

**A STUDY OF REASONS WHY SUPERINTENDENTS
IN KANSAS SCHOOLS DISCARD RESEARCH
QUESTIONNAIRES**

515

A Thesis

Presented to

**the Department of Education of the Graduate School
Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education**

by

Terry L. Clark

August 1967

RECEIVED
KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
EMPORIA, KANSAS
AUG 15 1967

Thesis
1967
C

Approved for the Major Department

Gene Kasper

Approved for the Graduate Council

Samuel Byler

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	2
Statement of the problem	2
Importance of the study	2
Limitations of the study	4
Source of data	4
Method of procedure	5
Definition of Terms	5
Organization of the Remainder of the Paper	6
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	7
Summary of Studies Illustrating the Low	
Percentage of Questionnaires Returned	7
Summary of Various Methods Utilized in	
Increasing the Percentage of Questionnaires	
Returned	10
Summary	15
III. PRESENTATION OF DATA	17
Reasons for not Responding to Questionnaires	17
Time of Year to Send Questionnaires	21
Number of Questionnaires Received Yearly	23
Sponsors of Research Questionnaires	25
Questionnaires on Worthy Educational Topics	26

CHAPTER

PAGE

Information Available Aside from

Questionnaires 29

Types of Research Questionnaires 31

Unreasonable Questionnaires 32

Summary of the Results Promised 34

Difficulties within Questionnaires 36

Strengths in Questionnaires 38

Too Busy for Questionnaires 39

Prodding for a Response 41

Purposes of Research Questionnaires 43

Number One Improvement to be Made in

Research Questionnaire Studies 45

Summary 48

IV. SUMMARY 49

Summary of Preceding Chapters 49

Conclusions Resulting from the Study 54

Suggestions for Further Research 55

BIBLIOGRAPHY 57

APPENDIX A 59

APPENDIX B 61

APPENDIX C 66

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Could You Give Some of the Reasons You Respond to Some Questionnaires and Not to Others	18
II. Do You Believe the Time of Year You Receive Questionnaires Affects Your Cooperation? . .	21
III. When Do You Consider the Best Time of Year for Researchers to Contact You	22
IV. To Which Sponsor are You Most Likely to Return Their Questionnaire Form?	26
V. Do You Respond to Those Questionnaires Which are not Worthy of a Response?	28
VI. Is the Information Requested by the Researcher Often Available Aside from a Questionnaire Survey?	29
VII. Will You Answer the Questionnaire if the Information Requested is Available Elsewhere?	30
VIII. Which Type of a Research Questionnaire Would You Rather Answer?	31
IX. Which Type of Questionnaire Do You Usually Receive?	32

TABLE	PAGE
X. How Often is a Summary of the Results Promised?	35
XI. Does a Promise of a Summary Prompt Your Return?	35
XII. What Do You Consider to be Some of the Difficulties within the Questionnaire Form that Hinders Your Response?	36
XIII. What Do You Consider to be Some of the Strengths in Research Questionnaires that Prompt Your Response?	38
XIV. Do You Honestly Believe that You are too Busy to Answer and Return Research Questionnaires?	40
XV. Do the Following Items Affect Your Response to Questionnaires?	42
XVI. Do You Really Need Prodding by the Researcher to Return Questionnaire Forms?	43
XVII. Is the Purpose of the Study Usually Simply Stated?	44
XVIII. Does the Future Use of the Study Affect the Response?	45
XIX. What Do You Consider to be the Most Important Improvement that needs to be made in Research Questionnaire Studies to Gain an Increased Response?	45

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. If You Were to Give an Estimate to the Number of Research Questionnaires You Receive Yearly, How Many Would You Say?	24
2. What Per Cent of the Questionnaires You Receive are not Worthy of Your Response? . . .	27
3. What is the Breaking Point Between Reasonable and Unreasonable When Asking School Superintendents for Answers?	33

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most popular device for surveying school administrative practices is the questionnaire. Each year scores of questionnaires are mailed to superintendents from a variety of sources. When a researcher conducts a survey, one of his prime concerns is to ensure that as many questionnaires as possible are returned. A report by R. Murray Thomas, dean of education, at the University of California, states that the per cent of returns varies greatly from one survey to another. Of thirty-six studies utilizing questionnaires to administrators reported in an educational journal between 1952 and 1963 the rate of returns ranged from 32 per cent to 96 per cent. The average or median was 73.5 per cent. In most studies the returns ranged from 58 per cent (20th percentile) to 84 per cent (80th percentile).¹ The range may actually be greater than indicated here because some researchers, apparently out of neglect or embarrassment, do not include in their reports the per cent of questionnaires returned.

¹R. Murray Thomas, "Questionnaires To Administrators: Rate of Return," California Journal of Educational Research, 15:122, May, 1964.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. The main objectives of this study were to: (1) identify some of the reasons why superintendents in Kansas schools discard research questionnaires; (2) evaluate each of the responses gained from the superintendents in the structured-questionnaire interview; and (3) investigate methods that might be utilized in increasing percentage of questionnaires returned.

Importance of the Study. The problem of non-respondents seems to plague every educational investigator who conducts a survey involving mail responses to questionnaires. Carefully he prepares a questionnaire and selects a sample for his mailing list; optimistically he sends out the questionnaires; hopefully he waits for the returns. "At the end of two or three weeks, he has heard from 25 per cent to 50 per cent of his sample."² Perhaps the researcher hears from more, maybe less, depending upon several factors: (1) the nature of the inquiry; (2) the type of individuals to whom questionnaires were sent; (3) the prestige of the investigator; (4) the length of the questionnaire; and (5) the ease with which it can be answered.

²Seerley Reid, "Respondents and Non-respondents to Mail Questionnaires," Educational Research Bulletin, 21:90, April, 1942.

Limitations of the Study. The greater part of research done for this study has been limited to the superintendents of twenty of the largest high schools in Kansas. (Appendix A) Originally, the study was to include twenty five Kansas school superintendents, but due to circumstances beyond the control of the researcher, five of the original sampling were unable to be interviewed. Because of time, expense, and practicality it was impossible to interview all the Kansas school superintendents. The fact that the interview took place when the school superintendent was involved with end-of-school activities may have limited the success of the interview. The fact that school superintendents were so busy may have meant a more rapid answering of questions and therefore, less reflection and deep thinking.

Source of Data. Information gathered for this study was obtained from the superintendents of twenty of the largest high schools in Kansas. (Appendix A) Selection was based on the figures found in the Kansas Educational Directory from the Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, 1966-67. The general method of obtaining information from the selected sample of Kansas school superintendents was through a structured-questionnaire interview. (Appendix B)

Method of Procedure. A letter of introduction concerning the importance and purpose of the study was individually typewritten to each of the Kansas school superintendents selected. (Appendix B) This time consuming process was used because of the belief that superintendents give more serious attention to mail directed to them by name than to mail directed to Dear Mr. School Superintendent. This letter explained the purpose of the study and asked for the superintendent to set aside a period of twenty to thirty minutes for a personal interview with the researcher. A return postcard was included in the letter of introduction for a reply.

In the actual interview the superintendent was asked to verbally give his views concerning questionnaire studies. Each of his reflections and comments were recorded by the researcher in the space provided in the questionnaire form.

After each of the responses of the superintendents were recorded, the material was further broken down into listings and tables as appropriate to each question.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Superintendents. The chief administrators of the unified school districts in the State of Kansas.

Discard. To turn off or away as useless or worthless; to cast away; to reject.

Questionnaire. A paper containing a series of questions, circulated among a large number of persons who may be either naive or expert in their answers, whose replies are designed to serve as data for investigation or the scientific study of some subject.

Non-respondents. Those superintendents of Kansas schools who do not respond, answer or return research questionnaire forms.

Structured-questionnaire Interview. The form used in the personal interview with the superintendents of twenty of the largest high schools in the State of Kansas. (Appendix B)

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAPER

Chapter II of this study will present the review of related literature. Interpretation of the data collected in the structured-questionnaire interviews is presented in Chapter III. The last chapter, Chapter IV, summarizes the study, offers some conclusions, and recommends solutions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research in the area of non-respondents to questionnaires is very plentiful. Thumbing through such sources as the Education Index, Masters Thesis Reviews and Dissertation Abstracts it becomes evident that school superintendents are one of the prime targets for questionnaire surveys. Literally hundreds of studies have been done dealing with the school superintendent's views and practices and only as a sidelight is the percentage of questionnaires returned mentioned. In studies where the returns evidently were quite low the researcher often omitted the percentage of questionnaires returned.

Looking at some of the research concerning the percentage of research questionnaires returned among school superintendents revealed the following.

I. SUMMARY OF STUDIES ILLUSTRATING THE LOW PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED AMONG SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Robert Howard Jerry, a doctoral candidate, at Indiana University, sent out a questionnaire form to public school superintendents attempting to identify just what demanded their professional time.

He gained a 72.4 per cent return from the questionnaire form, leaving 27.6 per cent listed as non-respondents.¹

In a study by Robert A. Koenig, a carefully prepared questionnaire was sent to ninety selected school superintendents in Massachusetts and the Bay Area. Of the ninety superintendents consulted only sixty-four (or 57 per cent) responded to the questionnaire form, leaving 43 per cent listed as non-respondents.²

The following four studies or opinion polls continue to illustrate a low percentage of returns among school superintendents.

In an opinion poll of James B. Conant's much publicized contentions concerning certification requirements for superintendents, the following return was gained:

Based on a 4 per cent proportional sampling of 16,000 administrators in the continental United States, this survey brought a 32 per cent response.³

¹Robert Howard Jerry, "The Duties of a Superintendent and the Allocation of Professional Time of Public School Superintendents in Indiana" (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1963), Dissertation Abstracts, 24:3175, January-April, 1964.

