

HSIRB Information

PROJECT TITLE:

A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this qualitative study is twofold: one, to examine and describe the process by which a cohort of educators who were participating in a collaboration between Western Michigan University and the Oak Park school district effected changes that occurred in the district, whether they were observable or perceived; two, to examine the impact of the cohort program on the teachers' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy.

For this study, a questionnaire will be sent on May 12, via the inter-school mail system, to those staff members that participated in the Western Michigan University/Oak Park School District cohort. The questionnaire will have a letter of explanation, consent form, and return envelope attached to it. The subjects will be instructed to read and sign the consent form before completing the questionnaire. The subjects will be told not to put their name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the subjects will place it in the return envelope, seal the envelope, and send it back to the researcher along with the consent form via the interschool mail system. When the researcher receives the consent form and the sealed envelope, they separate the consent forms from the envelopes and place them into two different groups in order to ensure the confidentiality of the subjects. All staff members that participated in the cohort will have the opportunity to complete the questionnaires confidentially at their earliest convenience. The survey will consist of eight open-ended questions regarding the staff members' opinions concerning the relevancy of the cohort on the policies, procedures and practices of the district.

In addition, the researcher will conduct individual interviews with purposeful sampling of up to ten participants of the cohort program between May 12, 2005 and June 10, 2005. Semistandardized interviews will be conducted in which seven predetermined questions will be asked each interviewee in a systematic, consistent order. However, the interviewer will be allowed the freedom to probe beyond the answers to the prepared standardized questions. The interviews will delve into the teachers' views and beliefs regarding how their participation in cohort program affected them as individuals and as educators within the district. A copy of the interview questions is attached.

Furthermore, up to six focus groups, each comprised of a minimum of four staff members who participated in the cohort, will be conducted in each of the schools in the district between May 12, 2005 and June 10, 2005. The focus groups will be a means to gather views, perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of staff members on the impact of the cohort program on the policies and practices of the district in a setting in which one participant will be able to draw from another's response or to brainstorm collectively with other members of the group. A copy of the questions to be asked during the focus groups is attached.

Both the interviewers and focus group sessions will be tape-recorded. As the interviews and focus groups are completed, the data will be transcribed. The written results of the research will include quotations to exemplify the data collected and validate the conclusions derived as a result of the findings.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS:

Once all the interviews, focus groups sessions, and questionnaire are completed, the responses will be categorized according to the perceptions of the respondents. The information will be analyzed for categories, patterns, themes, and trends and then be compared for relationships and differences. The data will be coded and rearranged into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts. The researcher will look for relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole.

BENEFITS OF RESEARCH:

This case study provides the background and data of the efforts of the educators within an urban school district to more effectively and successfully meet the educational needs of their minority students. There is no possible direct benefit to those who participate in this study. It is through the thorough review of the analysis of the findings of this case study that other educators throughout the country may be able to find application in their own setting.

SUBJECT SELECTION:

The subjects were selected because they are teachers and administrators of the Oak Park School District that participated in a collaborative effort with Western Michigan University to form an educational cohort. The questionnaire will be distributed to all participants of the cohort. The subjects for the interviews and focus groups will be purposefully selected to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample in which the most can be learned. The criteria for the purposeful sample selection will be based upon the subject's participation in the cohort, school of employment, role in the district, and degree attained in order to equally represent all factions of the cohort. Subjects will be approached individually by the researcher, in person, either before or after their school day and asked to participate in the either an interview or a focus group session. The researcher will follow the script that is attached when subjects are recruited to participate in the study.

RISKS TO SUBJECTS:

There will be minimal known risks to subjects. Some subjects may be inconvenienced by taking the time to fill out the survey or to participate in an interview or focus group. Many, however, may be happy to contribute to this research effort and it may enable them to develop a greater understanding of their participation in the cohort affected changes that occurred in the district, whether they were observable or perceived, and to examine the impact of the cohort program on

their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy. The time spent participating in the study will be an inconvenience to the subjects. In order to minimize any inconvenience to the subjects, they will be informed of the approximate time necessary to complete each process (questionnaire, interview, or focus group session) beforehand. To further minimize any inconvenience to the subjects, the researcher will conduct the interviews and focus group sessions at a time and place that is convenient for the subjects.

Some psychological risks are possible if the subjects had had negative experiences with either his/her involvement in the cohort or other interview, questionnaire, or focus group situations.

