11-23-2021

The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership

Amber J. Sainz

The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership

by

Amber J. Sainz

November 23, 2021

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership

by

Amber J. Sainz

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Lindenwood University, School of Education

Sherry R. DeVore	November 23, 2021
Dr. Sherry R. DeVore, Dissertation Chair	Date
Brad Hanson	November 23, 2021
Dr. Brad Hanson, Committee Member	Date
Kathy J. Grover	November 23, 2021
Dr. Kathy Grover, Committee Member	Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Amber Sainz

Signature: _Amber Sainz_ Date: November 23, 2021

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The Leader in Me is a school transformation process that focuses on teaching and embedding Stephen Covey's (2004) seven habits into the school day. The seven habits are a framework and process for transforming school culture but are not taught as a scripted curriculum (Covey et al., 2014). This mixed-methods study was designed to analyze the perceptions of elementary teachers, counselors, and principals regarding the Leader in Me process and to look at its effects on school culture and leadership. Surveys were sent to teachers and counselors in three Missouri elementary schools who had implemented the Leader in Me for at least three years. Principals from the schools were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the Leader in Me process. Survey data were analyzed for frequency of responses, and coding was used to identify themes from the interviews. Most participants agreed the Leader in Me has a positive impact on school culture and leadership. The results of this study can provide support for districts and principals when implementing the Leader in Me to ensure implementation occurs with fidelity, support, and opportunities for voice.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

Stephen Covey (2004) is a name that has been a staple in the business world for years since his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* was published. In 2008, work based on the seven habits transitioned to the world of education through a process in schools called the Leader in Me (Covey et al., 2012). The business and education world merged to embed the seven habits into the school day (Covey et al., 2014). Schools across the United States and worldwide have embraced and integrated the Leader in Me process (Covey et al., 2014). School districts and leaders invest resources into the Leader in Me process including professional development, time, and money (Covey et al., 2014).

The Leader in Me focuses on living the seven habits and the principles associated with each habit: "be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand, and then be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw" (Covey et al., 2012, p. 45). This chapter is focused on the background of Covey's (2004) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and how the habits are related to the Leader in Me process, school culture, and leadership. Included are the background of the study, conceptual framework, the problem and purpose, research questions, and significance of the study. Then key terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions related to the study are detailed.

Background of the Study

According to Covey et al. (2014), "The Leader in Me began in 1999 at A. B. Combs Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina, where some creative teachers started teaching the seven habits to elementary school children" (p. 16). The seven habits are a framework and process for transforming school culture but are not taught as a scripted

curriculum (Covey et al., 2014). The Leader in Me (2021) reported, "There are currently 4,000 schools implementing The Leader in Me process globally in over 50 countries" ("Making a Global Impact" section).

Covey (2004) wrote his landmark classic, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* in 1989. According to Covey (2020), "Character is a composite of habits, and habits are powerful factors in life" (p. 46). Covey (2020) continued, "A habit is defined as the intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire" (p. 47). Clear (2018) defined a habit as a regular routine or practice, or an automatic response to a specific situation. Habits one through three address self-mastery and the private victory (Covey, 2020). Habits four through six are focused on public victories and interdependence (Covey, 2020). Covey (2020) described habit seven as the habit of renewal and of ongoing improvement that causes growth and raises one to new understanding and a life of living the habits. Clear (2018) stated, "Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement" (p. 16).

A person's identity emerges out of that individual's habits (Clear, 2018). Daily habits become part of one's character (Walter, 2020). According to Clear (2018), "The real reason habits matter is not because they can get you better results, but because they can change your beliefs about yourself" (p. 41). The habits that matter in terms of improving performance are not unconscious (Burchard, 2017). Deliberate habits must be consciously chosen, willed into existence, and continually revisited to strengthen character and increase odds of success (Burchard, 2017).

Kouzes and Posner (2018) stated, "Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and abilities available to anyone, no matter their age or position" (p. 280). Leadership is about the choices one makes throughout life (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). In recent years, schools

have been using more conceptual inquiry to improve student learning (Barton, 2020).

One of the benefits of conceptual inquiry is that it provides leadership development for

students (Barton, 2020). According to Barton (2020), "Students are provided

opportunities to develop leadership skills and traits and prepare them for the world

outside the classroom" (para. 1).

Campbellsville University (2019) clarified student leadership means that students

play active roles in their education and develop necessary skills in the process. Instead of

the old way of educating students by telling them what to think, educators teach students

how to think and process (Campbellsville University, 2019). Students learn skills that are

carried over to adulthood with a focus on student leadership development

(Campbellsville University, 2019). Campbellsville University (2019) reported, "Student

leadership is about a classroom mirroring and affecting the real world; only then do

students build the skills they need to be leaders in and out of school" ("Student

Leadership Qualities Teachers Cultivate" section). Leadership roles can be behavior-

changing, if not life-changing, for students (Covey et al., 2014).

In 2018, Gordon noted, "Culture consists of the shared purpose, attitudes, values,

goals, practices, behaviors, and habits that define a team or organization" (p. 15). School

culture should be deliberate, a proactive approach needs to be applied, and life skills must

be taught (Covey et al., 2014). Gordon (2018) indicated, "Culture is not static; culture is

dynamic" (p. 17). Culture drives expectations and beliefs (Gordon, 2018). According to

Shafer (2018), "There are many overlapping and cohesive interactions among all

organization members in schools with a good culture" ("Culture is Connections" section).

A school culture remains strong when leaders communicate directly with teachers,

counselors, and families, who also communicate directly with one another (Shafer, 2018). Strong connections with community members help create a robust school culture (Shafer, 2018). Norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals within a school build over time (Samuels, 2016).

One way to improve school culture is to foster positive academic mindsets and encourage students to value and identify with academics (Samuels, 2016). Students must learn not to just memorize and regurgitate academic facts but also to apply them to authentic situations (Covey et al., 2014). Setting rigorous academic norms and offering relevant curricula can increase students' sense of belonging and connectedness with the school (Samuels, 2016). The Leader in Me goal-setting process involves identifying goals, action steps, scoreboards, and accountability (Covey et al., 2014). When the focus is on improving, everyone improves (Gordon, 2018).

A safe and orderly environment that is continuously maintained is another component of school culture (Samuels, 2016). Intentional relationship-building and partnerships strengthen a shared culture (Samuels, 2016). Before anything else can improve, teachers must know students feel safe in the classroom (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). Students' social and emotional needs must be met to set a stage for learning (Billy, 2018). Cultures are building blocks in the form of all the elements that make life comfortable, predictable, and safe (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Teachers should create safe, welcoming, and exciting learning environments for students (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017).

Covey et al. (2014) stated, "The Leader in Me is a proactive, culture-by-design approach, as opposed to a culture-by-chance approach" (p. 68). Covey et al.'s (2014) the

Leader in Me focuses mainly on three closely related areas: shared leadership, school environment, and leadership events. Shared leadership is when both adults and students are considered leaders (Covey et al., 2014). The school environment is what is seen, heard, and felt (Covey et al., 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2018) indicated, "Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and abilities that are available to anyone, no matter their age or position" (p. 280). People can choose to be leaders, starting with self-leadership (Andersen, 2014). The purpose of leadership events is to construct a sense of community, create a vision, establish a culture of trust, and teach the seven habits (Covey et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Covey's (2004) Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. The seven habits are habits of effectiveness that shape the foundation of the Leader in Me process (Covey, 2020). The ultimate purpose of habits is to solve life problems with as little energy and effort as possible (Clear, 2018). The habits provide a model or way of thinking to help reach goals and solve problems (Covey, 2020). Habits help create the future (Gordon, 2018).

Covey (2020) specified self-mastery and independence are the goals of habits one, two, and three. The first three habits include the following: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, and put first things first (Nica, 2016). Habits four, five, and six are about interdependence and public victories (Covey, 2020). These habits include the following: think win-win, seek first to understand and then be understood, and synergize (Buenger, 2020). Habit seven is all about the whole person, emphasizing renewal of the heart, mind, body, and spirit (Buenger, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to investigate the effects of the Leader in Me on the culture and climate of schools and on leadership. Principals, counselors, and teachers were surveyed regarding their thoughts on the Leader in Me. There is a need for this research because school districts and leaders invest resources into the Leader in Me process (Covey et al., 2014). These resources include professional development, time, and money (Franklin Covey Education, 2021).

According to Boyle (2016), "The startup cost the first-year ranges from $25,000–$34,000 per school, and then an additional $10,000 a year" (p. 1). Professional development includes three instructional days with a Leader in Me trainer (Boyle, 2016). The program has been criticized for squashing individuality and making kids too robotic, while others have questioned if it is appropriate for public schools to use taxpayer money for a private company (Boyle, 2016). There is a need to study this model further, since most of the research on the Leader in Me has been conducted by its founder, Franklin Covey (Franklin Covey Education, 2021).

Some contradictory findings regarding the Leader in Me have been established. Miller (2016) determined the Leader in Me did not make any discernable impact on student discipline or student achievement at the school studied. Sherry (2016) reported critics of the Leader in Me have vented via blogs and Facebook pages opposing the concept. The Facebook pages stated the Leader in Me is a brainwashing program with hidden religious principles posing as a character education curriculum (Sherry, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The Leader in Me is leaving its global footprint because of implementation by thousands of schools in countries worldwide (Leader in Me, 2018). The purpose of this study was to examine the Leader in Me process by eliciting the perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership. The research was conducted through surveys of teachers and counselors and interviews with principals.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership following implementation of the Leader in Me?

2. What are the perceived benefits of the common language of the Seven Habits, according to elementary principals, counselors, and teachers in a Leader in Me school?

3. What are the perceived challenges following implementation of the Leader in Me, according to elementary principals, counselors, and teachers?

Significance of the Study

Many critical issues face education (DeWitt, 2019). DeWitt (2019) stated many teachers, leaders, and students are stressed, have anxiety, and need to find more balance in life. Other areas of concern include teacher perceptions of students, equity, and the achievement gap (DeWitt, 2019). Covey et al. (2014) stated, "In education, there are three evolving challenges, including culture, academics, and life skills" (p. 6). In the past, schools could allow culture to grow naturally (Covey et al., 2014).

The Leader in Me is a school improvement model that uses teaching to support social and emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2021). An organizational approach is used with the Leader in Me to engage the entire school community with a leadership lens to build a culture (CASEL, 2021). The Leader in Me school culture model focuses on taking immediate steps to simultaneously improve culture, academics, and leadership (Covey et al., 2014). The Leader in Me process consists of staff training, direct lessons, and on-site coaches to support school teams (CASEL, 2021). The data gathered in this research provide an objective viewpoint on the impact of culture and leadership in Leader in Me schools and may help schools determine if they should invest resources into the process.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

School Culture

School culture is the collective behavior of its people, and it is represented by how people see each other and relate with each other (Franklin Covey Education, 2012).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time Frame

The data collection occurred in Spring 2021.

Location of the Study

The schools included in the study were in Missouri.