²Robert A. Koenig, "A Comparative Study of Superintendents and School Boards in Massachusetts and the Bay Area," Journal of Secondary Education, 41:51-58, February, 1966.

³"Administrators are Reluctant to Part with Certification," The Nation's Schools, 72:29, July, 1963.

In a similar study or opinion poll a questionnaire asking school superintendents if they believed a contract with a school district was the most appropriate employment arrangement brought the following returns:

Based on a 4 per cent proportional sampling of 16,000 school administrators in 50 states, this survey brought a 33 per cent response.⁴

In an opinion poll asking school superintendents to reply to a questionnaire form concerning an interstate compact for education, which was first suggested by Dr. James Conant, the following returns were received:

Based on a 4 per cent proportional sampling of 16,000 school administrators in the 50 states, this survey brought a 42 per cent response.⁵

Finally, in an opinion poll asking the question, "Should qualifications for the superintendent include at least one year of training in school business administration?" the following returns were received:

Based on a 4 per cent proportional sampling of 16,000 school administrators in the continental United States, this survey brought a 32 per cent response.⁶

⁴"Administrators Agree: 'Give Us Contracts for at Least Three Years,'" The Nation's Schools, 76:47, August, 1965.

⁵"Schoolmen Tie Strings To Their Support of Compact," The Nation's Schools, 77:61, January, 1966.

⁶"Superintendent Should Have A Year's Training In Business Administration," The Nation's Schools, 68:85, October, 1961.

Just as these studies and many others plainly show the critical problem of a low percentage of questionnaires returned, the following study stated just the opposite.

David M. Smith, in this case stated:

... the educational preparation, professional experience, age, salary, and certification status of Ohio city superintendents, were based on a questionnaire which was mailed to 135 Ohio city superintendents whose names appeared in the "Educational Directory of the State of Ohio for the School year 1951-52." By April 10, 1952, a total of 131 completed questionnaires, or 97 per cent, were returned.⁷

R. Murray Thomas, professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, stated in his study:

Of 326 questionnaires sent out to school superintendents, 74.5 per cent were returned, plus 11.3 per cent more as a result of a follow-up letter; some 70-75 per cent of the schools in California were represented. It was found superintendents of small schools replied more than those of large schools. Time of year seemed not to affect the magnitude of return.⁸

II. SUMMARY OF VARIOUS METHODS UTILIZED IN INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED

It has been shown through previous research that

⁷David Mitchell Smith and Norman Ziff, "The Preparation and Experience of Ohio City Superintendents," Educational Research Bulletin, 32:198, November, 1953; and David Mitchell Smith, "Educational Preparation and Professional Experience of Ohio City School Superintendents" (unpublished Master's thesis, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1952).

⁸R. Murray Thomas, "Questionnaires to Administrators: Rate of Return," California Journal of Educational Research, 15:129, May, 1964.

the percentage of questionnaires returned among school superintendents is a definite problem. Therefore, it is also important to investigate methods that previous researchers have used in increasing percentage of questionnaires returned.

D. A. Davis, professor at Western Michigan University, gained a high percentage of returns by using the following methods:

Questionnaires were sent to 549 public secondary schools, bringing a 98 per cent response. Reasons for the high return were attributed to the mailing of two reminders about three weeks apart. It was discovered that the poorest and the wealthiest schools gave the best response. Guidance personnel typically responded to the first request; and school administrators to the first follow-up reminder.⁹

Looking at some of the methods that have been utilized in motivating respondents and non-respondents to questionnaire surveys the following study is helpful. The experience gained from a carefully planned extensive mail questionnaire survey of the enrollment directors and executive directors of 85 Blue Cross Plans (100 per cent response) and state commissioners (87 per cent response) in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico provides suggestions for successful mail surveys. In this study, Sol Levine, at Harvard University stated:

⁹D. A. Davis, "Who Responds to Guidance Questionnaires," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 9:186, Spring, 1961.

Respondent preparation and follow-up procedures require careful planning and administration. Special delivery return envelopes, deadlines, and tentative time schedule for follow-ups and telephone calls all contribute to maximizing the response.¹⁰

John T. Gullahorn, at Michigan State University, stated in another study:

Where a relatively complete coverage of a population is desired, the use of a special-delivery follow-up is worth the added expense, particularly in eliciting responses from individuals who have not acknowledged any previous correspondence.¹¹

However, just the opposite results have been presented by Guyler E. Hammond concerning questionnaire response. He stated in a study for the American Cancer Society:

A survey conducted by mail was made to obtain information on inhalation in relation to type and amount of smoking. A test was made to determine whether the wording of the letter of transmittal enclosed with the questionnaire, the organization from which the questionnaires were sent, the presence or absence of a postage stamp on the envelope for reply, or the failure of some men to reply had an influence on the findings.

It appeared that these factors made very little difference in the percentage of distribution of responses to questions on smoking habits. However, a larger percentage of the addresses replied when a return envelope with a postage stamp attached was enclosed than when a business reply envelope not requiring a postage stamp was enclosed. The wording of the letter of

¹⁰Sol Levine and Gerald Gordon, "Maximizing Returns on Mail Questionnaires," Public Opinion Quarterly, 22:568, Winter, 1958-59.

¹¹John T. Gullahorn and Jeanne E. Gullahorn, "Increasing Returns from Non-respondents," Public Opinion Quarterly, 23:120, Summer, 1959.

transmittal also seemed to have some influence on the percentage of replies.¹²

In a questionnaire study by Bressler and Kephart, the sample of 1,000 nurses was divided into 10 inducement groups consisting of 100 each. The authors concluded:

Previews, pennies, nickels, and dimes had relatively little incentive value. The use of airmail stamps was moderately effective. Follow-ups, special delivery stamps, and quarters were extremely effective as inducements. There were no statistical differences among these three inducement-factors. The follow-up letter proved just as effective as more expensive and complicated arrangements.¹³

A further study in the area of inducements to larger returns, Mooren and Rothney presented the following information:

To examine the hypothesis that a personalized form of a mail questionnaire would produce faster and more complete response than the more generalized form, 688 high school graduates were randomly placed in two groups, and mailed questionnaires, or mimeographed letters and questionnaires. There were no significant differences in terms of speed and quantity of response of the two groups.¹⁴

Bruce Eckland, studying a group of high school dropouts who had entered college ten years before, found it

¹²Cuyler E. Hammond, "Inhalation in Relation to Type and Amount of Smoking," Journal of the American Statistical Association, 54:35-36, March, 1959.

¹³William Kephart and Marvin Bressler, "Increasing the Response to Mail Questionnaires: A Research Study," Public Opinion Quarterly, 22:132, Summer, 1958.

¹⁴Robert L. Mooren and John W. Rothney, "Personalizing the Follow-up Study," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 34:410-411, March, 1956.

difficult to locate the students but even more difficult to solicit a response from them. He stated concerning this study:

Prodding was necessary in the follow-up to gain a reply. Two methods proved quite successful. First, a long distance phone call from the university impressed these non-respondents to the importance and urgency of their response. A 64 per cent return was gained by the phone call follow-up. Secondly, a certified letter, coupled with a postal receipt, was a relatively inexpensive means of verifying delivery by requiring the recipient to affix his signature upon a card which is then returned to the sender. It serves the same purpose as a registered letter, except there is no insurance coverage on the contents of the letter. The phone call and then the certified letter brought another 19 per cent return.¹⁵

Still another method used in motivating non-respondents to return questionnaires was presented by Kenneth Bradt. He stated:

In this study of why certain students who were enrolled in USAFI courses had not completed their lessons, a mail questionnaire was accompanied by a post card bearing the respondent's name which he was asked to return separately after he had sent back the anonymous questionnaire. Two waves of mailing produced a return of over 80 per cent in this sample of presumably uninterested and non-compliant respondents.¹⁶

Finally, David Orr, at the University of Pittsburg and Clinton Neyman, Jr., at the American Institute for Research,

¹⁵Bruce Eckland, "Effects of Prodding to Increase Mailback Returns," Journal of Applied Psychology, 49:166-167, June, 1965.

¹⁶Kenneth Bradt, "The Usefulness of a Post Card Technique in a Mail Questionnaire," Public Opinion Quarterly, 19:218, Summer, 1955.

worked together on a study. They chose 440,000 high school students as their sample and had an amazing follow-up involving 88,000 students who had not responded to the first follow-up questionnaire. The authors list several conclusions that are possible from the reported experience:

The first conclusion drawn is undoubtedly that a large scale follow-up is an expensive business, however, it is done, and increasingly so as efforts are continued to induce non-respondents to respond. The graphs of the study show that the reminders mailed after the first and second waves of questionnaires had little discernible effect as compared to mailing new questionnaires. It was on this basis that new questionnaires were sent in the third and fourth waves instead of further reminders. However, it might be noted that the third and fourth wave curves appear to slack off more quickly than those for the first and second, suggesting the possibility that reminders may have had a sort of mild "sustainer" effect on the response rates. In any case, however, it appears that where there is relatively little cost difference in sending a reminder or a new questionnaire, the latter is more effective.¹⁷

III. SUMMARY

The review of previous research has shown that the percentage of questionnaires returned among school superintendents in most cases were quite low. It was further stated and shown that many methods have been utilized in attempting to motivate non-respondents.

¹⁷David B. Orr and Clinton A. Neyman, Jr., "Considerations, Costs, and Returns in a Large-scale Follow-up Study," Journal of Educational Research, 58:377-378, April, 1965.