I will invite members of the cohort to contribute in the data collection through the completion of a questionnaire and participation in an individual interview or focus group session. I will also ask to allow their data to be used in the analysis. The subjects will not be researchers in the project. The questionnaires will be completed at a time and place that is convenient to the subjects. Each interview and focus group session will be conducted after work hours, during the subjects' personal time. Each method of data collection will be conducted separately in a setting that is determined to be comfortable and familiar to the interviewees and at a time that is convenient for both the interviewee and the interviewer. However, no one will be required to participate, as stated in the protection for subject, which is included.

PROTECTION FOR SUBJECTS:

Subjects will be protected because the data will be protected. It will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office. Also, the consent form states that those asked to participate do not have to participate, and they can leave blank any questions they do not want to answer. I will protect the identity of all individuals in all reports, papers, and presentations. Data will be presented only in the aggregate.

Subjects are not required to answer any questions during the interview or focus group sessions. Subjects may withdraw at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA:

The data will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to the responses will be the principal investigator, student investigator, co-principal investigators and collaborating investigator included on the HSIRB form.

The researcher of this project will share the original data from this study with the members of their committee only. The researcher of this project will not share the information from this case study with anyone else and will keep all information confidential. The audio recordings of the interviews and focus group sessions will be erased from the voice recorder after the transcripts are completed. After the study has been completed, the researcher will keep the interview and focus group transcripts as well as the questionnaires in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office for a minimum of three years.

No identifying information about the university, the name of the school district, the name of the schools, the names of staff members who participated in cohort, or any other identifying

information will be used in this study. All participants in the study will sign an informed consent for participation prior to becoming involved in the study. Each interviewee will be informed that the study will be used for academic purposes only. When the data is transcribed, each participant will be given a pseudonym, so that other individuals who view the data will be unaware of their actual identity. If names or other identifying information is revealed during an interview or focus group, it will be eliminated or disguised in the transcript. Members of the focus groups will sign a consent form which contains a second signature that indicates that they agree not to discuss outside of the focus group any comments made by other participants. Questionnaires will be coded so that names are not attached to the data.

INSTUMENTATION:

The instruments are attached. The questionnaire, interview questions, and questions to be asked in the focus group are included.

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS:

Attached is a form that the participants will be asked to sign as part of the informed consent process.

Subjects for the interviews and focus group sessions will be contacted in person by the researcher at the school where they are assigned, either before or after the school day. Subjects will be approached individually by the researcher and asked to participate in either the interview or a focus group session. The researcher will follow the script that is attached when subjects are recruited to participate in the study. During the recruitment process, the researcher will schedule a time and place for the interview or focus group session that is convenient for the subject.

As the script below indicates, I will invite cohort members to participate and obtain their consent. I say in the script that cohort members do not have to participate at all, may withdraw at any time and may leave some questions blank if they so choose.

Educators, in the main, are not easily intimidated. I do not anticipate that those who don't want to fill out the questionnaire will do it, though it is good to be aware of this possibility, so that we are sensitive to it.

The participants will fill out the consent forms at the site of the interview or focus group session. Before the interview or focus groups session begins, the researcher will follow the script that is included and address any questions or concerns of the subjects. Everyone will get the form; those who choose not to participate will return the blank form and not participate in the interview or focus group session. Those that choose to participate will sign the consent form before the interview or focus group begins.

In the case of the questionnaire, the consent form, along with the cover letter, will be sent to each participant. Those choosing not to participate will be asked to read the questionnaire while others are filling it out, so that they will have an understanding of the questionnaire when I talk about the findings.

SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW (to be used at the school the subject is assigned, either before or after the school day begins):

This script is largely based on the consent form.

As you may know, I am conducting a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.” I want to get a better idea of how you viewed your participation in the collaborative effort between Western Michigan University and the Oak Park School District.

I am inviting you to participate in an interview. Topics covered will include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete the interview. We will be able to conduct the interview at time and place that is convenient for you.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate, to quit at any time during the interview, or to not answer certain questions, or to contact me if you change your mind about participating. You may choose how much or how little you will participate without prejudice or penalty.

Answer any questions.

Arrange a time and date to conduct the interview.

Thank the subject.

SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP SESSION (to be used at the school the subject is assigned, either before or after the school day begins):

This script is largely based on the consent form.

As you may have been told, I am conducting a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.” I want to get a better idea of how you viewed your participation in the collaborative effort between Western Michigan University and the Oak Park School District.