Sample

The participants in the study included elementary principals, counselors, and teachers who worked in schools using the Leader in Me for at least three years.

Criteria

Schools chosen had been active in the Leader in Me for at least three years.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample Demographics

The sample was a convenience sample, and only three Leader in Me schools in Missouri were chosen.

Instrument

The survey statements and interview questions were a limitation. The survey and interview questions were developed by the researcher and were adapted from *The Leader in Me Measurable Results Assessment* questionnaire (Leader in Me, 2021, "Questions and Answers" section).

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and willingly.

2. The sample was representative of the general population of educators who held teaching certificates from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE).

3. The sample was representative of educators in Leader in Me schools.

Summary

In Chapter One, the background of the study and the conceptual framework were discussed. The Leader in Me model is focused on living the seven habits and the

principles associated with each habit (Covey et al., 2014). The seven habits are habits of effectiveness (Covey, 2020). This study was designed to investigate the effects of the Leader in Me on the culture and climate of schools and on leadership. The data gathered in this study contribute to the currently available research.

      A review of literature is presented in Chapter Two. The main topics of review include the conceptual framework of the seven habits, culture, and leadership.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine the Leader in Me process by obtaining the perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership. Culture is created every moment of every day by what one thinks, says, and does (Gordon, 2018). In a strong school culture, many overlapping and cohesive interactions occur among all members of the organization (Shafer, 2018). According to White (2021), school culture influences how hard people work, how individuals achieve their goals, what people pay attention to, and how they identify with their school. The Leader in Me was designed to help develop school culture (Covey et al., 2014).

According to Tuccinardi (2018), character development programs make students aware of necessary habits and choices and the importance of thinking about their actions. The Leader in Me process is focused on three closely related areas: school environment, shared leadership, and leadership events (Covey et al., 2014). The seven habits are a process of private victories and public victories (Buenger, 2020). Self-mastery is the focus of habits 1–3, while public victories are the focus of habits 4–6 (Covey, 2020). Teaching the seven habits is the foundation of leadership within a Leader in Me school (Covey et al., 2014). According to Henson (2020), the five paradigms of the Leader in Me include change, potential, leadership, motivation, and education.

Chapter Two is the review of relevant literature. The seven habits served as the conceptual framework. Culture and leadership were chosen as topics of literature review because they are focus areas within the Leader in Me.

The Seven Habits

According to Covey (2020), habits and habitats, or culture, are closely related. Covey (2020) detailed, "The seven habits embody many of the fundamental principles of human effectiveness" (p. 53). To make something a habit in one's life, one must have the knowledge, skill, and desire (Covey, 2020). Walter (2020) defined a habit as routinely performed behaviors without putting any thought into them. As actions and thoughts are repeated, they become habits (Walter, 2020). Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement and are like the atoms of life (Clear, 2018). Character is a composite of habits, and habits are potent factors in life (Covey, 2020). The habits that matter in improving performance are not unconscious (Burchard, 2017). The habits people perform each day are the difference between those who are successful and unsuccessful; successful people follow the same habits daily (Walter, 2020).

The ultimate purpose of habits is to solve life problems with as little energy and effort as possible (Clear, 2018). The habits provide a model or way of thinking to help reach goals and solve problems (Covey, 2020). Deliberate habits do not come easy (Burchard, 2017). Habits can be incorporated into one's life to improve self-discipline (Walter, 2020). Self-mastery is the focus of habits 1–3, which include the following: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, and put first things first (Covey, 2020). According to Newell (2017), these habits help one to make solid and independent decisions. Newell (2017) continued, "These three habits allow students to develop specific 21st century skills of initiative, responsibility, self-confidences, time management, goal setting, integrity, organization, and planning" (p. 2).

Habits four, five, and six are focused on public victories and include think win-win, seek first to understand and then be understood, and synergize (Covey, 2020). These habits build interdependence and allow people to learn how to collaborate (Newell, 2017). Newell (2017) stated, "When these three habits are practiced, the skills of teamwork, problem-solving, conflict management, creativity, speaking, listening, and analyzing" (p. 2). Habit seven is focused on the renewal of the heart, mind, body, and spirit (Covey, 2020). Henson (2020) shared the seventh habit builds habits for physical fitness and meaningful work.

Covey et al. (2014) indicated, "The Leader in Me began in 1999 at A. B. Combs Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina, where some creative teachers started teaching the seven habits to elementary school children" (p. 16). The school used Steven Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and other best educational practices to design a school leadership model (Newell, 2017). The seven habits were a framework and process for transforming their school's culture and were not taught as a scripted curriculum (Covey et al., 2014). According to Soutter (2018), the Leader in Me works to transform a school's culture by focusing on compassion and leadership skills. The process was designed to help people become more effective overall by developing and understanding the seven habits (El-Atrrache, 2018).

The seven habits' essential principles and actions are presented in meaningful ways for all ages within the Leader in Me (Mohler, 2020). The seven habits are currently being applied by students in thousands of elementary, middle, and high schools worldwide (Covey, 2020). The hope is that the habits and skills will transfer over into adult life (El-Attrache, 2018). White (2021) shared there is a strong relationship among

school leaders, the seven habits, and the notion that all students are leaders within the school. According to White (2021):

> Key actions that administrative leaders and teacher leaders took to implement the program included communication, creating action teams to accomplish goals, beautifying the physical environment of the school, and learning and living Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* alongside students within the school. (p. 79)

The seven habits language is filtered throughout the school culture and is a way to unify the school (El-Attrache, 2018). The Leader in Me process provides seven habits training for the entire staff, and school team members are trained to teach the seven habits to families (Newell, 2017). According to Newell (2017), after students are taught the seven habits, they are better citizens.

Figure 1

7 Habits Diagram
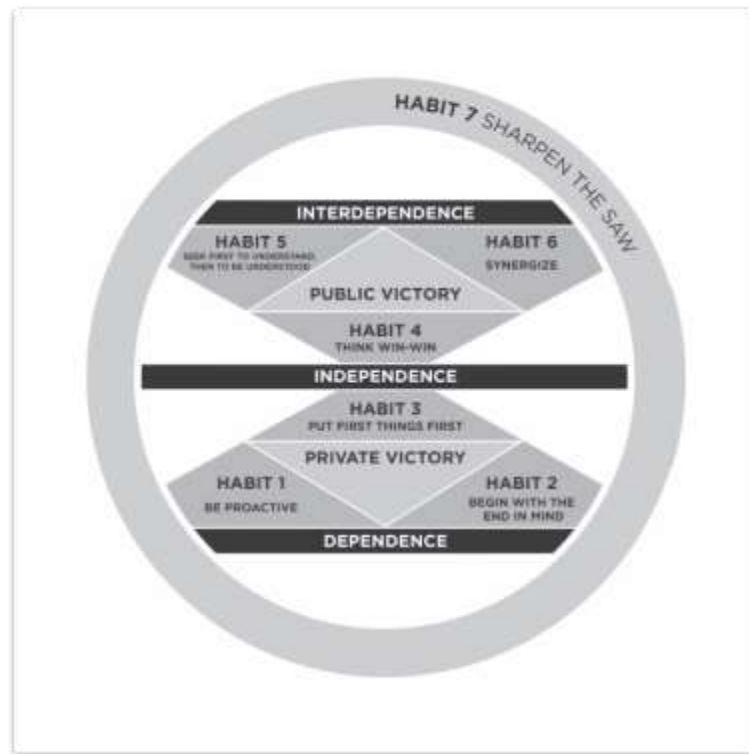
Note. From *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by S. Covey, 2020, p. 52. Copyright 2020 by Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Be Proactive

Habit one is based on the principles of responsibility, choice, accountability, initiative, and resourcefulness (Franklin Covey Education, 2012). A proactive person is responsible and takes initiative (Covey, 2020). Proactive means choosing one's actions, attitudes, and moods and not blaming others for mistakes (Covey, 2020). Stein (2019) stated, "There are only two things in the world that we have 100 percent control over, 100 percent of the time, and that is our effort and our attitudes" (p. 10). Proactive people can only truly be offended if they choose to be (Covey, 2020). People have little to no control

over most things in life, so spending time and energy on things not in one's control is a waste of time (Stein, 2019).

Highly proactive people recognize responsibility and do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior (Covey, 2020). Proactive people take ownership of their responses to everything that happens to them (Caprino, 2020). Covey (2020) determined that by nature, people are proactive. Each person's life is a function of stimuli and response; people empower things to control by decision or default (Covey, 2020). Self-awareness is being aware of the control one does have over circumstances (Stein, 2019).

Proactive people have a set of behaviors they have acquired that prepare them for the future (Bergen, 2020). The physical and social environment often affects reactive people, but proactive people carry their weather with them, or in other words, they are not affected by the world around them (Covey, 2020). Reactive people focus on negativity and weaknesses, and proactive people focus on positivity and strength (Bergen, 2020).

Although proactivity is a part of human nature, the proactive muscles are not often used, but they can be used when activated (Covey, 2020). By respecting others' proactive nature, a person can provide others with at least one clear, undistorted reflection from the social mirror (Covey, 2020). When an organization is proactive and responsible, it will be resourceful, have initiative, and solve problems (Caprino, 2020). Organizations should encourage creativity and resourcefulness from proactive individuals to create a proactive culture (Bergen, 2020).

According to Newell (2017), seventh-grade students have a higher understanding of the habit "be proactive" than students at other grade levels. Third-grade students had a

high mean for habit one, too (Newell, 2017). According to Newell (2017), "Parents perceived their children used habits be proactive and think win-win more than other habits" (p. 14). Overall, students rated themselves as having improved with being proactive in social situations (Newell, 2017).

Begin with the End in Mind

A person who uses habit two plans ahead, sets goals, and focuses on essential things (Covey, 2020). Effectively learning to set and achieve goals is a skill that often results in a fulfilling life (Hardy, 2020). Vision, commitment, and purpose are the guiding principles that help to shape habit two (Franklin Covey Education, 2012). Habit two focuses on performing tasks that have meaning, making a difference, and contributing to society (Covey, 2020). People who use habit two are a creative force in their own lives and create their own futures (Caprino, 2020). Vision means understanding a person's purpose and tying everything to that central purpose and focus (Stein, 2019).

Habit two is based on the principle that all things are created twice; there is first a mental creation, and then a physical creation evolves (Covey, 2020). Vision requires a balancing act of commitment to one's convictions and a willingness to adapt to whatever might come one's way (Stein, 2019). When goals are defined, it gives the brain something new to focus on and desire (Hardy, 2020). Habit two helps one be aware and have a clear focus on the end goal (Nica, 2016).

It is imperative to determine which behaviors help accomplish the goal and which behaviors are barriers to reaching the goal (Hardy, 2020). To increase the chances of success, one should find an "accountability partner" to help with achieving the goal (Hardy, 2020). Establishing a cadence of accountability with a success partner is essential

to achieve a goal (Covey et al., 2014). Seeking clarity and focus on one's goals helps increase overall performance and fulfillment in life (Burchard, 2017). Long-term goals can be achieved by breaking them down into smaller goals; daily goals can help build momentum toward larger goals (Walter, 2020).