One must refer to all non-respondents since little research has been done in increasing the percentage of questionnaires returned among school superintendents. Since research shows little has been accomplished or written in this area, the research in the present study is thereby strengthened. Finally, it was stated in the research that "small school superintendents seem to reply to questionnaire surveys more readily than the large school superintendents."¹⁸ Therefore, since this study was interested in the school superintendents who seldom return questionnaire forms, the sample was selected from the superintendents of the larger school systems in Kansas.

¹⁸Thomas, op. cit., p. 129.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Two methods were used to secure information for this study. The first was a review of related literature. This method was covered in the previous chapter. The second was obtaining data through a structured-questionnaire interview with the superintendents of twenty of the largest high schools in the State of Kansas.

This chapter shows the results of the structured-questionnaire interviews. Data was presented in tables and important points discussed in the text of this chapter.

I. REASONS FOR NOT RESPONDING TO QUESTIONNAIRES

As stated in question one, research indicates that school superintendents receive a large amount of mailed research questionnaires. Table I is a listing, in descending order of importance, of the reasons given by the selected superintendents for not responding to some research questionnaires.

TABLE I

COULD YOU GIVE SOME OF THE REASONS YOU
RESPOND TO SOME QUESTIONNAIRES
AND NOT TO OTHERS?

REASONS FOR NOT RESPONDING	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
The construction of the questionnaire is poor.	9
The questionnaire is too long and time consuming.	7
The form of the questionnaire needs improvement.	4
The content of the questionnaire is too shallow.	3
The superintendent does not have time to give to questionnaire studies.	3
Some questionnaires contain misspelled words and poor grammar.	3
Some of the information requested is simply not available.	2
Some questionnaires show a lack of deep thought.	2
Some questionnaires have a slanted approach, calling for predetermined responses.	2
Researchers who have a limited knowledge of the subject usually ask out-dated questions.	2
Some questionnaires are ambiguous.	2
Questionnaires calling for opinion depend on one's mood and therefore are considered unimportant.	2

REASONS FOR NOT RESPONDING	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
Some questionnaires call for too much factual or technical information.	2
Some questionnaires have been poorly printed or poorly duplicated.	2
Some questions asked put the school system on a spot.	1
Questionnaires containing essay type questions are too time consuming.	1
New duties of the superintendent are demanding more of his time.	1
Questionnaire forms from out-of-state will not be returned.	1
If a summary is not promised it is less likely to be returned.	1
The questionnaires are delegated to the department heads and they do not return them.	1
Some questionnaires make it difficult to understand what information is wanted.	1
If the present questionnaire is repetitious of previous studies it is less likely to be returned.	1
If the questionnaire comes at a busy time of year, it is less likely returned.	1
If the study has no future use but to go into the files it will not be answered.	1
If the questionnaire requires over 20 minutes to answer, it will not be completed.	1
Local, State, and National reports are requiring time that used to be given to questionnaires.	1

REASONS FOR NOT RESPONDING	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
Questionnaires that call for a 1,2,3 or a yes---no response can not be too important.	1
The lack of courtesy in asking for information, by some researchers, hinders a response.	1
Questionnaires containing loaded questions will not be returned.	1
The topic of research questionnaires in general irritates the superintendent and therefore does not return any of them.	1
Superintendents are just receiving too many questionnaires to complete all of them.	1

Table I shows that the superintendents in the Kansas schools have many and varied reasons for not responding to some research questionnaires. In analyzing the major reasons given for not responding, it is plainly shown that questionnaire studies need to be improved in the area of construction. Construction of the questionnaire may include such things as length, form, and content. Most of the superintendents felt that considerably more work and thought must be put into the questionnaire form if a higher percentage of returns is to be ever realized.

II. TIME OF YEAR TO SEND QUESTIONNAIRES

The information in Table II is based entirely on the notions of the selected superintendents for their own particular school setting. It is evident that these views cluster in two distinct areas.

In this table, the term "yes" is intended to mean that superintendents definitely believe the time of year affects their response. The term "no" is intended to mean that superintendents definitely believe the time of year questionnaires are received is of little or no importance.

TABLE II

DO YOU BELIEVE THE TIME OF YEAR YOU RECEIVE
QUESTIONNAIRES AFFECTS YOUR COOPERATION?

YES		NO	
No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
10	50	10	50

Table II indicates that the percentage of superintendents believing the time of year makes a difference in their response are equal in percentage to the superintendents who believe the time of year questionnaires are received is of little or no significance.

Table III, which is a second part to the above question, asks the superintendents when they consider the best time of year to receive research questionnaires.

In this table, the phrase "November to January" is intended to mean from the middle of November to the middle of January. The words "Summer months" are intended to mean from the middle of June to the middle of August. And the phrase "No Best Time Of Year" is intended to mean that the superintendents thought one month of the year was just as busy as the next month.

TABLE III

WHEN DO YOU CONSIDER THE BEST TIME OF YEAR FOR
RESEARCHERS TO CONTACT YOU FOR INFORMATION?

MONTHS	No.	Per Cent
November to January	8	40
Summer months	4	20
No Best Time Of Year	8	40

Table III shows that the preferences of the superintendents seem to cluster around two particular periods of time. According to 60 per cent of the responses, it seems superintendents in Kansas schools are in a lull or have more free time from November to January or during the Summer months. Yet, 40 per cent of the selected superintendents felt that in their particular school setting there was no best time of year for researchers to contact them.

III. NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES RECEIVED YEARLY

Figure 1 reveals the responses of the superintendents regarding the number of research questionnaires they receive a year. The figures presented here are only an approximation. The superintendents were asked to estimate the total number, since there were no records with this information available.

The red line running through the figure indicates the mode and the blue line indicates the mean or average number of questionnaires superintendents receive yearly.

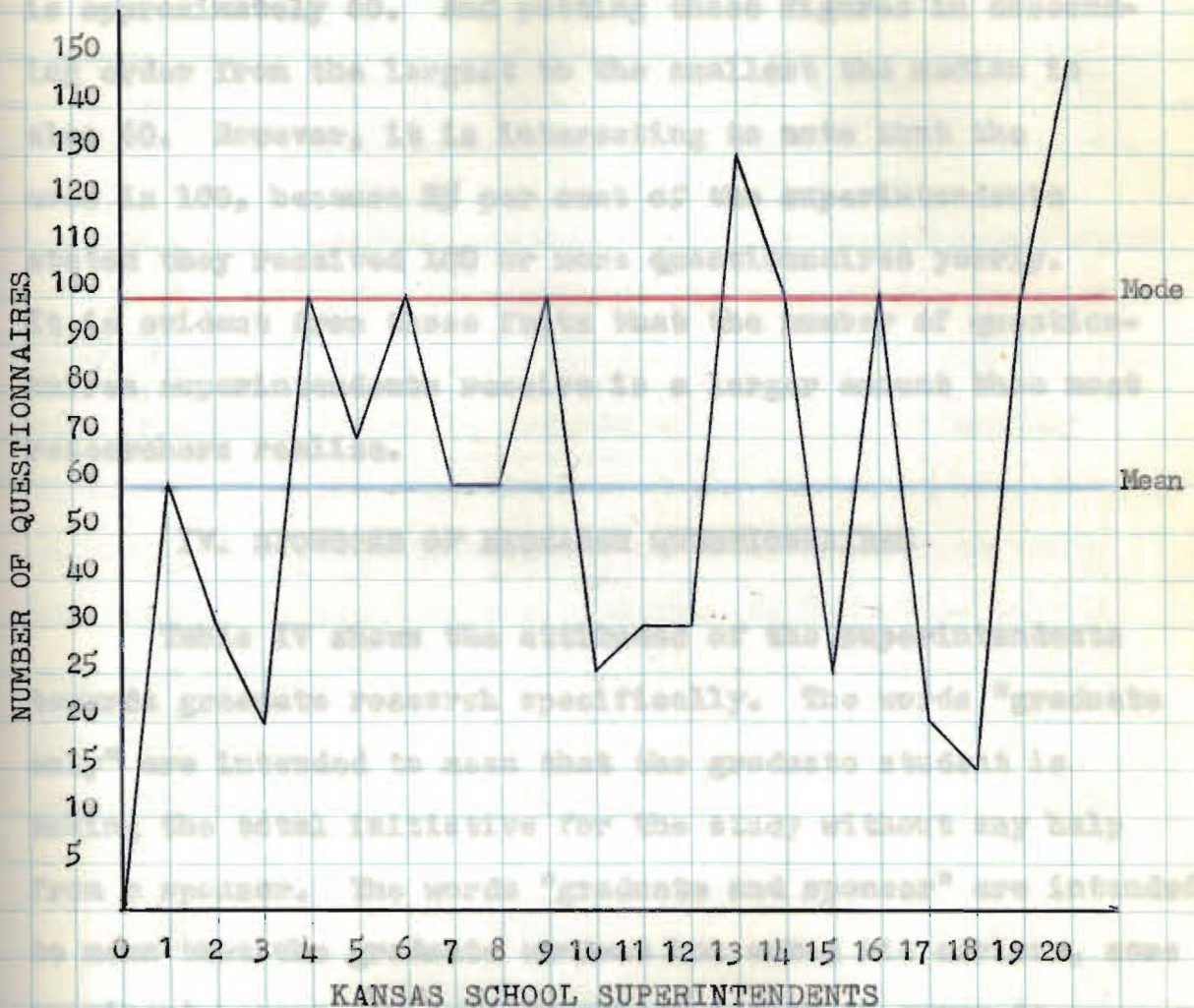


FIGURE 1

IF YOU WERE TO GIVE AN ESTIMATE TO THE NUMBER
OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES YOU
RECEIVE YEARLY, HOW
MANY WOULD YOU
SAY?

