. Be assured that I will do everything possible to maintain your confidentiality. Your name will not be passed on without your permission. All envelopes will be discarded and all the returned surveys will be mixed together. Teachers from several school districts are participating in this study and no surveys will be identified by subject, school or district. The surveys will be destroyed after my thesis has been defended.

I would be happy to share the results of this study after it is completed. I will be preparing a synopsis of the results. If you would like to receive a copy at your school, please ask the person who contacted you about this survey to request a copy on your behalf. I will have the requested number of summaries delivered to your school.

Again, thank you for participating in my research.

Sincerely,

Marion Hofmann

Appendix E Copy of letter that went to each school confederate

Dear----;

Thank you for agreeing to assist me in my research. As we discussed over the telephone, the enclosed survey is the final step of the research I am conducting to complete the requirements of my graduate thesis. I am deeply appreciative of your assistance.

I plan to ensure that no completed survey will be traceable to either the district or the respondent. Therefore, there are some steps that I ask you to follow in order to preserve the acceptability and confidentiality of these documents.

You have been given a stamped brown envelope that has been addressed to me in care of my advisor, Dr. Bryan Hartman at UNBC. As this envelope arrives at the university, it will be opened, discarded, and the smaller envelopes will be set aside. A white envelope that has been addressed to me should accompany each survey form.

If your staff or administration are uncomfortable with the process or document, do not distribute the surveys. Simply return them to me in the pre-addressed envelope with a note of explanation. If there are questions, I may be reached at 250-963-7474 (school), 250-963-8237 (fax) or hofmann@bc.sympatico.ca (e-mail).

When approval has been granted, distribute the survey and envelope to volunteer respondents. Please keep a list of those who have taken a survey, and mark off when they have returned it to you. After completing the survey, each teacher has been asked to place it in the envelope and then seal the envelope. When all surveys have been collected, place all of them in the large brown envelope and mail it.

Once again, thank you for taking the time and energy to assist me in this research.

Sincerely,

Marion Hofmann