Ninety-two percent of people who set a goal on New Year's Eve never reach that goal (Schwantes, 2016, p. 1). The more specific and challenging the goal, the more motivation toward reaching the goal (Schwantes, 2016). When a goal is set, it is crucial to understand the process or strategy to reach the goal (Walter, 2020). People often do not reach larger goals because they get lost in the chaos of the day (Reizen, 2019).

Reizen (2019) stated the Four Disciplines of Execution are "a framework for ensuring that the most important work gets done" (p. 1). The Four Disciplines of Execution include the following: Focusing on the Wildly Important, Act on Lead Measures, Keep a Compelling Scoreboard, and Create a Cadence of Accountability (Reizen, 2019, p. 8). When one has clear and challenging goals, there is more focus and engagement (Burchard, 2017). Higher productivity is a result of clear direction and a plan (Burchard, 2017). Tracking habits helps investment with the process (Sincero, 2020).

Newell (2017) shared that "begin with the end in mind" scored the lowest on the student survey regarding application of the habit. Parents felt students had increased their use of habit two overall, and students did report that they had increased their use of the habit (Newell, 2017). Caprino (2020) shared habit two allows for focus, trust, and purpose around one's identity.

Put First Things First

Habit three focuses on setting priorities, creating plans, and following a schedule (Covey, 2020). The principles of this habit include focus, integrity, discipline, and prioritization (Franklin Covey, 2012). Habit three is about spending time on the essential things and saying no to things one should not do (Covey, 2020). Discipline and organization are critical with habit three (Covey, 2020). Self-discipline is doing what one needs to do, no matter what (Walter, 2020). Putting first things first is when one prioritizes crucial tasks (Nica, 2016). High performers have a strict approach to planning their days and tasks (Burchard, 2017). Discipline is not easy, and people are not born with discipline; it takes time to develop (Walter, 2020). Self-discipline can be improved by getting used to being uncomfortable, as discipline is a brain-training exercise, and feelings are not involved (Walter, 2020).

When discipline and actions become a regular weekly, monthly, and yearly routine, they become a rhythm (Hardy, 2020). A rhythm means making time for planning, preparation, and prevention (Covey, 2020). If an event is not scheduled on the calendar, it often does not happen (Hardy, 2020). Focus must be maintained to be productive (Burchard, 2017). Winning in life requires focusing on the system used to obtain a goal (Walter, 2020). The environment can make or break a person faster than almost anything; physical, human, spiritual, and emotional environments need to be aligned to support the habits (Sincero, 2020). Habit three is the physical result of habits one and two (Covey, 2020).

Newell (2017) explained students in grades four through six best understand putting first things first. According to Newell (2017), students understood habit three in

relation to doing their schoolwork before engaging in fun activities like playing games.

Habit three is all about priorities and how one manages day-to-day life (West, 2019).

Think Win-Win

Covey (2020) stated, "Win-Win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions" (p. 237). Servanthood is about involving people in the work that will affect their roles, understanding with clarity what is best for the people, seeing the work from their point of view, and making sure people have what is needed to perform (Stein, 2019). Habit four is about the courage a person should have to get what is wanted and consider what others want in the process (Covey, 2020). To influence other people, one must first relate to them and then help raise their drive to think better and do more (Burchard, 2017). Serving means listening, interacting, understanding, and adapting one's approach to others in the organization (Stein, 2019).

There is enough for everyone when a growth mindset or think win-win is in place (Caprino, 2020). An abundance mentality comes from internal, not external factors, and indicates there is enough for everyone with some to spare (Carter, 2017). Covey (2020) stated people who utilize habit four are trustworthy individuals who think win-win and focus on making deposits into others' emotional bank accounts (Covey, 2020). When people think of win-win as a habit, solutions for both sides are explored when conflicts arise (Covey, 2020). People who perform at high levels challenge those around them to better themselves (Burchard, 2017). The principles of habit four are mutual benefit, fairness, and abundance (Franklin Covey Education, 2012).

In Newell's 2017 study, parents reported their students understand the idea of thinking win-win, and fourth through sixth-grade students also reported they understand

habit four. Habit four is about how to see the world and all of its possibilities (Caprino, 2020). The think win-win habit helps to establish and maintain relationships with others (Henson, 2020).

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Covey (2020) determined, "Communication is the most important life skill" (p. 275). The most profound need of the human heart is to be understood (Covey et al., 2014). Habit five, seek first to understand and then to be understood, is focused on trying to see things from different viewpoints (Covey, 2020). Attending to different opinions means listening to other people's ideas and feelings (Covey, 2020). Listening is an acquired skill (Stein, 2019), and the highest form of listening is empathic listening (Davis, 2018). Empathic listening increases the ability to understand others and requires focusing on another person's point of view (Schmitz, 2016). Listening empathically requires a great deal of mental and emotional energy and requires one to use both the heart and mind (Davis, 2018).

Active listening requires one to "be vulnerable, give feedback, and create space for everyone to be heard" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 110). Intense listening allows one to get a sense of what people want and value and insight into their dreams (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Empathic listening truly means listening to understand (Covey, 2020).

The second part of habit five, to be understood, is equally important when aiming for a win-win (Covey, 2020). Seeking to be understood takes a great deal of courage (Covey, 2020). Once one listens to understand, a more efficient response can be made (Wise Labs, 2019a). Credibility increases when students can present their ideas with a

deeper understanding of other people's thoughts (Covey, 2020). Habit five is about being confident voicing one's own ideas (West, 2019).

The best leaders are also some of the best listeners (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Burchard (2017) asserted great leaders ask many questions, and by asking questions, leaders can have a more significant influence on other people. A leader can learn what others think, feel, want, need, and aspire to do by asking questions (Burchard, 2017). People have mental "skin in the game," or ownership, when they contribute ideas (Burchard, 2017). When leaders demonstrate empathy, it builds trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Empathy is the key to smart leadership and is not just about seeing things from another perspective (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Habit five requires basic conversational skills, such as listening without interrupting, confidence in voicing ideas, and looking people in the eyes when talking (Covey, 2020). People who follow this habit are empathetic and nonjudgmental, yet habit five helps people freely express their opinions (Covey, 2020). Seeking first to understand and then to be understood builds trust between the listener and the speaker (Wise Labs, 2019a). In Newell's (2017) study, students rated themselves as having increased their use of habit five with social skills. Habit five requires not viewing issues as unfavorable but instead seeing issues as opportunities (Mohler, 2020). According to Mohler (2020), habit five can be utilized for effective collaboration, as it requires individuals to make an active choice to improve (Mohler, 2020). Most people feel they do well with habit five, but Covey (2020) suggested people actually have a hard time living the habit.

Synergize

Covey (2020) defined habit six as synergize. Synergy occurs when two or more things combine to create a more significant sum (McKay & McKay, 2021). Synergy focuses on strengths and how people use those strengths to benefit and learn from each other (Covey, 2020). McKay and McKay (2021) suggested synergy creates a benefit that existed before the two ideas were combined. The teaming approach is essential to synergy, and the goal is to help one another work together, solve problems, and get along for the greater good (Covey, 2020). According to Covey (2020), habit six is the other habits put together. In 2020, Covey stated, "Synergy is the highest activity in life when properly understood" (p. 308).

When no one individual in the group is better than the whole collectively, synergy is achieved (Mister Smart, 2019). Teams get things done faster when synergy is in place (Wise Labs, 2019b). When people genuinely listen to one another, empathize with one another, and work toward achieving more significant results, synergy happens (Nica, 2016). Habit six principles include creativity, cooperation, diversity, and humility (Franklin Covey, 2012). Life synergy is about completing two tasks with one action and seeing life as an interconnected system (McKay & McKay, 2021). Students seem to understand the habit synergize (Newell, 2017). Synergize is a habit students can apply in their own lives, and they tend to rate themselves high in understanding of the habit (Newell, 2017). Synergy is a process; it does not just happen (Covey et al., 2014).

Sharpen the Saw

Habit seven is about renewal and focusing on taking care of the individual (Covey, 2020). With the introduction of habit seven, the need for and purpose behind

self-renewal has become more of a focus (Caprino, 2020). Sharpening the saw is about taking care of oneself (Rybak, 2020). Habit seven focuses on a balance of heart, mind, body, and spirit with the goal of self-renewal (Rybak, 2020). All four dimensions need to be exercised and balanced (Covey, 2020). The principles of renewal, continuous improvement, and balance are associated with habit seven (Franklin Covey Education, 2012).

The physical dimension ensures the body has the strength and ability to take on daily demands (McKay & McKay, 2020). McKay and McKay (2020) stated, "At a minimum, one should focus on exercising, getting enough sleep, and eating right" (p. 5). Energy is crucial to high performance (Burchard, 2017). Henson (2020) advised habit seven helps with focus on physical fitness, emotional health, and hygiene habits. Sleep is essential to renew the body and mind for the next day (Walter, 2020). A bedtime routine that allows one to unwind and prepare for the next day is crucial (Walter, 2020). Sharpen the saw is often the least understood habit; however, classroom observations often reveal habit seven being used the most (Newell, 2017).

The spiritual dimension is one's core, center, and value system and provides leadership to life (Covey, 2020). Purpose in life is generated by the spiritual dimension, and gratitude is one way to sharpen the spiritual dimension (McKay & McKay, 2020). It is essential to bring more joy into daily life, because positive emotion is one of the most significant predictors of a good life (Burchard, 2017). Meditation helps people to focus, concentrate, and make rational decisions (Walter, 2020).

It is essential to ensure mental development by not turning the mind off but by giving it something different to think about for a period (McKay & McKay, 2020). A

great way to grow the mind is to read good-quality literature regularly (Covey, 2020).

Walter (2020) stated, "Leaders are readers" (p. 48). A major key to success is continuing

education (Walter, 2020). The Daily Private Victory involves spending one hour a day

with the first three dimensions (Covey, 2020).

The emotional dimension is primarily developed from relationships and

interactions with others (Covey, 2020). Interacting with others can reduce stress, decrease

depressive feelings, and help one learn new ideas (McKay & McKay, 2020). There is a

need within people for meaning and purpose in life (Covey, 2020). Everything seems to

be in order when emotional balance is present, even if something difficult comes along

(McKay & McKay, 2020). Engaging in habit seven helps keep life impenetrable to

prevent conflicts and the feeling of weakness (Covey et al., 2014). The self-renewal

process requires renewal in all four areas: heart, mind, body, and spirit (Covey, 2020).

Habit seven creates an awareness of taking care of oneself and its value when made a

priority (Caprino, 2020).

Culture

The seven habits are designed for developing influential people, but they can also

apply to workplaces, schools, and organizations (Caprino, 2020). School culture should

include a safe and secure environment, strong relationships, and a focus on academic

achievement (Samuels, 2016). A building's culture is strong and evolves daily with no

written rules or guidelines (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). According to White (2021),

school culture consists of the norms, values, and traditions that affect daily school life.