Figure 1 shows that the average number of research questionnaires a superintendent receives in a year's time is approximately 60. And putting these figures in descending order from the largest to the smallest the median is also 60. However, it is interesting to note that the mode is 100, because 25 per cent of the superintendents stated they received 100 or more questionnaires yearly. It is evident from these facts that the number of questionnaires superintendents receive is a larger amount than most researchers realize.

IV. SPONSORS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

Table IV shows the attitudes of the superintendents towards graduate research specifically. The words "graduate only" are intended to mean that the graduate student is taking the total initiative for the study without any help from a sponsor. The words "graduate and sponsor" are intended to mean that the graduate student has asked his advisor, some prominent person, or some important agency or group to sponsor his study.

TABLE IV

TO WHICH SPONSOR ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO
RETURN THEIR QUESTIONNAIRE FORM?

GRADUATE STUDENT ONLY		GRADUATE STUDENT AND SPONSOR	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
10	50	10	50

Table IV indicates that 50 per cent of the superintendents seemed to think that the graduate student and his study were important enough to respond without any sponsoring agency. The table also shows that the remaining 50 per cent of the superintendents believed it to be imperative that the graduate student have a sponsor. They further stated that the sponsor or sponsors should be well known in the field in which the study is being conducted if a high percentage of returns is to be gained.

V. QUESTIONNAIRES ON WORTHY EDUCATIONAL TOPICS

Figure 2 reveals the views of the selected superintendents concerning the percentage of questionnaires they consider not to be worthy of a response. The blue line is the mean or average percentage given in response to the above question.

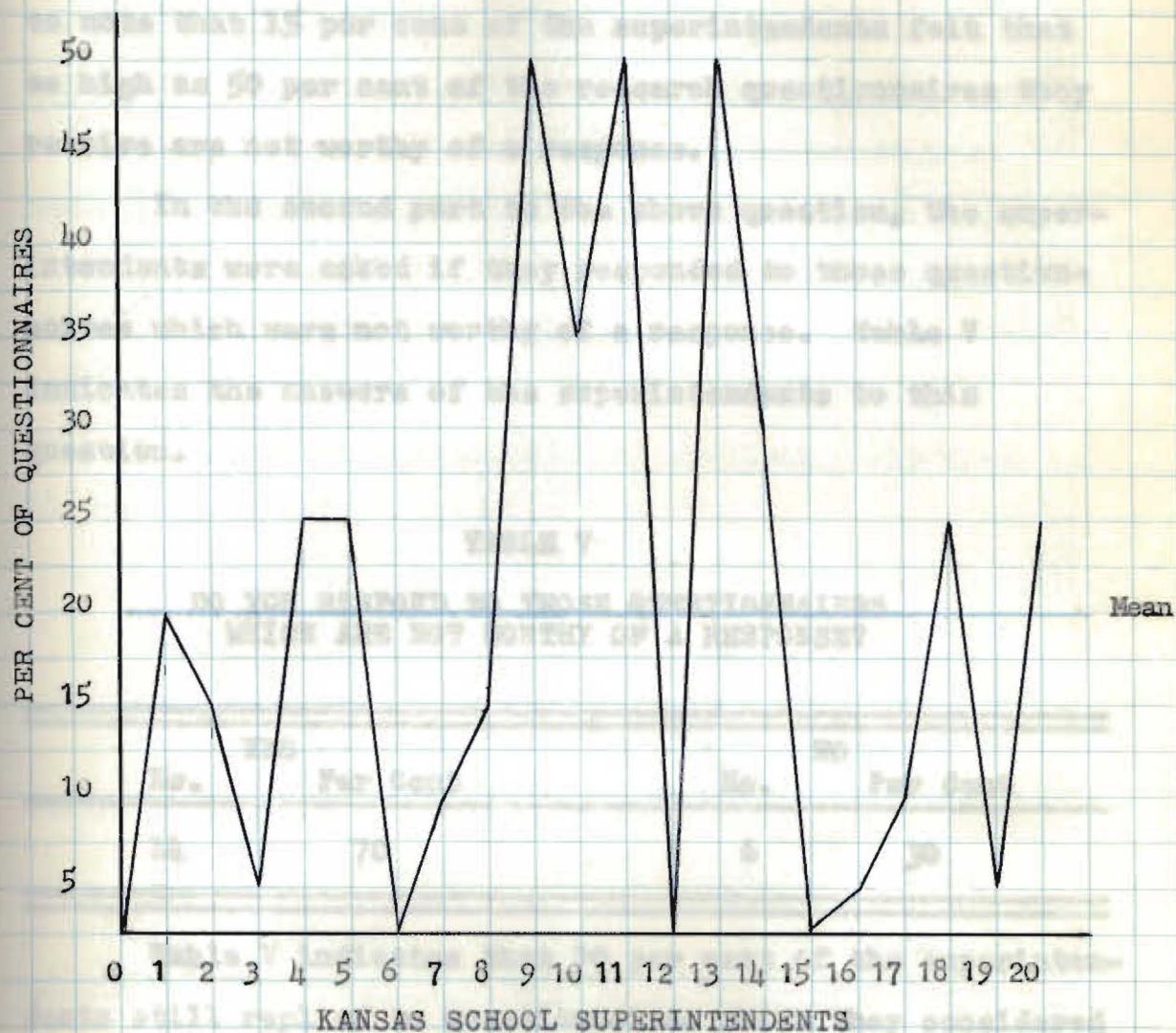


FIGURE 2

WHAT PER CENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES YOU RECEIVE
ARE NOT WORTHY OF YOUR RESPONSE?

Figure 2 shows the average number of questionnaires received by superintendents that are not worthy of a response is 20 per cent. However, it is also interesting to note that 15 per cent of the superintendents felt that as high as 50 per cent of the research questionnaires they receive are not worthy of a response.

In the second part to the above question, the superintendents were asked if they responded to those questionnaires which were not worthy of a response. Table V indicates the answers of the superintendents to this question.

TABLE V

DO YOU RESPOND TO THOSE QUESTIONNAIRES
WHICH ARE NOT WORTHY OF A RESPONSE?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
14	70	6	30

Table V indicates that 70 per cent of the superintendents still replied to questionnaires which they considered unworthy of a response. The table further shows that 30 per cent of the superintendents would not respond to questionnaires they considered unworthy of a response.

VI. IS THE INFORMATION REQUESTED AVAILABLE ASIDE FROM A QUESTIONNAIRE?

Table VI shows the positive and negative responses of the superintendents when asked if they considered the information requested to be available aside from a questionnaire survey. The term "yes" is intended to mean that the superintendents believed the researcher could find their information from other sources and need not bother and take the superintendents time. The term "no" is intended to mean that the superintendents thought that the information requested was available only from him or his school.

TABLE VI

IS THE INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE RESEARCHER
OFTEN AVAILABLE ASIDE FROM A
QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
14	70	6	30

Table VI indicates that 70 per cent of the superintendents felt the information requested was often available from other sources. These superintendents felt the researcher was taking their valuable time when he could be getting his information elsewhere.

Yet, 30 per cent of the superintendents felt the information requested usually was of such a nature it could be gained only from them or through their schools.

Table VII, which records the responses of the second part of the above question, asks the superintendents if they would answer and return questionnaires if the information was available from other sources. The term "yes" is intended to mean that the superintendent would answer and return the form; the term "no" is intended to mean that the superintendent would not answer and return the questionnaire form. The words "no, send back" are intended to mean that the superintendent would return the questionnaire form unanswered and would tell the researcher where the information could be found.

TABLE VII

WILL YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONNAIRE IF THE
INFORMATION REQUESTED IS AVAILABLE
ELSEWHERE?

YES		NO		NO, SEND BACK	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
8	40	5	25	7	35

In Table VII it is interesting to note that 60 per cent of the superintendents stated they would not answer questionnaires if they knew the information was available elsewhere.

Yet, of this 60 per cent non-response, 35 per cent of the superintendents stated they would return the questionnaire unanswered informing the researcher where the information could be found. And as the table indicates, 40 per cent of the superintendents stated they would take time to respond even though they knew the information could be gained from some other source.

VII. TYPES OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

Table VIII reveals the replies of the superintendents in response to which type of a research questionnaire they prefer to answer. The term "objective" is intended to mean that the superintendents preferred the short answer, multiple choice type of questionnaire. The term "subjective" is intended to mean that the superintendents preferred the more extensive essay-type answers.

TABLE VIII

WHICH TYPE OF A RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
WOULD YOU RATHER ANSWER?

OBJECTIVE		SUBJECTIVE	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
19	95	1	5

Table VIII indicates that 95 per cent of the superintendents would rather receive and answer the objective questionnaire form.

Only 5 per cent of the superintendents felt like they had sufficient time to answer the subjective type questionnaire form.

In Table IX, which is part two of the above question, the superintendents were asked which type questionnaire they usually received. In this table, the terms "objective and subjective" have the same meaning as in Table VIII.

TABLE IX

WHICH TYPE OF QUESTIONNAIRE DO
YOU USUALLY RECEIVE?

OBJECTIVE		SUBJECTIVE		HALF OF EACH	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
10	50	5	25	5	25

Table IX indicates that 50 per cent of the superintendents stated that they usually receive objective questionnaires; 25 per cent of the superintendents stated that they usually receive subjective questionnaires; and 25 per cent of the superintendents stated that they receive about half of each type.

VIII. UNREASONABLE QUESTIONNAIRES

Figure 3 shows the responses of the superintendents to the question of what is the breaking point between reasonable and unreasonable when asking superintendents for answers.

