

A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFICACY OF A UNIVERSITY COHORT GROUP IN A SMALL URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The purpose of this case study was to explore the processes followed in an educational partnership and to describe the changes in the participants' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy as a result of their participation. This study described and analyzed an educational partnership between a large university and the staff of a small, urban school district. The goals of the partnership were to provide the participants the knowledge to enhance student achievement as well as to develop educational leaders throughout the district. The participants consisted of educators of the district that enrolled in the educational partnership that existed for 4 school years.

This research project was a qualitative case study in which the researcher was a participant observer of the educational partnership studied. In this study, the data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires conducted at the conclusion of the program. The major themes that emerged through the analysis of the data collected were collaboration, knowledge and skills acquired, and leadership. The themes were presented within the categories in which change occurred, that is, at the individual, classroom, school, and district levels. It was realized that the changes that occurred collectively throughout the district had a greater impact than the combining of all the changes that occurred in the four categories. The responses of the participants

indicated that to achieve the goals and outcomes of the partnership, professional growth and collaboration were necessary to nurture the changes in the leadership skills of the participants.

This study confirmed that educational partnerships between universities and public school districts have the potential to assist educators in the process of increasing levels of student learning. It also confirmed that teachers' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy can be influenced by participation in an educational partnership. The findings of this study added to the literature by providing a better understanding of how participation in an educational partnership impacted its members from the participants' perceptions of the changes that occurred.

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GROUP IN A SMALL URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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