Positive cultures within schools take time to establish (Samuels, 2016). Schools cannot

approach culture with a passive mindset (Covey et al., 2014). In 2018, Gordon noted,

"Culture is not just one thing; it is everything" (p. 15). Leaders within a school need to be mindful of reading, assess the culture, and reinforce the optimistic (White, 2021).

When walking into a building, what a person feels is determined by the school's culture (Billy, 2018). School culture affects individuals' actions, dress, conversation, and support of others (White, 2021). Cultures redefine what it "means to be normal" within the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017, p. 316). According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2017), a culture within a school is ongoing; positive cultures are sustained with continuous nurturing and attention (Covey et al., 2014). According to White (2021), heart and spirit supported by a strong culture lead to successful and positive learning environments.

According to Coyle (2018), cultures are created through the skills of safety, vulnerability, and purpose and how they work together. Individuals shape cultures, and cultures help to shape individuals (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). Leaders have a tremendous influence on culture, as they set the tone and decide what the team stands for; however, the entire school team brings the culture to life (Gordon, 2018). Creating a positive school culture is a huge task that takes time and may require paradigm shifts for some educators (Samuels, 2016). Teachers are the main drivers of culture within a school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017).

Schools where students receive a quality education are built on positivity and high expectations (Billy, 2018). Samuels (2016) stated positive school culture can have a monumental impact on student outcomes. The Leader in Me is a practical model for creating change (Mohler, 2020). White (2021) suggested that to support and sustain a

school culture, change must often occur. Culture is a crucial element when implementing change within a school (White, 2021).

Leadership programs often create a positive school culture when implemented (El-Attrache, 2018). According to White (2021), the culture within a Leader in me School is leadership; principals, staff, teachers, and students are all leaders. A Leader in Me school creates a culture of excellence (White, 2021). Henson (2020) shared that often Leader in Me implementation is initiated to improve school culture. The Leader in Me process has tools and systems for improving the culture and climate of a school (Tuccinardi, 2018).

The first year of Leader in Me implementation is focused on culture (Henson, 2020). The process helps students feel good about being at school while having a purpose, which benefits culture (Tuccinardi, 2018). When school culture includes the common language of the Leader in Me, trust and relationships form (El-Attrache, 2018). According to Tuccinardi (2018), The Leader in Me provides staff and students with the tools and skills they need to build a positive culture. Culture is the personality of the building (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017).

Leadership

The Leader in Me Framework integrates tools and practices related to leadership, culture, and academics (Leader in Me, 2021) (see Figure 2). Henson (2020) summarized the framework was created around the belief positive climate within a school affects all three areas. Covey et al. (2014) specified these three areas are challenges and need to be improved on at the same time. Covey et al. (2014) shared, "They are interactive, not separate in nature" (p. 36).

Figure 2

Leader in Me Framework
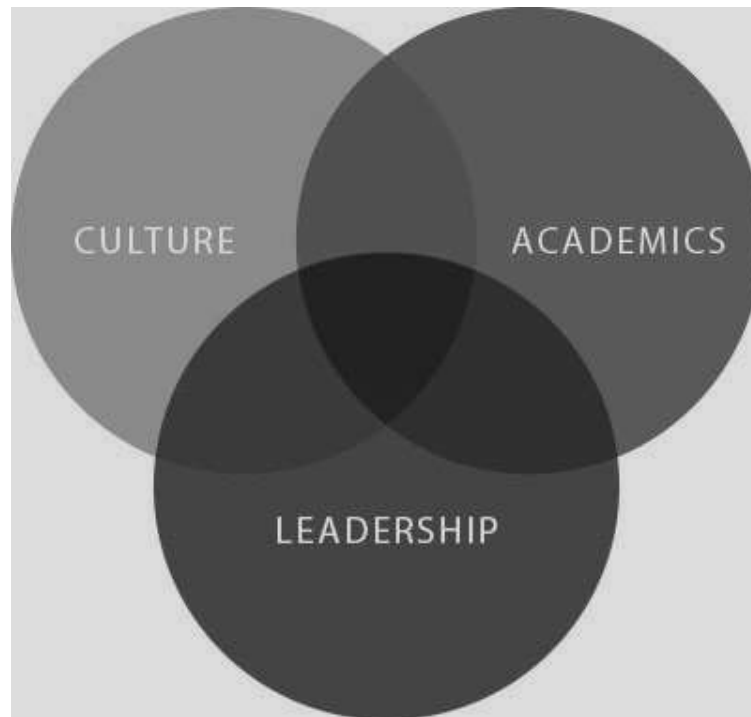
Note. Adapted from "What is Leader in Me?" by Leader in Me, 2021, para. 7. Copyright 2020 by Leader in Me.

There are two paradigms of leadership: leading self and leading others (Franklin Covey Education, 2016). Covey et al. (2014) defined leadership as "communicating a person's worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves" (p. 39). In 2018, Kouzes and Posner defined leadership as an "observable set of practices and behaviors, and a definable set of skills and abilities" available to anyone, no matter their age or position (p. 302). Leadership is about the choices one makes throughout life (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Covey et al. (2014) stated, "Leadership is a choice, not a position" (p. 77). Kouzes and Posner (2018) determined, "Leadership is not about

personality, privilege, or power; it is about behavior" (p. XV). Leaders who get incredible things done engage in the five practices of exemplary leadership: "model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2018, p. 12). Modern-day leadership in the workplace requires relationships, trust, and participation to foster collaboration (El-Attrache, 2018).

El-Attrache (2018) explained many schools are adding character education programs to prepare students for society. Barton (2020) discussed schools have been using more conceptual-based programs to improve student achievement. One of the benefits of this type of curriculum is that students are provided with opportunities to develop leadership skills and traits (Barton, 2020). Students are given opportunities to foster their leadership skills and prepare for the real world (Barton, 2020). The goal of inspiring student leaders is to create a culture of ownership, collaboration, and community in the classroom (Campbellsville University, 2019).

Adults can help children develop their leadership skills by allowing them opportunities at a young age (Andersen, 2014). When leadership is shared among the principal, teachers, staff, students, and parents (collective leadership), a positive impact on student learning and staff morale results (Covey et al., 2014). According to White (2021), Leader in Me schools utilize distributed leadership to capitalize on the greatness of others at all levels within the school.

The Leader in Me is a school-wide approach that utilizes a common language, understood among the individuals within the school, to create a model of behavior and support a culture of leaders who incorporate the seven habits (Bryant, 2017). The language used is the terminology of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Bryant,

2017). The seven habits become the school's common language, because the staff embed the habits into the school day (Covey et al., 2014). Students hear a consistent message of positive language (Covey et al., 2014). Newell (2017) shared, "As students experience leadership opportunities and a common language is developed, a school's physical and emotional state becomes sharpened into a positive environment where students and teachers work together to meet common goals" (p. 3).

Leadership roles for students can be behavior-changing and sometimes life-changing (Covey et al., 2014). Students have opportunities to fill classroom and building leadership roles (El-Attrache, 2018). The first step for students to become leaders is to discover the greatness and beliefs inside them (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Barton (2020) noted student leaders are formed when given platforms to practice leadership skills. Through leadership opportunities, students are given a chance to work together, form relationships, solve problems, and experience difficult situations (Barton, 2020).

According to El-Attrache (2018), students who participate in leadership programs learn how to speak publicly and collaborate with others. The Leader in Me helps students take ownership of their own learning (El-Attrache, 2018). Students track their personal and academic goals in Leadership Notebooks (El-Attrache, 2018). Leadership notebooks for students include goals, the seven habits, personal highlights, and leadership roles (White, 2021). Student-led conferences allow students to lead discussions on their own progress, goals, and strengths (Covey et al., 2014). These conferences allow students to lead their own learning and have a voice in their work and goals (White, 2021). According to White (2021), allowing students to engage in the educational process is crucial for authentic leadership development.

Covey et al. (2014) noted, "When it comes to sharing leadership with students, there are at least three ways that The Leader in Me strives to involve students as leaders: giving them leadership responsibilities, valuing student opinions, and helping them find their voice" (p. 78). Campbellsville University (2019) determined all students should have the chance to develop leadership qualities in an environment where they can practice and learn, regardless of their learning type. These leadership qualities are different depending on the student (Campbellsville University, 2019). El-Attrache (2018) stated, "The Leader in Me impacted students' leadership abilities by fostering independence and teaching them to take charge of their own life and actions" (p. 14). According to White (2021), students in a Leader in Me school make leadership choices daily and demonstrate these choices through their actions. The Leader in Me allows students to communicate and showcase their greatness and skills with school staff, other students, and families (White, 2021).

Everyone can lead, no matter what position they fill (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Covey et al. (2014) found there are a couple of ways to be a leader; the first is to lead oneself through life, and the other is to lead other people (Covey et al., 2014). The Leader in Me develops leadership with all stakeholders (Henson, 2020). According to Covey et al. (2014), leadership is meant for everyone including students, classroom teachers, learning specialists, grade-level leaders, parents, and community members. Henson (2020) agreed, "Students, staff, and parents begin to experience life as a leadership opportunity" (p. 93). Every adult is expected to be a leader (Franklin Covey Education, 2016). Leadership is about behavior, not power or privilege (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The overall goal is for children to acquire the necessary skillset to lead them successfully

through life (Covey et al., 2014). Future leaders are fostered when given opportunities to develop leadership skills at school and in the community (Barton, 2020). The first step to becoming a stellar student leader is discovering one's own beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Henson (2020) shared teachers must also develop leadership to support the Leader in Me initiative. Henson (2020) found student outcomes soar when teachers are provided with strong leadership development, a supportive school, and opportunities to practice leadership. According to White (2021), implementation of the Leader in Me provides professional development for teachers to help the process be effective. As teachers learn the seven habits and utilize them in the classroom for management, student understanding is deepened (White, 2021). El-Attrache (2018) stated, "It is important for faculty to model the skills that they want the students to acquire in the process" (p. 7). As adults model the habits, they also benefit from the habits (Covey et al., 2014). All staff are teachers and models (Covey et al., 2014). All teachers want what is best for their students, both academically and behaviorally (El-Attrache, 2018). According to White (2021), teachers play a crucial role in implementing the Leader in Me.

Henson (2020) clarified social and emotional health can impact a family's engagement in school activities. According to White (2021), trust is required among teachers and families to affect school reform. The Leader in Me provides a shared vision so everyone is headed in the same direction (White, 2021). Schools that have succeeded with the Leader in Me have done so with family and community members (Covey et al., 2014). The Leader in Me allows educators and families to collaborate to develop students into life-ready leaders; parents can reinforce skills taught at home (Leader in Me, 2021).

The Leader in Me is based on the assumption there is greatness in every home (Covey et al., 2014). Covey et al. (2014) shared one of the best ways for parents can learn the habits is through their students. Lighthouse Teams are structures within Leader in Me schools that provide opportunities for parent voice (White, 2021).