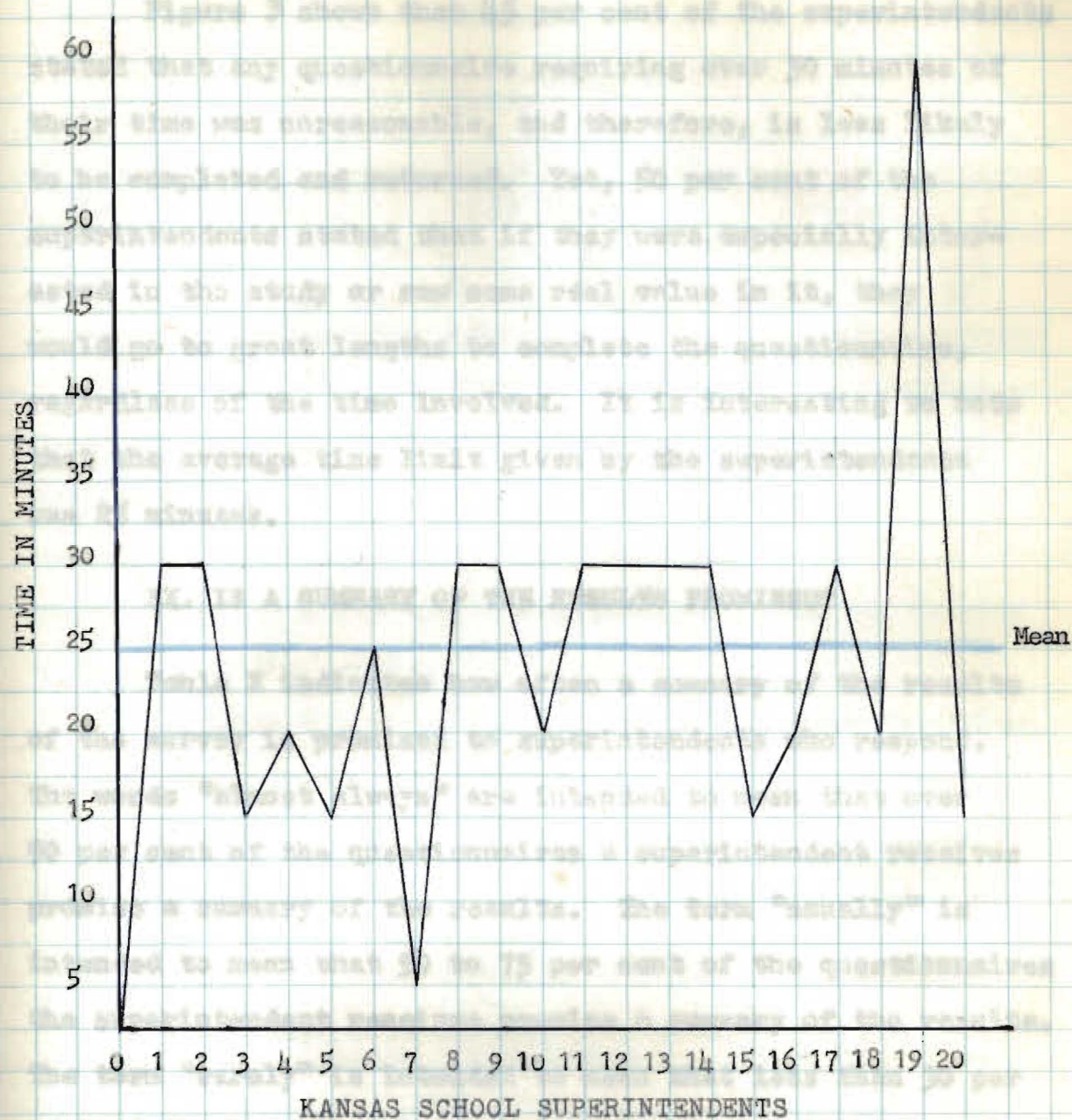


FIGURE 3

WHAT IS THE BREAKING POINT BETWEEN REASONABLE
AND UNREASONABLE WHEN ASKING SCHOOL
SUPERINTENDENTS FOR ANSWERS?

Figure 3 shows that 45 per cent of the superintendents stated that any questionnaire requiring over 30 minutes of their time was unreasonable, and therefore, is less likely to be completed and returned. Yet, 50 per cent of the superintendents stated that if they were especially interested in the study or saw some real value in it, they would go to great lengths to complete the questionnaire, regardless of the time involved. It is interesting to note that the average time limit given by the superintendents was 25 minutes.

IX. IS A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS PROMISED?

Table X indicates how often a summary of the results of the survey is promised to superintendents who respond. The words "almost always" are intended to mean that over 90 per cent of the questionnaires a superintendent receives promise a summary of the results. The term "usually" is intended to mean that 50 to 75 per cent of the questionnaires the superintendent receives promise a summary of the results. The term "rarely" is intended to mean that less than 30 per cent of the questionnaires a superintendent receives promise to send a summary of the results.

TABLE X

HOW OFTEN IS A SUMMARY OF THE
RESULTS PROMISED?

ALMOST ALWAYS		USUALLY		RARELY	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
7	35	7	35	6	30

Table X indicates that 35 per cent of the superintendents stated that almost all questionnaires they receive include a promise of a summary of the results; 35 per cent stated a summary was usually promised; and 30 per cent stated questionnaires they received rarely promised to send a summary of the results.

In Table XI, which is part two of the above question, the superintendents were asked if the promise of a summary prompted their response. Their responses are listed simply affirmative or negative.

TABLE XI

DOES A PROMISE OF A SUMMARY
PROMPT YOUR RETURN?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
12	60	8	40

Table XI indicates that 60 per cent of the superintendents believe that a summary of the results prompts them to respond. And 40 per cent of the superintendents stated that they paid little attention to the promise of a summary and that it made little difference to their response.

X. DIFFICULTIES WITHIN QUESTIONNAIRES

Table XII lists, in descending order of importance, what the superintendents considered to be some of the difficulties within questionnaire forms that hinder their response.

TABLE XII

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES
WITHIN THE QUESTIONNAIRE FORM
THAT HINDERS YOUR
RESPONSE?

DIFFICULTIES	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
ambiguity within questionnaire	9
poor grammar, spelling and punctuation errors	4
repetition of questions	3
poorly stated questions	3
loaded questions	3
request for long, subjective response	3
technical questionnaire which requires depth research	3

TABLE XII (continued)

DIFFICULTIES	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
rambling, unorganized questions	2
questions concerning confidential matters	2
questions with more than one interpretation	2
questions obviously not written by the student	2
questions calling for an opinion	2
lack of instructions	1
questions not adaptable to particular school system	1

Table XII reveals many of the difficulties superintendents have observed in the questionnaires they receive. These difficulties, as the question stated, were related in particular to the difficulties found within the questionnaire form itself. It is note-worthy that 45 per cent of the superintendents listed ambiguity as one of the chief problems of research questionnaires. It is also important to note that 20 per cent of the superintendents listed poor grammar, spelling and punctuation as a definite short coming of many of the questionnaires they receive.

XI. STRENGTHS IN QUESTIONNAIRES

Table XIII lists, in descending order of importance, the responses of the superintendents as to what they considered to be some of the good points or strengths within questionnaires they have received that would increase the percentage of questionnaires returned.

TABLE XIII

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS IN RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES THAT PROMPT YOUR RESPONSE?

STRENGTHS	NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED
topics of interest	9
thoroughly organized and well structured	9
specific "to the point" questions	7
correct grammar, spelling and punctuation	6
attractive format	5
high quality printing or duplication	5
questions which can be easily and precisely answered	5
factual, less opinionated questions	2
language suitable to the level of the study	1
sufficient space provided for answers	1
adequate time allowed for return	1

Table XIII makes known many of the good points or strengths that superintendents like to see in questionnaires. It is interesting to note from the list how many superintendents held the same views. It is important to point out that the entire listing are improvements that must well be made if a high percentage of returns is to be realized.

XII. ARE SUPERINTENDENTS TOO BUSY FOR QUESTIONNAIRES?

Table XIV shows the responses of the superintendents when asked if they were too busy to answer and return research questionnaires. The term "yes" is intended to mean that the superintendents thought being too busy was a valid reason for not responding to questionnaires. The term "no" is intended to mean that the superintendents considered being too busy was not a valid reason for not responding to questionnaires. The words "no, if interested" are intended to mean that the superintendents considered they were too busy for the usual questionnaire, but if one came along which they considered to be worthwhile, they would take time to respond.

TABLE XIV

DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE TOO BUSY
TO ANSWER AND RETURN RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES?

YES		NO		NO, IF INTERESTED	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
4	20	12	60	4	20

Table XIV indicates that 20 per cent of the superintendents honestly believed being too busy was a valid reason for not completing questionnaires. The table also indicates that 60 per cent of the superintendents considered being too busy was not a valid reason for not responding. And 20 per cent of the superintendents stated they were too busy, but if interested in a particular study or considered one really worthwhile they would take time to respond.

All of the superintendents stated that they had more to do than they could ever get done. Yet, only two of the school districts had found a solution to the problem of being plagued by all types of research studies. The solution of these schools is a research screening committee. If a researcher wishes to send a questionnaire to the superintendent or to any other school employee it must first be approved by the research screening committee.

APPENDIX C includes the pages out of the Topeka Policy Handbook which outlines the members of the research

screening committee and the general procedures to be followed by the researcher. Also included is the "Research Study Request Form" from both the Topeka and Lawrence school systems.

These superintendents stated that a research screening committee eliminated the poorer research studies and therefore gave them more time for the worthwhile studies. They stated if a study once received the approval of the research screening committee, whether an interview or a questionnaire survey, the researcher was sure to find cooperation of the people involved.