I am inviting you to participate in a focus group session. Topics covered will include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the focus group session. The focus group will be conducted at time and place that is mutually convenient with the four members of the group.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research.

Additionally, you will be asked not discuss outside the focus group session any comments made by other participants. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate, to quit at any time during the study, or to not answer certain questions, or to contact me if you change your mind about participating. You may choose how much or how little you will participate without prejudice or penalty.

Answer any questions.

Arrange a time and date to conduct the focus group.

Thank the subject.

SCRIPT FOR INTERVIEW (This is to be used at the site of the interview before the interview begins.):

This script is largely based on the consent form.

Thank you for attending today's interview. As you may have been told, I am inviting you to participate in a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District." I want to get a better idea of how you viewed your participation in the collaborative effort between Western Michigan University and the Oak Park School District.

I am inviting you to participate in an interview today. Topics covered will include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete the focus group session. You will be able to complete it today.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research.

All forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in Sue Poppink's, the principal investigator, office, coded so that your responses can be identified only by the co-principal investigators.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate, to quit at any time during the study, or to not answer certain questions, or to contact me if you change your mind about participating. You may choose how much or how little you will participate without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email, call or write me. Our contact information is on the consent sheet that I will ask you to sign before filling out the questionnaire. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board or the Vice President for Research, whose information is also included on the consent form.

The consent document I am giving you has been approved for you for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature on the board

chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old. You will be given a copy of the consent document to keep.

Your signature on the consent form indicates that you have read or had explained to you, or both, the purpose of the requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate. You need not sign it if you decide not to participate.

Thank you very much.

SCRIPT FOR FOCUS GROUPS SESSION (This is to be used at the site of the focus group before the session begins.):

This script is largely based on the consent form.

Thank you for attending today's focus group session. As you may have been told, I am inviting you to participate in a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District." I want to get a better idea of how you viewed your participation in the collaborative effort between Western Michigan University and the Oak Park School District.

I am inviting you to participate in a focus group session today. Topics covered will include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the focus group session. You will be able to complete it today.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Additionally, please do not discuss outside this focus group session any comments made by other participants. All comments made within this focus group session must be kept confidential. Your signature on the second signature line of the consent form indicates that you agree not to discuss outside of this focus group any comments made by the other participants.

All forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in Sue Poppink's, the principal investigator, office, coded so that your responses can be identified only by the co-principal investigators.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate, to quit at any time during the study, or to not answer certain questions, or to contact me if you change your mind about participating. You may choose how much or how little you will participate without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email, call or write me. Our contact information is on the consent sheet that I will ask you to sign before filling out the questionnaire. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board or the Vice President for Research, whose information is also included on the consent form.

The consent document I'm passing out has been approved for you for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature on the board

chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old. Everyone will be given a copy of the consent document to keep.

Your signature on the consent form indicates that you have read or had explained to you, or both, the purpose of the requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate. You need not sign it if you decide not to participate.

Thank you very much.

QUESTIONNAIRE COVER LETTER

May 12, 2005

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.”

You are asked to complete a questionnaire; the name of the questionnaire is “Reflections on the Western Michigan University and Oak Park School District Collaboration.” Topics include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Data will be reported only in aggregate form. All questionnaires will be retained for at least three years in a locked file, with only coded identifying marks, in the principal investigator’s office. Only the co-principal investigators will have access to the file.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time, to not answer certain questions, or to request your data not be included in the analysis, without prejudice or penalty.

Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on the completed questionnaire. Place your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope and seal it. Also, please return the attached signed consent form with your questionnaire. Do not place the consent form inside the sealed envelope. Return both the sealed envelope and the signed consent form to me via the interschool mail. When I receive the consent form and the sealed envelope from you, I will separate the consent forms from the envelopes and place them into two different groups in order to ensure the confidentiality of your responses.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email or call: Ann Rea Kopy at: akopy@oakparkschools.org or (248) 691-8449. My contact information is on the consent sheet that I will ask you to sign before filling out the questionnaire. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 with any concerns you have.

The consent document has been approved for you for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature on the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Thank you for the time and effort you have put into your participation in this research project. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ann Rea Kopy

**Western Michigan University
Department of Teaching, Learning and Leadership**

QUESTIONNAIRE CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Sue Poppink
Student Investigator: Ann Rea Kopy

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.”