Covey et al. (2014) stated children are highly motivated when schools, families, and communities are involved in learning. Partnerships like this take time and intention (Covey et al., 2014). The CASEL (2021) shared:

> The Leader in Me acts as an inside-out system, building the SEL capacity of the adults in the school as the foundation. This systematic approach to SEL practices includes outreach to families and the community as essential parts of the learning partnership. (p. 1)

Leadership Day events are designed to bring the community into schools to experience the Leader in Me (White, 2021). Henson (2020) shared all stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, and community members, begin to live life as a leadership opportunity.

Summary

Bryant (2017) explained schools are no longer just places to teach academics; schools need to embed processes like the Leader in Me to invest in the lives of their students. Leadership is everyone's business; therefore, everyone can lead in some capacity (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). The foundation of leadership within a Leader in Me school is the teaching and learning of the seven habits (Covey et al., 2014).

Chapter Two included a review of literature focused on the components of the Leader in Me process. The conceptual framework was explained based on the seven

habits. The seven habits focus on both a private and public victory (Covey et al., 2014). Leadership and culture were also discussed in Chapter Two. The Leader in Me framework is based on the seven habits and the three challenges of leadership, culture, and academics (Covey et al., 2014).

In the next chapter, the methodology is detailed. The problem and purpose of the study are presented. The research questions are reintroduced, and the research design is explained. Chapter Three contains information concerning the population and sample, a description of the instrumentation, data collection processes, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Schools began implementing Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in 1999 when educators looked to improve student leadership and school climate with skills that would transfer into students' adult lives (El-Attrache, 2018). According to White (2021), Leader in Me schools build a positive culture, climate, and environment, which generate achievement and improvement. The Leader in Me process is adopted by schools looking to transform culture and climate by providing enrichment in all areas rather than just focusing on academics (Soutter, 2018). According to Henson (2020), the job of schools is to ensure students are productive members of society.

In this chapter, the problem and purpose are discussed. The research questions and design are addressed, along with demographic details about research participants. The population and sample and instrumentation are discussed. An outline of data collection procedures is followed by a description of data analysis in this chapter. Finally, an examination of the ethical considerations used during the study is discussed.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The Leader in Me was first created by an elementary principal and teachers who wanted to teach students real-world skills such as collaboration and leadership (Brooks, 2016). According to El-Attrache (2018), schools are starting to consider leadership training just as important as academic content because of the necessity of these skills in real life. Many schools in the United States and worldwide are investing time and money in the Leader in Me process (El-Attrache, 2018). El-Attrache (2018) noted implementing the Leader in Me can cost anywhere from $45,000 [to] $60,000 for the first three years; however, there is not much information supporting the process's effects on culture,

climate, and leadership after initial implementation. Henson (2020) shared although there is research about character programs improving school culture, minimal research exists on perceptions after the process starts. The purpose of this study was to determine if the time and money schools invest in the Leader in Me process are beneficial to the culture and climate and leadership of a building as perceived by elementary principals, counselors, and teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership following implementation of the Leader in Me?

2. What are the perceived benefits of the common language of the Seven Habits, according to elementary principals, counselors, and teachers in a Leader in Me school?

3. What are the perceived challenges following implementation of the Leader in Me, according to elementary principals, counselors, and teachers?

Research Design

The methodology chosen for this study was a mixed-methods design to analyze elementary teacher, counselor, and principal perceptions of the Leader in Me process. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), mixed methods involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Johnson and Christensen (2020) discussed the qualitative and quantitative research might happen simultaneously or at different points of the research within a mixed-methods study. Quantitative data were collected using a

survey for elementary counselors and teachers. According to Johnson and Christensen (2020), "Quantitative research reduces measurement to numbers. In survey research, for example, attitudes are usually measured by using rating scales" (p. 36).

Survey data were collected through the Qualtrics platform. The surveys were formatted so participants responded to five-point Likert-type statements concerning perceptions related to school culture and leadership of the Leader in Me process. Creswell and Creswell (2017) discussed how survey research gives a "quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 12). The intent is to make an overall generalization from the sample to a particular population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the frequency of responses represented in percentages and the mode as a measure of central tendency. Descriptive statistics describe and summarize the data (Glen, 2021). Figures were created to share the percentages for each of the Likert-type statements' responses. The survey responses included strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree.

The principal interviews were conducted via video chat, and the video was recorded. The interview responses were transcribed and then sent to the interviewees for member checking. Member checking is when participants review what the researchers have written to check for accuracy and completeness (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

The next step was to determine how to analyze and organize the information obtained from the interviews. The data were coded using the techniques of open, axial, and selective coding (Rezat & Vollstedt, 2019). Coding is the analytic process through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory (Fraenkel et al.,

2019). Open coding was used to determine the significant idea brought out in each sentence or paragraph (Fraenkel et al., 2019). In the first phase of open coding, the data were studied to form initial categories from the information (Creswell, 2012).

Axial coding followed open coding (Creswell, 2012). Axial coding was used to explore connections among concepts and themes developed and to determine one overall category (Kaiser & Presmeg, 2019). The researcher then related other categories to the core category (Creswell, 2012). A diagram called a coding paradigm was created to portray the interrelationships (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative researchers often refine codes and subcodes iteratively as they strive to make sense of data through categorization and thematic analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Population and Sample

Potential participants were recruited from the Leader in Me website. The website gave information regarding schools in Missouri that were part of the Leader in Me process from 2016–2019. Participants included counselors, teachers, and principals working at Leader in Me elementary schools. The schools must have initiated and sustained a Leader in Me program for at least three years: 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019.

The response rates for external surveys are typically 10% or even lower (Nones, 2017, p. 2). Purposive and convenience sampling were utilized as selection procedures for this study. Crossman (2020) stated, "A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study" (para. 1). From that list, three Leader in Me schools from Missouri were selected based

on a convenience sample. A convenience sample is chosen based on convenience and availability of participants (Creswell, 2012).

There were approximately 50 elementary teachers in the overall population of the three schools (MODESE, 2021). A minimum of 15 teachers was accepted for this study. Each building counselor, for a total of three, was asked to complete the survey. In addition, all three building principals and one assistant principal participated in personal interviews to provide information about implementation of the Leader in Me within their buildings.

Instrumentation

Portions of the Leader in Me MRA survey were adapted and provided a basis for the survey used in this research (Franklin Covey Education, n.d.). The MRA is a tool designed to collect, analyze, and report information on leadership, culture, and academics in a school (Redolive, 2018). The surveys were designed for participants to respond to five-point Likert-type statements concerning perceptions related to school culture and leadership of the Leader in Me process. The participants selected from the following options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The teacher survey and counselor survey were the same (see Appendix A). The 15 statements in both surveys were designed to gather information regarding the school's seven habits, culture, and leadership. This information provided insight into perceptions of the effects of the Leader in Me on the leadership and culture of the school.

Statements one through seven refer to school culture and climate. Climate and culture are constructs that describe how one interacts with the environment (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). Climate is the culmination of a group of people (Gruenert & Whitaker,

2017). Culture defines normalcy and morality for the group (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017).

Statements five, six, seven, and eight were designed to provide insight into teachers' feelings and the foundational principles of the seven habits. Statements seven through 10 were centered on the seven habits. Statement nine was developed to focus on habit five and the ability to pause and respond, and statement 10 was focused on creating a personal mission statement.

Statements 11 through 15 provided insight into the impact of the Leader in Me on the school, the individual, staff, and students. When teachers at a school agree with the building's educational values, they cannot hide what they do because the culture itself will hold them accountable in the form of their peers (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). The last statement of the survey was designed to provide insight into possible challenges with the Leader in Me implementation.

The principal interview protocol was based on questions from the MRA. The principal interview (see Appendix B) consisted of eight open-ended questions to elicit the principals' perceptions of the effects of the Leader in Me on school culture and climate. The first question was designed to inquire about the impact of the Leader in Me on the culture and climate of the school. A school's culture leads to climate and determines the "way it feels" when anyone walks into a school or classroom (Billy, 2018, p. 5). The second question referred to the personal and professional impact of the Leader in Me on the administrator. The third question was designed to gather the Leader in Me process's impact on teachers and students in the principal's school.

The fourth question was created to explore how the seven habits are utilized within the school. Newell (2017) explained, "The seven habits are universal and timeless principles that enable both young students and professionals to work effectively and efficiently" (p. 2). The fifth question was designed to determine if shared or collaborative leadership is present throughout the school. Collaborative leadership is about growth (DeWitt, 2018).

The sixth question was designed to gather perceptions of how the Leader in Me impacted parents and the community. Collaborative leadership is about building relationships with families and engaging in two-sided communication (DeWitt, 2018). The seventh question was designed to gather information about the challenges faced related to the Leader in Me. White (2021) suggested time to implement the program has emerged as a challenge with Leader in Me implementation.

The final question was designed to gather how common language within the Leader in Me has impacted the school. Newell (2017) explained, "As students experience leadership opportunities and a common language is developed, a school's physical and emotional state becomes sharpened into a positive environment where students and teachers work together to meet common goals" (p. 13). White (2021) reported, "The preliminary discussions that occurred about the program were about creating a common language using The Leader in Me language, reading the books, training, and inviting the coaches to come to the school" (p. 81).

Field testing is where the content validity of scores on an instrument is determined; an initial evaluation of the consistency of items occurs (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It provides an opportunity to improve questions, format, and instructions

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The survey was field-tested by three teachers and a counselor from a Leader in Me school in Missouri that was not part of the study. Changes were made, as needed, following the field testing. Field-testing of the interview questions occurred with a principal of a Leader in Me school in Missouri that was not part of the study.

Reliability

Reliability in this context refers to the consistency or repeatability of an instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Homer (2016) asserted research has become easier to gather with short surveys due to the availability of online questioning; however, the most significant consideration of reliability is the development of high-quality questions. According to Glen (2021), reliability is defined as giving a survey consistency with data outcomes. There is currently no reliability and validity data on the MRA (D. Christensen, personal communication, February 22, 2021). The MRA was created as one of the resources schools might use (D. Christensen, personal communication, February 22, 2021). The MRA survey scales contain modified portions of previously validated scales and new scales collaboratively developed between Franklin Covey Education and University of Michigan researchers (Franklin Covey Education, n.d.). Henson (2020) shared the questions and statements were created to ensure they were easy to understand and interpret.

Validity

The survey and interview questions were field-tested to establish the content validity of the scores (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Heale and Twycross (2015), "Validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a

quantitative study" (p. 1). Establishing the validity of scores in a survey helps researchers identify whether an instrument might be a good one to use in survey research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Content validity determines if the items measure the content they were intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Field-testing is necessary to establish content validity, to provide an initial evaluation of the items' consistency, and to improve questions, format, and instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Bonazza et al. (2017) discussed quantitative research approaches encompass more extensive theories and breaking information down to smaller data points to describe in more detail. Heale and Twycross (2015) suggested validity can be ensured by focusing on a specific design, such as the seven habits. The questions were focused on the seven habits, leadership, and culture based on the perceptions of teachers, counselors, and principals within the schools.