XIII. PRODDING FOR A RESPONSE

Question thirteen asks the superintendents if they have ever received gimmicks in questionnaires to prompt or prod them to respond. In responding to this question 65 per cent of the superintendents stated they had never received any gimmicks and 35 per cent of the superintendents stated they had received some, but very few.

In Table XV, the superintendents were asked if any of the following items affected their response to questionnaires. The term "yes" is intended to mean that the superintendents believed the item to be essential if a response was to be expected. The term "no" is intended to mean that the

superintendents did not believe the item to be necessary for a return.

TABLE XV

DO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS AFFECT YOUR
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRES?

ITEMS	YES		NO	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Return Addressed Stamped Envelope	16	80	4	20
Follow-up letters or reminders	15	75	5	25
Enclosure of money	8	40	12	60
Personal phone call	14	70	6	30

Table XV shows that 80 per cent of the superintendents thought a return addressed stamped envelope was essential; 20 per cent said it would make little or no difference to their response. The table shows that 75 per cent of the superintendents considered follow-up letters or reminders to be essential; 25 per cent said they would not affect their response. The table shows that 40 per cent of the superintendents thought money to be a good motivator to increase responses; 60 per cent said receiving money would irritate them and they would definitely not respond.

The table shows that 70 per cent of the superintendents considered a personal phone call to be a good idea in gaining a higher response; and 30 per cent of them considered a phone call to be of little value.

Table XVI, which is part two of the above question, shows the responses of the superintendents when asked if they really needed prodding to return questionnaire forms.

TABLE XVI

DO YOU REALLY NEED PRODDING BY THE RESEARCHER
TO RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE FORMS?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
6	30	14	70

Table XVI indicates that 30 per cent of the superintendents considered prodding necessary if they were to return many of the questionnaires they receive. However, 70 per cent of the superintendents considered prodding an insult and would hinder rather than prompt their response.

XIV. PURPOSES OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

Table XVII makes known the responses of the superintendents when asked if the purpose of the study is usually clearly stated.

The term "yes" is intended to mean that the superintendents considered most questionnaires they receive to simply and clearly state their purpose. The term "no" is intended to mean that the superintendents considered most questionnaires to be very ambiguous.

TABLE XVII
IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
USUALLY SIMPLY STATED?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
8	40	12	60

Table XVII indicates that 40 per cent of the superintendents considered the purpose of the questionnaire studies they receive to be clearly and simply stated; 60 per cent found it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the purpose of the majority of these studies.

In Table XVIII, which is part two of the above question, the superintendents were asked if the future use of the study affected their response.

TABLE XVIII

DOES THE FUTURE USE OF THE STUDY
AFFECT YOUR RESPONSE?

YES		NO	
No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
16	80	4	20

Table XVIII indicates that 80 per cent of the superintendents stated that the future use of the study affected their response; 20 per cent stated that they paid little attention to this factor in responding.

XV. NUMBER ONE IMPROVEMENT TO BE
MADE IN QUESTIONNAIRES

Table XIX lists the one, most important improvement that needs to be made in mailed research questionnaires as stated by the selected superintendents. These twenty improvements are not in any particular order.

TABLE XIX

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENT
THAT NEEDS TO BE MADE IN RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
STUDIES TO GAIN AN INCREASED RESPONSE?

IMPROVEMENTS

Researchers need a deep, thorough understanding of the topic which they are undertaking. If the questionnaire shows this deep, thorough understanding of the subject and informs the respondent as he answers, it is very likely to be returned.

TABLE XIX (continued)

IMPROVEMENTS

Superintendents need to receive more questionnaires that are well thought out and organized, thus making them easier to answer.

Questionnaires need to be constructed in a more concise manner and must be more clearly stated if they are to be returned.

Questionnaire studies need a clearing house. There is too much duplication. Superintendents are receiving a number of studies that are alike or similar. A researcher could be more sure of a response if his study was unique.

Questionnaires need to become less mere opinions and more factual. The return of worthwhile, factual material is usually more important to the superintendent.

The quality of questionnaires needs to be more carefully considered. Grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and mechanics are important if high returns or any return is desired.

Researchers need to strive to develop questionnaires that are objective, brief and clear. If these factors are included the questionnaire will usually be returned.

Researchers need to structure their questionnaires in a more orderly manner, thus making it easier to answer and more likely to be returned.

A very simple improvement that superintendents would like to see in questionnaires is a greater degree of simplicity and clarity.

If the researcher would make the questionnaire more personal, making the respondent think he is an important link in the chain, the study is more likely to have high returns.

It would be a welcomed sight to see more questionnaires developed in a precise manner to gain specific answers.

TABLE XIX (continued)

IMPROVEMENTS

Superintendents want to receive questionnaires that are more pertinent to the problems of school administration. If questionnaires are on subjects vital to the school setting they are sure to be answered.

Questionnaires that call for a degree of intelligence in answering are considered more worthwhile and favorable among school administrators.

In the letter of introduction preceding the questionnaire, it is important for the researcher to introduce himself and then simply state the purpose of the study.

When graduate students quit using questionnaire studies as just a bridge to cross and start showing genuine interest and preparedness in their topic, superintendents will feel more like responding.

When institutions of higher learning start cooperating on what research studies are being done and there is, as a result, fewer duplications, the percentage of returns from superintendents will increase.

When researchers start dealing with pertinent topics which are of real concern to the superintendents at that time, the responses will increase. It is realized that for any given school year the major concerns of superintendents are pretty narrow.

Complexity of forming and stating the questions must give way to simplicity, conciseness and precision, if an increased percentage of questionnaire is to be ever realized.

Researchers need to realize that superintendents do not want the school district identified. A fear of this event occurring limits the responses of some superintendents.

Questionnaires that are eye catching, have a color-ful mat, and are printed or duplicated neatly are more likely to be returned.

XVI. SUMMARY

This chapter contains the data gained from the selected superintendents of Kansas school districts. The information is based on their views, practices and experiences in the past few years as stated in a personal interview held in their offices.

When a researcher conducts a survey, one of his prime concerns is to ensure that as many questionnaires as possible are returned. It is evident from the facts contained in this chapter that there are many weaknesses in most questionnaires.

Hopefully, this chapter has shown future researchers many of the problems of questionnaire studies and at the same time given them ideas for improving their own studies. If a few of the shortcomings and pitfalls of questionnaires can be avoided by future researchers, this chapter will have been worthwhile.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study has been to: (1) identify some of the reasons why superintendents in Kansas schools discard research questionnaires; (2) evaluate each of the responses gained from the superintendents in the structured questionnaire interview; and (3) investigate methods that might be utilized in increasing the percentage of questionnaires returned.

This chapter summarized the development of preceding chapters, lists conclusions arrived at, and notes questions worthy of further study.

I. SUMMARY OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Related literature indicates that leading educators are in agreement that the percentage of questionnaires returned among school superintendents is quite low. Authorities in the field of research are quite aware of the importance of a large percentage of questionnaires returned. Therefore, leading educators considered it vital that methods be found to prompt superintendents to respond.

In the related literature several authors presented some of the methods and techniques which have been utilized

in attempting to increase the percentage of questionnaires returned.

In the presentation of the data each of the questions that were asked of the superintendents were evaluated and recorded. The following is a summary of each of these questions.

In question one, the superintendents gave their reasons for not responding to research questionnaires and these reasons were listed in Table I. Among the reasons given, 45 per cent of the superintendents stated construction of the questionnaire as a definite area needing improvement if a larger percentage of responses are to be gained.

In question two, 40 per cent of the superintendents stated that the best time of year for researchers to send out research questionnaires was from the middle of November to the middle of January. Also, 40 per cent of the superintendents stated the summer months, from the middle of June to the middle of August, were the best time to contact them for information.

Question three concluded that superintendents receive an average of 60 questionnaires a year. Yet, 25 per cent of the superintendents topped this figure stating they received 100 or more questionnaires a year. These figures seemed to show that superintendents receive more questionnaires than most researchers realize.

Question four indicated that superintendents are equally divided as to whether a graduate student should have a sponsor. It was shown in Table IV that 50 per cent responded in the affirmative and 50 per cent responded in the negative.

Question five concluded that superintendents considered an average of 20 per cent of the questionnaires they receive are not worthy of a response. Yet, Table V showed that 70 per cent of the superintendents stated they still replied even though they considered the questionnaire unworthy of a response.

Question six indicated that 70 per cent of the superintendents thought the information requested by the researcher was often available aside from a questionnaire survey. Yet, 40 per cent of the superintendents stated they would answer the questionnaire even if they considered the information available elsewhere.

Question seven made known that 95 per cent of the superintendents would rather receive objective questionnaires than subjective. Table VIII, showed that superintendents were receiving more of the objective forms, but yet 25 per cent of the superintendents stated they received more of the subjective forms.

Question eight indicated that 45 per cent of the superintendents stated that any questionnaire requiring over 30 minutes of their time was unreasonable and very likely would not be completed and returned.

Question nine revealed the superintendents were very evenly divided as to how often they considered a summary of the results to be promised. Yet, it is important to note that 60 per cent of the superintendents believed a summary of the results prompted their response.

Question ten lists what the superintendents considered to be the main difficulties within questionnaires that hinder their response. The most important difficulty given by 45 per cent of the superintendents, was the fact that researchers fail to clearly explain what they are seeking. Too many of the questionnaires superintendents receive are considered to be vague and ambiguous.

Question eleven lists what superintendents considered to be the good points or strengths in questionnaire studies. It was interesting to note that 45 per cent of the superintendents considered a definite strength to be a topic of special interest to them. It was considered important that these improvements be made if a high percentage of returns is to be realized.