If you choose to participate, you are asked to complete a questionnaire; the name of the questionnaire is “Reflections on the Western Michigan University and Oak Park School District Collaboration.” Topics include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire. You will be able to complete it today.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Data will be reported only in aggregate form. All questionnaires will be retained for at least three years in a locked file, with only coded identifying marks, in the principal investigator’s office. Only the co-principal investigators will have access to the file.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time, to not answer certain questions, or to request your data not be included in the analysis, without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email or call: Ann Rea Kopy at: akopy@oakparkschools.org (248) 691-8449 or Sue Poppink at sue.poppink@wmich.edu 269-387-3569. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 with any concerns you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read or had explained to you, or both, the purpose and requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

**Western Michigan University
Department of Teaching, Learning and Leadership**

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Sue Poppink
Student Investigator: Ann Rea Kopy

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.”

If you choose to participate, you are asked to participate in an individual interview. Topics addressed in the interview include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the interview. You will be able to complete it today.

This interview will be taped and the script will be transcribed. The data will be coded and rearranged into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and aid in the development of theoretical concepts. The written results of the research will include quotations to exemplify the data collected and validate the conclusions derived as a result of the findings.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Data will be reported only in aggregate form. All transcripts of this interview will be retained for at least three years in a locked file, with only coded identifying marks, in the principal investigator’s office. Only the co-principal investigators will have access to the file. After three years the transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time, to not answer certain questions, or to request your data not be included in the analysis, without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email or call: Ann Rea Kopy at: akopy@oakparkschools.org (248) 691-8449 or Sue Poppink at sue.poppink@wmich.edu 269-387-3569. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 with any concerns you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read or had explained to you, or both, the purpose and requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Consent obtained by: _____ Date _____

Western Michigan University
Department of Teaching, Learning and Leadership

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Sue Poppink
Student Investigator: Ann Rea Kopy

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on Educational Leadership in a Small Midwestern Urban School District.”

If you choose to participate, you are asked to participate in a focus group. Topics addressed in the focus group include your opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. Topics include you opinions on the impact of the cohort on your professional skills, beliefs, and the school district. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the focus group. You will be able to complete it today.

This focus group session will be taped and the script will be transcribed. The data will be coded and rearranged into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and aid in the development of theoretical concepts. The written results of the research will include quotations to exemplify the data collected and validate the conclusions derived as a result of the findings.

All the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name or other identifying features will not be used in any analysis or in any reporting of the research. Data will be reported only in aggregate form. All questionnaires will be retained for at least three years in a locked file, with only coded identifying marks, in the principal investigator’s office. Only the co-principal investigators will have access to the file. After three years the transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time, to not answer certain questions, or to request your data not be included in the analysis, without prejudice or penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may email or call: Ann Rea Kopy at: akopy@oakparkschools.org (248) 691-8449 or Sue Poppink at sue.poppink@wmich.edu 269-387-3569. You may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 with any concerns you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read or had explained to you, or both, the purpose and requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate.

Your Signature _____ Date_____

My signature below indicates that I agree not to discuss outside of this focus group any comments made by the other participants.

Your Signature _____ Date_____

Consent obtained by: _____ Date_____

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What was your initial impression of the Oak Park/WMU partnership when it first began in 2000? Why did you feel this way?

2. What is your impression of the partnership now? Why do you feel this way?

3. Give one or more examples of how the partnership has influenced you?

4. From your perspective, what impact has the partnership had on your class and/or school?

5. What do you view as the greatest challenge facing Oak Park teachers today?

6. In what way, if any, did the Oak Park/WMU partnership help you to address this challenge?

7. What do you see as the biggest accomplishment of the partnership?

8. What do you see as the biggest shortcoming of the partnership?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Share with me something about yourself and your position in the district.
2. Explain your perception of the purpose/goals of the Oak Park/WMU cohort? Do you feel that they were attained? Why/why not?
3. Did you acquire or refine any skills as a result of participating in the cohort? Explain.
4. How were your attitudes and dispositions regarding the education of children affected by your participation in the cohort?
5. Give one or more examples that the cohort accomplished something—in your classroom, the school, the Oak Park School District or all of them?
6. How do you think that changes and accomplishments of the cohort will continue? Give examples.
7. How do you feel about your participation in the cohort?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Describe your perception of the initial purposes of the cohort program.
2. What went well?
3. What did not go well?
4. To what degree were your expectations for the program met?
5. What would you have done differently or should have been done differently?
6. Is this type of program beneficial?