I’m very thankful for the opportunity I’ve had to do research at Calvin over the past two summers. I especially appreciated my particular project, one of the few focused on Science Education. As a prospective science teacher, the work I’m doing now is constantly leading me to think about how I’ll run my own classroom and plan my own lessons someday.

The work we’ve been doing recently is focused on helping teachers understand their specific approach to formative classroom practices. Over the past several years, we’ve collected data (transcribed interviews based on classroom observations) for 18 different professors in the Science Division. We’ve worked to qualitatively analyze (code) this data and this summer we are finishing up the last 20 transcripts. We are also using a statistical approach called factor analysis to objectively group our codes, and help us determine some of the characteristics that define how different teachers teach. Determining different types of teachers would be helpful because by identifying with one or more types, any real teacher would be more aware of his potential strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to the project I’m working on, the overall environment of the summer research program at Calvin has been wonderful to experience. Working on research creates a different dynamic between professors and students than the classroom. While the professors are still the ones with the experience and decision making power, it is obvious that they value what we students are doing. The professor I am working with makes it clear that he values my opinion and my contributions, and other professors take the time to ask questions about my work. Having my work taken so seriously by professors encourages me that there is a place for a young science teacher in the world of academic professionals. I’m also convicted to be responsible and careful in my work, so others can benefit from it.

One of the best parts about summer research is the final Poster Fair at Van Andel Institute. It is a great opportunity to hear about some of the exciting things going on in the research community, see the work other students have done, and describe and answer questions about my own work.

There are lots of other great things I could say about Calvin research. Friday ice-cream is something I look forward to every week. Submitting our paper for publication after weeks of work was also very exciting. Professor Tatko’s Safety Training session on week one was entertaining. There were kids visiting for Chemistry camp all through the summer and laughing down the halls. I got the opportunity to meet and work with a great new co-worker, a fellow Education student. Research at Calvin is a lot of work but it is definitely worthwhile. I thank God for the opportunity He has given me to be part of research at Calvin for the past two years.