Question twelve concluded that 60 per cent of the superintendents felt being too busy was not a valid reason for not responding to questionnaires. Most of these superintendents considered they always responded to questionnaires because they had a professional obligation to make time for helping graduate students. The general consensus given by the majority of the superintendents was that they had time to do what they wanted to do. It was further indicated that two of the superintendents had found a solution to this problem of being plagued by all kinds of research studies. It was found a research screening committee was helpful in saving the superintendent time by eliminating the poorer studies. The forms used by these schools are included in APPENDIX C.

Question thirteen indicated that various items have different effects on prompting or prodding superintendents to respond to questionnaires. It was interesting to note that 70 per cent of the superintendents stated they did not need prodding.

Question fourteen concluded that 60 per cent of the superintendents felt that the majority of the questionnaires they received lacked clarity in stating the purpose of the study. It was shown that 80 per cent of the superintendents considered the future use of the study affected their

response, therefore, it was considered important that the superintendents be able to understand this purpose.

Question fifteen lists the number one, most important improvement that the selected superintendents believed must be made in questionnaire studies. These twenty improvements should be given a great deal of consideration as future researchers begin their questionnaire studies.

II. CONCLUSIONS RESULTING FROM THE STUDY

Conclusions reached during this study largely result from tabulation of data gathered for this paper, related research previously done by others, and from study of literature in books and periodicals.

The following conclusions appear to be justified as a result of this study:

1. A number of the superintendents stated that when subjective, essay-type questionnaires come to their office to be completed, they are likely to be laid aside until they have more time. It is suggested that those researchers using the longer, subjective form, if at all possible, make interviews rather than send a mailed questionnaire.
2. It is suggested future researchers take into consideration the time of year they send out questionnaires, since 60 per cent of the superintendents indicated a preference to time of year.
3. It is suggested that researchers stay away from questionnaires if at all possible. The present study indicated superintendents receive up to 150 questionnaires a year, this should be incentive enough to go some other direction with research.

4. It is suggested that a researcher planning a questionnaire study, cut his sample and make personal interviews. It appears a smaller sample of interviews would be more valid than a large sample of mailed questionnaires.
5. It is suggested that if a questionnaire study is the only way to gain the needed research that the questionnaire form be as objective and concise as possible. It is suggested, since 45 per cent of the superintendents stated that the questionnaire be not over 30 minutes, that researchers take this thought into consideration in constructing the questionnaire form.
6. It is suggested since superintendents listed so many difficulties within the questionnaire form, that future researchers have several authorities evaluate and critically analyze the questionnaire before using it.
7. It was shown 70 per cent of the superintendents stated a personal phone call would prompt them to respond. If a researcher could afford the expense, this method might be worth exploring in the follow-up stage of the study.
8. It is apparent that more of the school districts should use the research screening board as was established in two of the school districts visited. This process of screening will thus eliminate the poorer studies and give the superintendent more time.
9. Since 60 per cent of the superintendents stated a summary was vital to their response, it is suggested that future researchers indicate that a summary of the results will be given.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As work progressed on this paper certain questions arose which are related to this study.

These questions are submitted as worthy of further research.

1. It was indicated that superintendents receive many questionnaires that are alike or similar. It is suggested that further study could be done in getting schools to collaborate on what has been and what is being done in graduate research. The ideal would be to create a clearing house for all graduate research.
2. Further research could be done in comparing the schools which use a research screening board to those which do not. This study would include determining how effective a research screening board is in eliminating poorer questionnaires and how much time is saved the superintendent.
3. It is suggested that other studies similar to the present study be conducted by graduate students working toward advanced degrees in the area of education with the intent of proving or disproving the validity of the present study.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Administrators Agree: 'Give Us Contracts for at Least Three Years,'" The Nation's Schools, 76:47, August, 1965.

"Administrators Are Reluctant to Part with Certification," The Nation's Schools, 72:29, July, 1963.

Bradt, Kenneth. "The Usefulness of a Post-card Technique in a Mail Questionnaire," Public Opinion Quarterly, 19:218-222, Summer, 1955.

Davis, D. A. "Who Responds to Guidance Questionnaires?," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 9:184-186, Spring, 1961.

Eckland, Bruce K. "Effects of Prodding to Increase Mail-Back Returns," Journal of Applied Psychology, 49:165-169, June, 1965.

Gross, Neal. Who Runs Our Schools? New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958.

_____, Ward S. Mason, and Alexander W. McEachern. Explorations In Role Analysis. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958.

Gullahorn, John T., and Jeanne E. Gullahorn. "Increasing Returns from Non-respondents," Public Opinion Quarterly, 23:119-121, Summer, 1959.

Hammond, Cuyler E. "Inhalation in Relation to Type and Amount of Smoking," Journal of the American Statistical Association, 54:35-51, March, 1959.

Jerry, Robert Howard. "The Duties of a Superintendent and the Allocation of Professional Time of Public School Superintendents in Indiana," Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1963, Dissertation Abstracts, 24:3175, January-April, 1964.

Kephart, William M., and Marvin Bressler. "Increasing the Response to Mail Questionnaires: A Research Study," Public Opinion Quarterly, 22:123-132, Summer, 1958.

Koenig, Robert A. "A Comparative Study of Superintendents and School Boards in Massachusetts and the Bay Area," Journal of Secondary Education, 41:51-58, February, 1966.

Koos, Leonard V. The Questionnaire In Education. New York: Macmillan Company, 1928.

Levine, Sol, and Gerald Gordon. "Maximizing Returns on Mail Questionnaires," Public Opinion Quarterly, 22:568-575, Winter, 1958-59.

Mooren, Robert L., and John W. Rothney. "Personalizing the Follow-up Study," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 34:409-412, March, 1956.

Orr, David B., and Clinton Neyman, Jr. "Considerations, Costs, and Returns in a Large-Scale Follow-up Study," Journal of Educational Research, 58:373-378, April, 1965.

Reid, Seerley. "Respondents and Non-respondents to Mail Questionnaires," Educational Research Bulletin, 21:87-96, April, 1942.

"Schoolmen Tie Strings to Their Support of Compact," The Nation's Schools, 77:61, January, 1966.

Smith, David Mitchell, and Norman Ziff. "The Preparation and Experience of Ohio City Superintendents," Educational Research Bulletin, 32:197-201, November, 1953; and David Mitchell Smith. "Educational Preparation and Professional Experience of Ohio City School Superintendents," Unpublished Master's thesis, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1952.

Speak, Mary. "Some Characteristics of Respondents, Partial-Respondents and Non-Respondents to Questionnaires on Job Satisfaction," Occupational Psychology, 38:173-182, July and October, 1964.

"Superintendents Should Have a Year's Training in Business Administration," The Nation's Schools, 68:85, October, 1961.

"The Questionnaire," Research Bulletin of the National Education Association, 39, January, 1930.

Thomas, R. Murray. "Questionnaires to Administrators: Rate of Return," California Journal of Educational Research, 15:122-129, May, 1964.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

TWENTY OF THE LARGEST HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF KANSAS AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF EACH DISTRICT

<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Home County</u>	<u>High School Students</u>	<u>Unified District</u>
Dr. O. L. Plucker Library Building Kansas City, Ks. 66101	Wyandotte	5,628	500
Dr. Merle R. Bolton 415 West Eighth Street Topeka, Kansas 66603	Shawnee	4,541	501
Dr. Harland L. R. Paschal 1300 N. Plum Hutchinson, Ks. 67501	Reno	1,688	308
Dr. Carl S. Knox 2017 Louisiana Lawrence, Ks. 66044	Douglas	1,546	497
James M. Benjamin 400 East Ninth Street Winfield, Ks. 67156	Cowley	1,278	465
Gordon A. Yeargan 624 Olive Leavenworth, Ks. 66048	Leavenworth	1,244	453
J. L. Smalling Box 949 Liberal, Ks. 67901	Seward	1,102	480
Dr. Sanford G. Witter 1800 S. 55th Street Kansas City, Ks. 66106	Wyandotte	1,073	202
William C. Robinson 2031 Poynts Manhattan, Ks. 66502	Riley	1,070	383
Dr. D. W. Frazer 605 Kansas Avenue Atchison, Ks. 66002	Atchison	1,050	409

<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Home County</u>	<u>High School Students</u>	<u>Unified District</u>
Dan V. Swarts 2408 Jefferson Great Bend, Ks. 67530	Barton	1,042	428
Bryce D. Stallard 230 East Grand Haysville, Ks. 67060	Sedgwick	980	261
Loren L. Van Patten 120 East Washington Derby, Ks. 67037	Sedgwick	977	260
Harold Deever P. O. Box 370 Junction City, Ks. 66441	Geary	975	475
Thomas F. Saffell 118 1/2 Grant Garden City, Ks. 67846	Finney	908	457
Dr. J. A. Kinder 124 W. Seventh Street Newton, Ks. 67114	Harvey	854	373
Victor A. Klotz P. O. Box 564 Coffeyville, Ks. 67337	Montgomery	847	445
Frank B. Toalson 1000 Second Avenue Dodge City, Ks. 67801	Ford	847	443
Lloyd L. Shank 119 West Washington Arkansas City, Ks. 67005	Cowley	836	470
L. D. Curran Altamont, Kansas 67330	Labette	800	506

Taken from the Kansas Educational Directory, 1966-67.
 Kansas State Department of Public Instruction,
 Bulletin 340.

July 1, 1967

Dr. O. L. Plucker
Library Building
Kansas City, Ka.