Data Collection

First, IRB approval (see Appendix C) was obtained. Then, a list of Missouri elementary schools that had implemented the Leader in Me for at least three years was obtained from the Leader in Me organization. Then, superintendents' email addresses were accessed through their respective school district webpages. Next, a site permission letter (see Appendix D) was sent through email to each superintendent requesting permission to invite elementary principals, counselors, and teachers to participate in the study. Follow-up phone calls were made to the district superintendents' offices to make them aware of the research and of the email sent.

Once approval was attained, a letter of introduction (see Appendix E) was emailed to each building principal, requesting the research information sheet (see

Appendix F) be forwarded to counselors and teachers. The link to the survey was included. Follow-up phone calls were made to the building principals to make them aware of the research and of the email sent. Finally, building principals were asked to participate in a short interview via video chat. The researcher emailed principals the consent form (see Appendix G) and a copy of the interview questions. Video-chat interviews were conducted with the building principals.

Data Analysis

Participants responded to 15 five-point Likert-type statements. The Likert-type statements revealed ordinal-level data (Bluman, 2019). Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the survey responses. Descriptive statistics describe the data and what it shows (Glen, 2021). According to Ho (2017), Likert-type scales allow easy analysis but can sometimes cause difficulty determining meaningful results. The median and frequency of responses were determined. Glen (2021) stated, "The median is where the middle of the data set is" (para. 1). The survey results were placed into tables (Bluman, 2019). Descriptive statistics are displayed through percentages of survey responses to each Likert-type statement.

The next step was to analyze and organize the information obtained from the interviews. Open, axial, and selective coding were the techniques used to analyze the data (Kaiser & Presmeg, 2019). Coding is the process through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and combined to form theory (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Open coding was used to break the data apart and label the significant ideas (Delve, 2021). Open coding allows the researcher to look at different data points and compare and contrast the information (Delve, 2021).

Axial coding was the next step after open coding (Delve, 2021). Connections among the data were explored, and main categories were determined utilizing axial coding (Kaiser & Presmeg, 2019). The researcher used axial coding to determine connections and organize the information (Delve, 2021). Researchers use thematic analysis to identify codes and subcodes, often refined (Fraenkel et al., 2019). After axial coding, the research has "axes," or categories and supporting codes (Delve, 2021). The researcher determined the overall connections. Coding allows the researcher to find relationships among ideas (Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives [CESSDA], 2021).

Ethical Considerations

There was minimal risk associated with this study. The participants' identities were protected. Confidentiality and anonymity were safeguards for protecting the participants in the study and ensuring survey responses were ethical and anonymous (Boudah, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The electronic communication sent to building principals included an introductory letter, a copy of the survey information sheet, and the survey link. The principals were asked to forward the information to teachers and counselors in their buildings, so personal identifiable information was not comprised. This allowed survey responses to be kept confidential and anonymous. The letter contained information specifying no foreseen risks or direct benefits associated with participating in the study. Participation was voluntary, and participants could choose not to respond to any of the statements (Bluman, 2019).

Principals were referred to as A, B, C, etc. All data will be retained for three years and then destroyed. The potential risks related to the research include the possibility of

participants losing privacy or confidentiality during survey data collection (Office of Institutional Review Board, 2018). Another potential risk was that participants would become identifiable during the research process, which might occur due to the research design (Office of Institutional Review Board, 2018). To minimize risks, the researcher did not collect any specifically identifiable data.

Summary

The methodology of the study was presented in Chapter Three. The methodology chosen for this study was a mixed-methods design to determine elementary teacher, counselor, and principal perceptions of the Leader in Me process. The research questions were restated. Quantitative data were collected using a survey for elementary counselors and teachers. The principal interviews were conducted via video chat and were video and audio-recorded.

Participants included counselors, teachers, and principals working in a Missouri Leader in Me elementary school. The school must have initiated and sustained a Leader in Me program for at least three years: 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019. The description of purposive and convenience sampling used in the study was explained.

A survey and interviews were the most effective ways to elicit responses from principal, teacher, and counselor participants for this mixed-methods study. The data collection and analysis procedures were described in this chapter. Ethical considerations were explained, along with how participant information was kept private. The survey data responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the frequency of responses represented in percentages and the median, the middle set of the data. The interview data

were coded using the techniques of open, axial, and selective coding. Themes were found, and descriptions of data were presented.

Chapter Four includes the presentation of research data. The demographics and quantitative and qualitative data analysis are described. The specific data collected regarding school culture and leadership are also provided in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Data

The Leader in Me program focuses on five core paradigms that allow educators to see themselves, the purpose of school culture, and student potential in different ways (Leader in Me, 2021, "What is Leader in Me?" section). According to the Leader in Me (2021), the five paradigms include "leadership, potential, change, motivation, and education" ("What is Leader in Me" section). The framework provides a unique approach combining the following: teaching leadership, aligning educational systems, and empowering students (Leader in Me, 2021, "What is Leader in Me" section).

The purpose of the study was to obtain perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership with implementation of the Leader in Me. The interviews and instrumentation tool elicited various perceptions from principals, counselors, and teachers, yet their responses revealed similar expected outcomes and themes. The information in this study can help schools implement the Leader in Me program or contemplate taking on the Leader in Me process. It can help schools prioritize and look at where support might be needed.

Provided in Chapter Four are the data analysis and interview narrative. Descriptive statistics are included to display results based on each Likert-type statement. A narrative of the synthesized interview responses through open and axial coding is presented.

Demographics

Three Leader in Me schools were selected from Missouri. All schools must have participated and sustained a Leader in Me program from 2016–2019. Elementary principals and assistant principals (where applicable) participated in interviews.

Counselors and teachers completed the survey. All were currently working in a Leader in Me school. A total of 20 teachers and counselors participated. A total of 63 participants failed to complete the survey, and none of their data were included in the study.

Survey statements one through seven were related to school culture. Statements five through eight were designed to elicit insight into teachers' feelings toward the habits and principles of the Leader in Me. Survey statements 11 through 15 related to the impact of the Leader in Me process on different stakeholders. The 15 statements were designed on a Likert-type scale to determine the effects of the Leader in Me on culture and leadership.

Quantitative Analysis

The 15 survey statements were designed to gather perceptions of participants regarding the overall impact and effects of the Leader in Me. Specifically, the statements were focused on the seven habits, culture, and leadership. The Likert-type scale ranged from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree,* with a total of five responses possible. All statements began with the prompt, "As a result of being a Leader in Me School…" Survey statements one through seven referred to school culture and climate.

Survey Statement One

I feel safe at (insert name of the school).

Results indicated 85% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* they felt safe with the Leader in Me program in their school. Another 5% responded *neutral,* and 10% *disagreed* (see Figure 3). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.15.

Figure 3

Safe at School
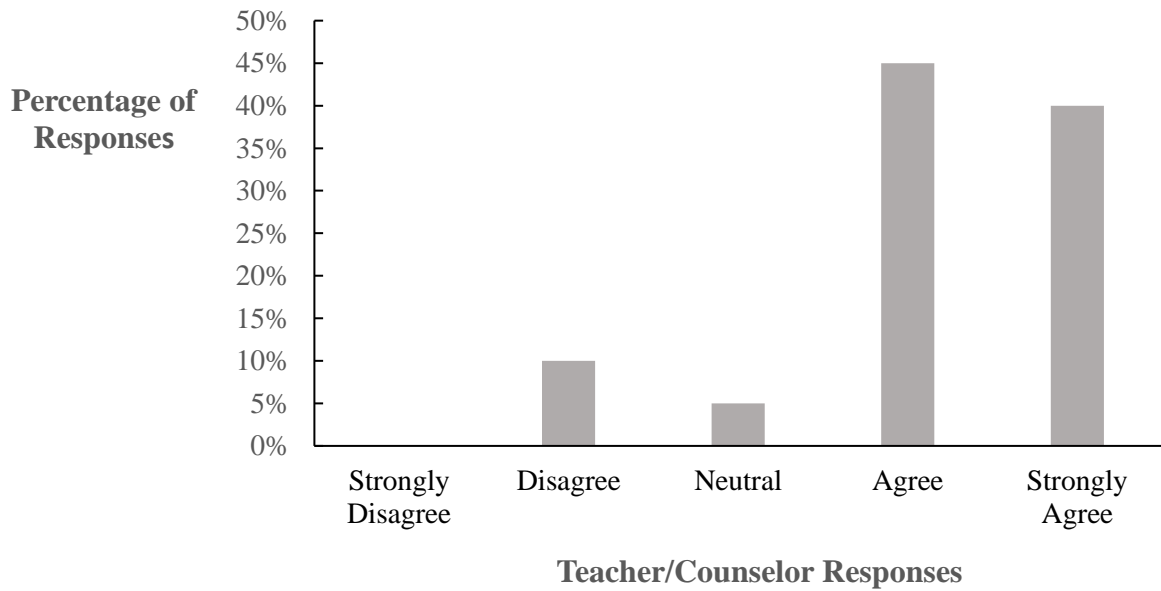
Survey Statement Two

My ideas are valued by my peers and principal(s).

Results indicated 70% of the participants *strongly agreed* or *agreed* their ideas were valued. Another 20% responded *neutral* to the statement, and 10% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* (see Figure 4). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 3.85.

Figure 4

Ideas Are Valued
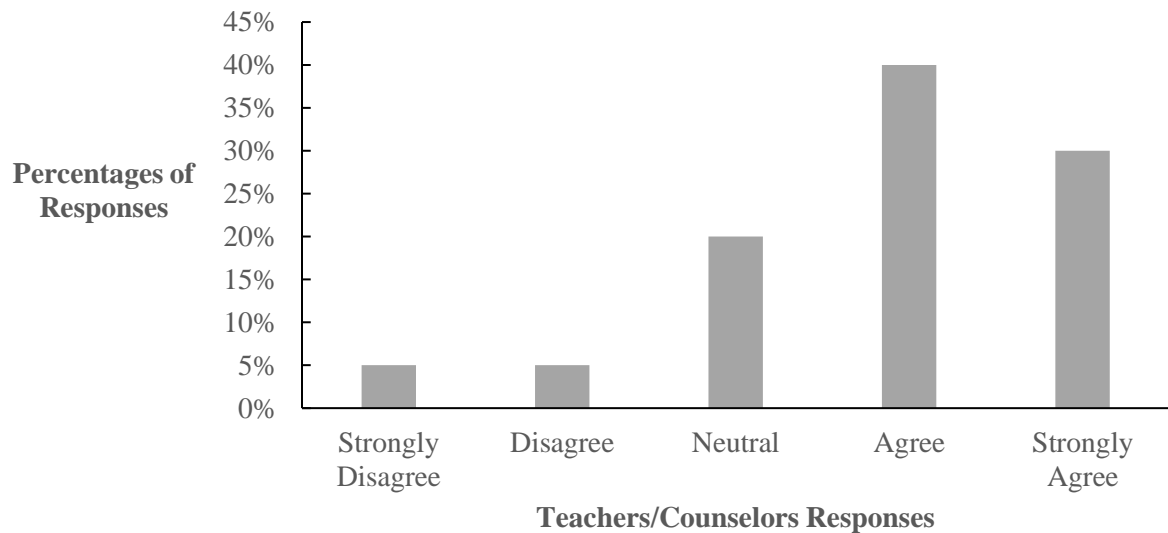
Survey Statement Three

As a result of being a Leader in Me School, the school is safe and provides a welcome environment.