Dear Dr. Plucker:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Terry Clark. I am a graduate student at Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia. I am making a study on reasons why superintendents in Kansas schools discard some research questionnaires. As the school year draws to a close you undoubtedly have been swamped with many research questionnaires. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to understand some of the reasons why superintendents, such as yourself, never return some of these research questionnaires. Further, it is the purpose of this study to find methods that can be utilized by future researchers in increasing the percentage of questionnaires returned.

I have selected the superintendents of twenty of the largest high schools in the state of Kansas as my sample. According to the Kansas Educational Directory, 1966-67 your school is number three. I would appreciate it if you would set aside 15 to 20 minutes of your time in which I could come and visit with you. I have several questions I would like to ask you and also possibly you could make some suggestions for improving questionnaires.

I will be to your school on Friday, July 7, 1967 at 3:00 in the afternoon. I am hoping, if it is at all possible, that you will be in your office at this time. I am including a post-card in this letter for your reply. If for some reason you will not be in your office at the above time would you return this card including a convenient time for you.

Sincerely yours,



Terry L. Clark

Part of APPENDIX B

of a response

STRUCTURED-QUESTIONNAIRE INTERVIEW

of a response to this.

of a response

1. Research proves school superintendents receive a large amount of mailed research questionnaires. Could you give some of the reasons why you respond to some and not to others?

Interviewer

2. Do you believe the time of year you receive research questionnaires affects your cooperation? *could you rather*

Yes _____

No _____

- A. When do you consider the best time of year for researchers to contact you for information?

3. If you were to give an estimate to the number of research questionnaires you receive a year, how many would you say?

4. To which sponsor are you most likely to return their questionnaire form?

Graduate Student Only

Graduate Student and Sponsor

6. What is the breaking point between reasonable and unreasonable when asking school superintendents for answers? (measured in time)

4. Which type of questionnaire do you usually receive?

Objective _____
Subjective _____

7. Which type of a research questionnaire would you rather answer?

Yes _____
No _____
No, send back _____

4. Will you answer the questionnaire if the information requested is available elsewhere?

Yes _____
No _____

6. Is the information requested by the researcher often available aside from a questionnaire survey?

Yes _____
No _____

4. Do you respond to those questionnaires which are not worthy of a response?

5. What per cent of the questionnaires you receive are not worthy of a response?

9. How often is a summary of the results of the study promised, if you reply?

A. Does a promise of a summary prompt your return?

Yes _____

No _____

10. What do you consider to be some of the difficulties within the questionnaire form that hinders your response?

Personal phone call

Personal phone call

11. What do you consider to be some of the strengths in research questionnaires that prompt your response?

Yes

12. Do you honestly believe that you are too busy to answer and return research questionnaires?

consider to be too busy
most people in the world
make an increased effort

13. Have you ever received gimmicks in mailed research questionnaires to prompt or prod your response?

A. Like what?

- B. Do the following items affect your response to questionnaires?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Return Addressed Stamped Envelope	_____	_____
Follow-up letters or reminders	_____	_____
Enclosure of money	_____	_____
Personal phone call	_____	_____

- C. Do you really need prodding by the researcher to return questionnaires?

Yes _____

No _____

14. Is the purpose of the questionnaire study usually clearly and simply stated?

Yes _____

No _____

15. What do you consider to be the one, most important improvement that needs to be made in research questionnaires to gain an increased response?

APPENDIX C

PERIMENTS AND RESEARCH

I. General Statement

It is the desire of The Public Schools of Topeka to keep abreast of the times in matters of method, content of curriculum and aids to teaching. We welcome opportunities to be a part of the on-going progress in education. At the same time we are obligated to protect the interests of our pupils, teachers, and patrons of our schools. We are jealous of the six-hour day allotted to us by law for instructional purposes. We have more to do than we have the time, money and personnel to do. Therefore, we must use what resources we have wisely and to the best interest of this school district. Being located close to some major Universities, Colleges, Bureaus of Research, Menninger Foundation, and being a capital city causes us to receive many requests for research and experimentation. In order to participate in those that are of most worth, we have adopted the following procedures.

I. Screening Committee on Experiments and Research

Committee:

Representative from the Office of Superintendent of Schools
Deputy Superintendent of Personnel
Deputy Superintendent of Instruction
Director of Pupil Accounting
Director of Research (Chairman)

Committee meets on notice from the Superintendent or the Director of Research.

Experiments in administrative organization are to be examined by the Deputy Superintendent of Personnel and his recommendation made to the committee for consideration and action.

Experiments and research involving the instructional program shall be referred to the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction who will study the plan and procedures and make recommendations for the committee's consideration.

Experiments and research involving census, attendance and statistics will be studied by the Director of Pupil Accounting and his recommendations presented to the committee.

Experiments and research involving building and departmental teaching staff projects will be studied by the Director of Research and his recommendations presented to the committee.

EXPERIMENTS AND RESEARCH (Cont'd.)

71

C. Procedures to be Followed

- A. Individuals, research organizations or commercial companies desiring to conduct research projects in The Topeka Public Schools will be required to complete all items of a prescribed request form (Form RA-4). Requests will be processed by the Experiments and Research Committee following each regular staff meeting. The Board of Education of The Topeka Public Schools recognizes the mutual interest to be served by cooperating on research studies by responsible persons outside the school system; however, those particular studies that will make contributions to The Topeka Public Schools will be given higher priority by the Research Committee. The possible value of a research study, however, is a secondary consideration to safeguarding the privacy of the pupil and limiting the interference with his educational program. These latter considerations are primary in making decisions on research proposals. If a proposal is approved, participation in the study by any pupil, teacher, staff member, and by any school is voluntary. Further, the identity of pupils, schools, teachers, staff members, and county may not be revealed in the report of the study unless permission has been obtained from the Superintendent of Schools. When the report is finalized, a complete copy of the study will be provided to the Director of Research.
- B. All research organizations, institutions or agencies (such as the Menninger Foundation) are encouraged to screen requests which come to the committee from them so the Experiments and Research Committee will know that each request is authorized by proper administrative officials.
- C. The committee will give its decision in writing one week following the receipt of the request providing ample information is included in the original request. A complete copy of the research request together with the letter of approval from the committee will be forwarded to the appropriate principal, director, or supervisor within the school district.
- D. Implementation of the research will be in accordance with the instructions from the committee; however, the researcher must contact the appropriate principal in each school and comply with his specific instructions.

TOPEKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

UNIFIED DISTRICT 501

Topeka, Kansas

Research Study Request Form

72

ments and Research Committee

ual conducting study:

..... Phone No.

sional title, if any,

s

tion, organization, or agency with which individual is associated, if any:

of institution

s

for study:

or university course requirement

fulfillment for Master's degree

fulfillment for Doctor's degree

gation by a college or university faculty member

y is being conducted for course requirement or for a degree, please provide course instructor's
name of major advisor, or committee chairman.

..... Address

tle

ss Phone No. Home Phone No.

f study

ent of hypothesis, and-or objective(s) of study:

describe the procedure you will use in that part of your study involving pupils as subjects. That
y will the pupils be instructed, what will they be required to do, will the pupils be involved in-
ally, in groups (how many in a group), for how much time will the pupils be involved, etc.?

Starting Date: (b) Period Required

cedure:

Study Request Form (Cont'd.)

as subjects: How Many? At what grade(s)?

at time(s)? What date(s)?

lar characteristics, e.g., boy, girl, high or low ability, etc.:

Specific school or geographic area required?

explain.

achers be required to help in the study?

n what way?

her school personnel be involved in the study?

n what way?

chool records be required? If so, to what extent?

e specify)

ary of results:

e to supply the Topeka Board of Education Research Department with a complete copy of this

Signed:

A complete copy of the test, questionnaire, rating scale, or other data-gathering instrument you use must accompany this request.

val of Faculty Advisor for Student Project:

reviewed the proposed research study and consider the project to be educationally worthwhile and technique to be satisfactory.

Signed:

Title:

Date:

g Instructions: Send five (5) completed copies of this request form to:

Topeka Public Schools
Att.: Director of Research
Research Committee Chairman
415 West 8th Street
Topeka, Kansas, 66603.

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN THE
LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

73

Instructions

In requesting permission to conduct case studies or to secure research data within the Lawrence Public Schools, the applicant shall:

- A. Present an endorsement of the project from the school or department head with whom the applicant is working,
 - B. Present a brief statement of the purposes of the study and a summary of the procedures to be employed in carrying it out,
 - C. Submit specimens of all tests, questionnaires, or forms to be used in collecting data,
 - D. Indicate the school(s) and grade(s) to be involved, the amount of pupil time required, and the approximate number of pupils to participate, and,
 - E. Promise to promptly submit to the Lawrence Schools
 1. A copy of all the data and information collected in the schools, and,
 2. A summary or extract of the resulting article, research report, thesis, or dissertation indicating findings, conclusions, and implications.
 - F. Promise to respect the highly confidential nature of the information that will become available through this contact with the Lawrence Schools and to use it only in a highly professional manner.
- II. Whenever a selected group of children from any one room or grade is to participate, written permission must also be secured from these children's parents. The form of the request for parental permission and the parent's responses must be approved and verified by the Building Principal.
- III. Forms must be prepared in triplicate and left at the Office of the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for the approval of the Research Committee and the Principal(s) concerned. NO CONTACT SHOULD BE MADE WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, OR PRINCIPALS UNTIL THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE.
- A. One copy will be filed with the Department of Instruction.
 - B. One copy will be sent to the Building Principal.
 - C. One copy will be returned to the applicant as notification regarding approval or rejection of the study.
- IV. The data collected in connection with an approved study may not be used for purposes other than those stated on the approved application form nor may they be made available to others than the applicant without prior and specific permission from the Lawrence Schools.