Most of the respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (89%) with this statement. The remaining teachers and counselors responded *neutral* (5%) or *strongly disagreed* (5%) (see Figure 5). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.32.

Figure 3

School Is Safe and Welcoming
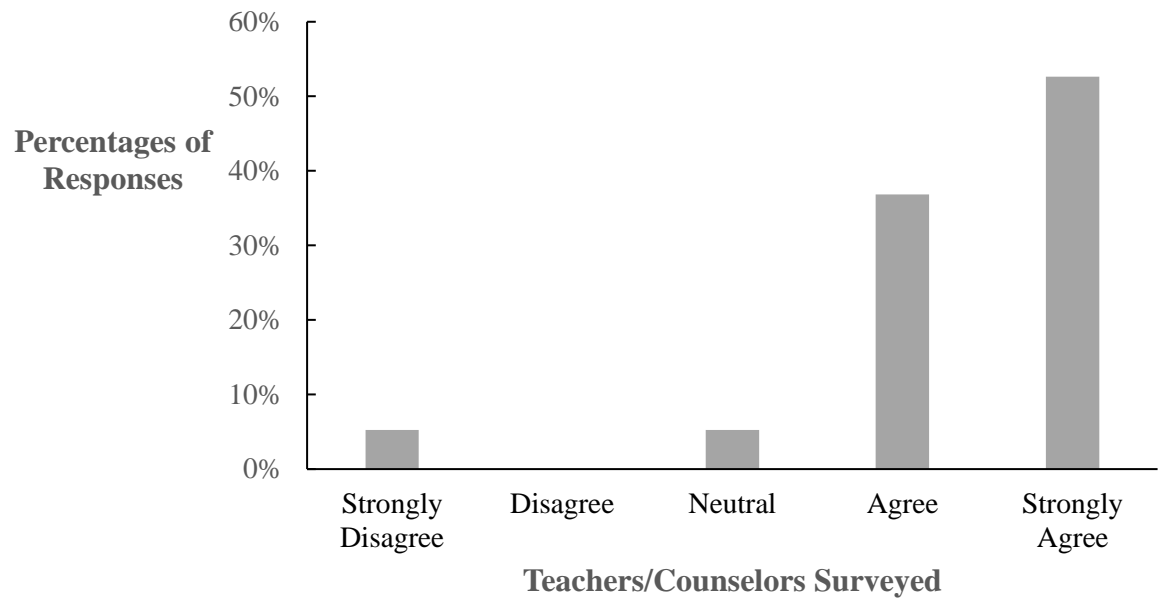
Survey Statement Four

I am treated with respect by students, staff, and principals.

The data revealed 75% of teachers and counselors *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement, while 15% responded *neutral,* and 10% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* (see Figure 6). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 3.85.

Figure 6

Respected by Students, Staff, and Principal
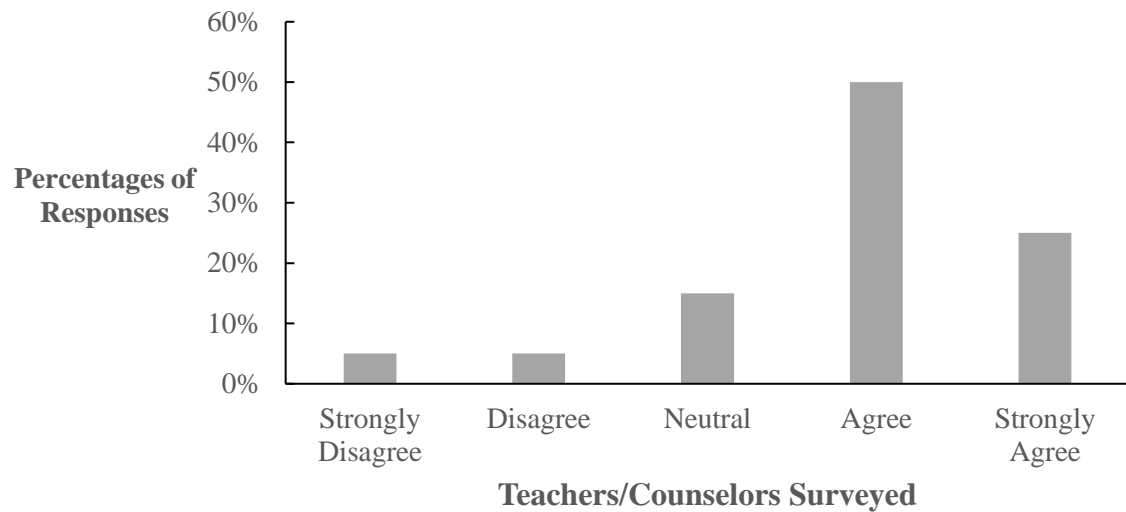
Survey Statement Five

I look forward to coming to work every day.

The data revealed 75% of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement. The remaining teachers/counselors responded *neutral* (15%) or *disagreed* (10%) (see Figure 7). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 3.90.

Figure 7

Looks Forward to Work Every Day
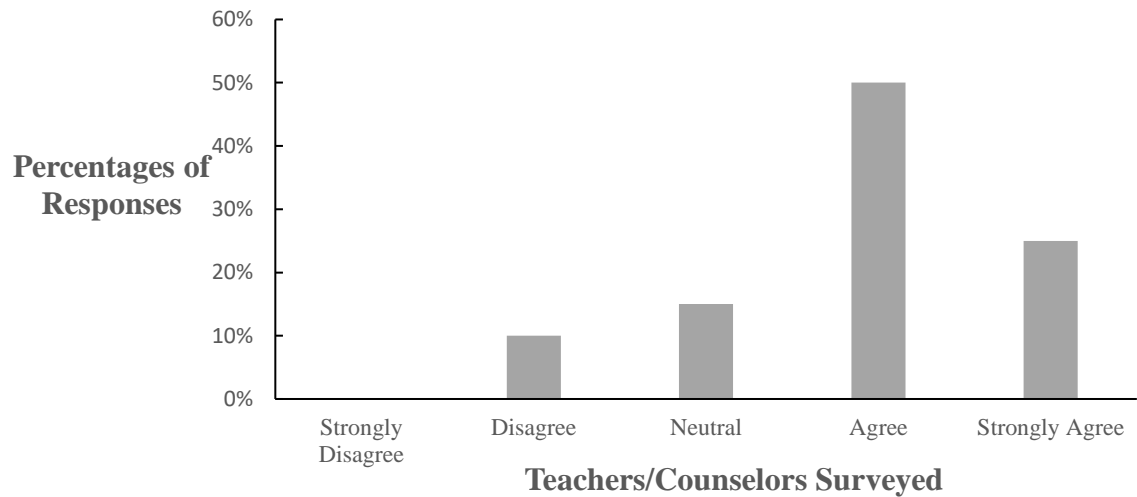
Survey Statement Six

My opinions are valued and respected.

The data revealed 80% of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement. The remaining teachers/counselors responded *neutral* (10%) and *disagree* or *strongly disagree* (10%) (see Figure 8). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 3.90.

Figure 8

Opinions Are Valued and Respected
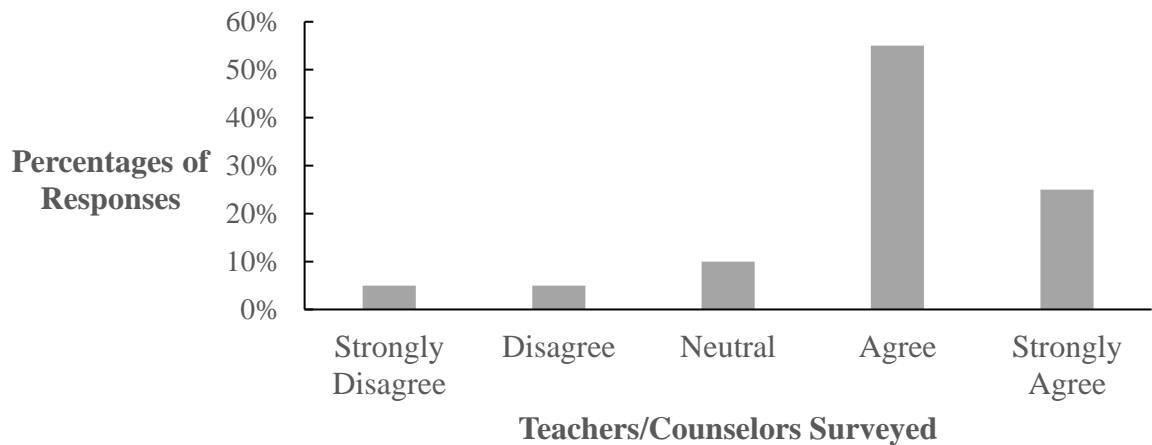
Survey Statement Seven

I empower student learning through high expectations for my students.

Results indicated 85% of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement. The remaining teachers/counselors responded *neutral* (5%) or *disagree* and *strongly disagree* (10%) (see Figure 9). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.15.

Figure 9

Empower Student Learning
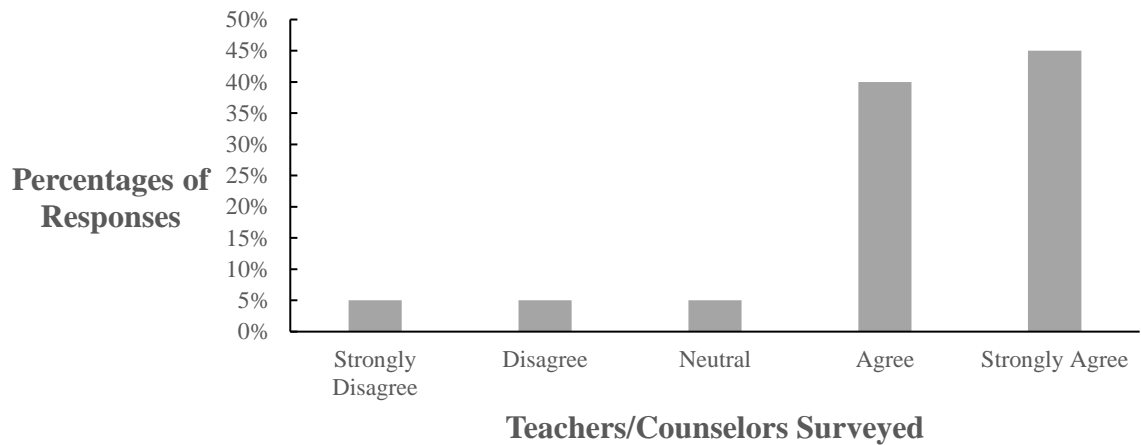
Survey Statement Eight

I know and use the seven habits in my daily life.

Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (85%) with this statement. Another

10% were *neutral,* and 5% *disagreed* (see Figure 10). The mean of the Likert-type scale

scores was 4.15.

Figure 10

Use the Seven Habits Daily
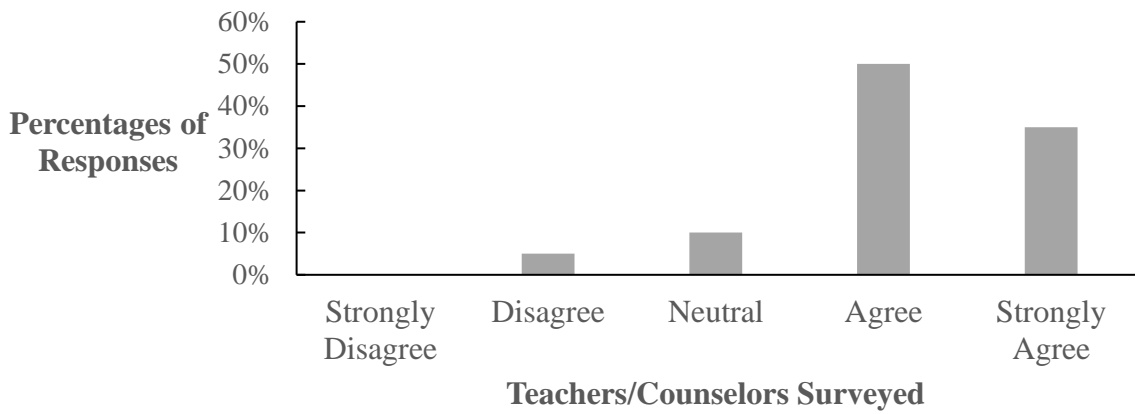
Survey Statement Nine

I am empowered to be a leader within my school.

The data revealed 80% of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement. Another 10% were *neutral,* and 10% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* (see Figure 11). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 3.90.

Figure 11

Empowered to Be a Leader
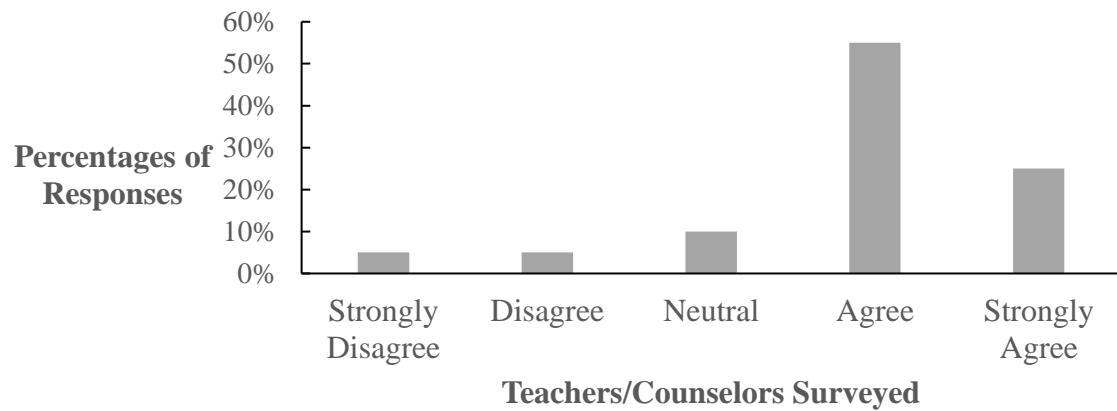
Survey Statement 10

The Leader in Me has had a positive effect on me personally and professionally.

Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (80%). The remaining

teachers/counselors responded *neutral* (10%) or *disagreed* (10%) (see Figure 12). The

mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.05.

Figure 12

Positive Effect on Me
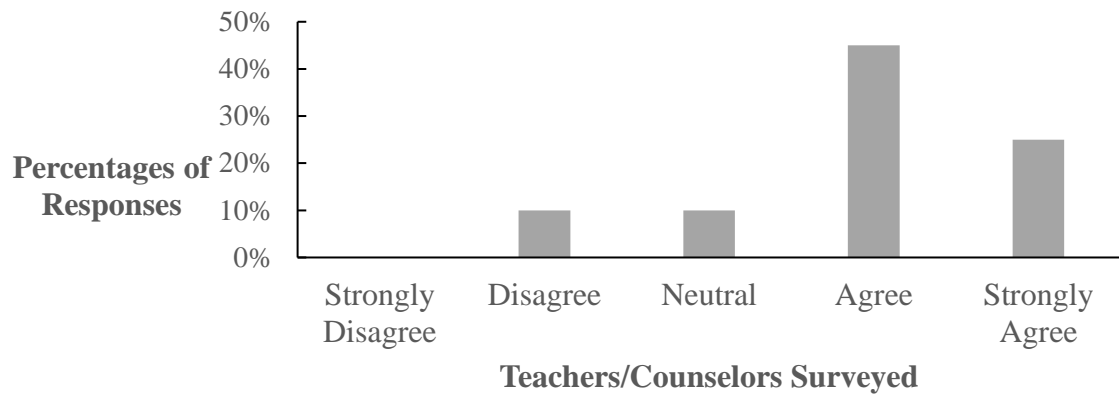
Survey Statement 11

The Leader in Me has helped our school.

The results revealed 80% of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement. Another 10% were *neutral,* and 10% *disagreed* with the statement (see Figure 13). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.20.

Figure 13

Helped Our School

Chart with y-axis labeled "Percentages of Responses" ranging from 0% to 60%, and x-axis labeled "Teachers/Counselors Surveyed" with categories: Strongly Disagree (0%), Disagree (10%), Neutral (10%), Agree (30%), Strongly Agree (50%).
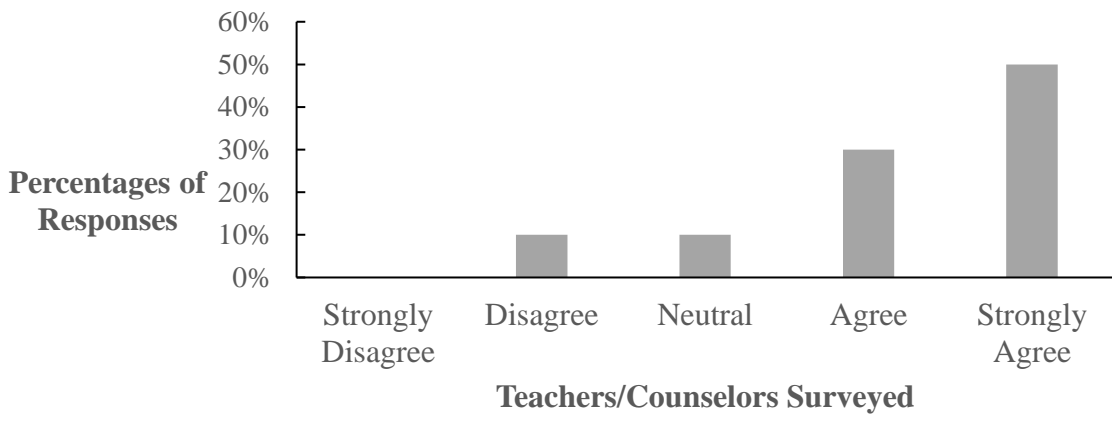
Survey Statement 12

I pause and respond based on principles and desired results.

A high percentage of respondents (95%) *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement. The remaining 5% disagreed with the statement (see Figure 14). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.15.

Figure 14

Principles and Results
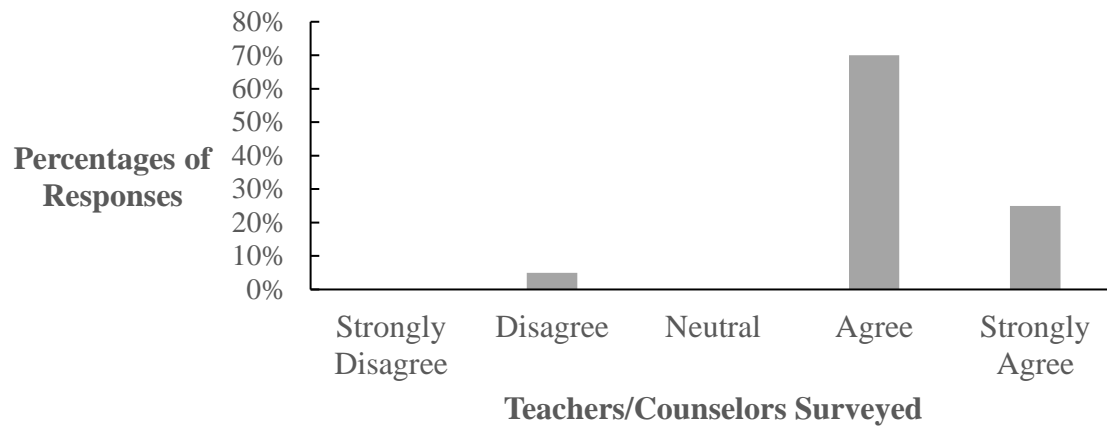
Survey Statement 13

I have created and lived by a personal mission statement.

Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (85%), while 5% were *neutral,* and

15% *disagreed* (see Figure 15). The mean of the Likert-type scale scores was 4.10.

Figure 15

Personal Mission Statement
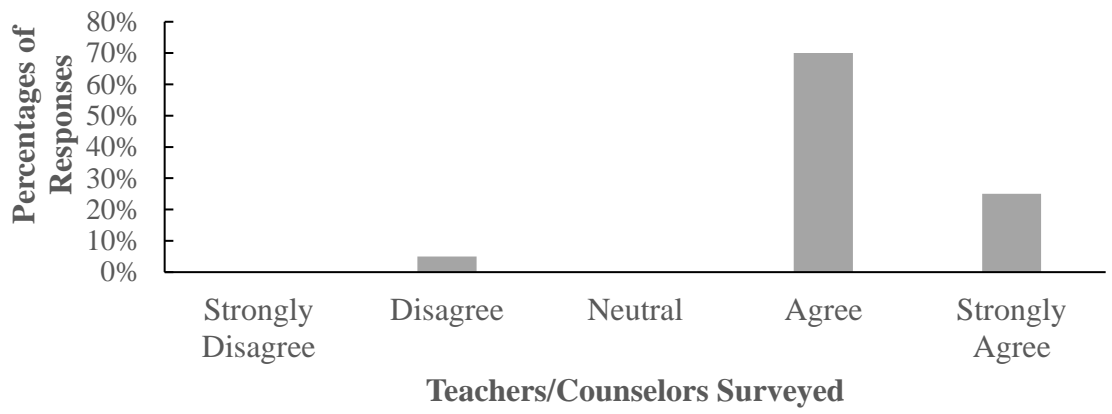
Survey Statement 14

The common language of the Leader in Me has benefited our staff and students.

Most respondents (85%) either *strongly agreed* or *agreed*. The remaining

teachers/counselors were *neutral* (15%) or *disagreed* (5%) (see Figure 16). The mean of

the Likert-type scale scores was 4.20.

Figure 16

Common Language
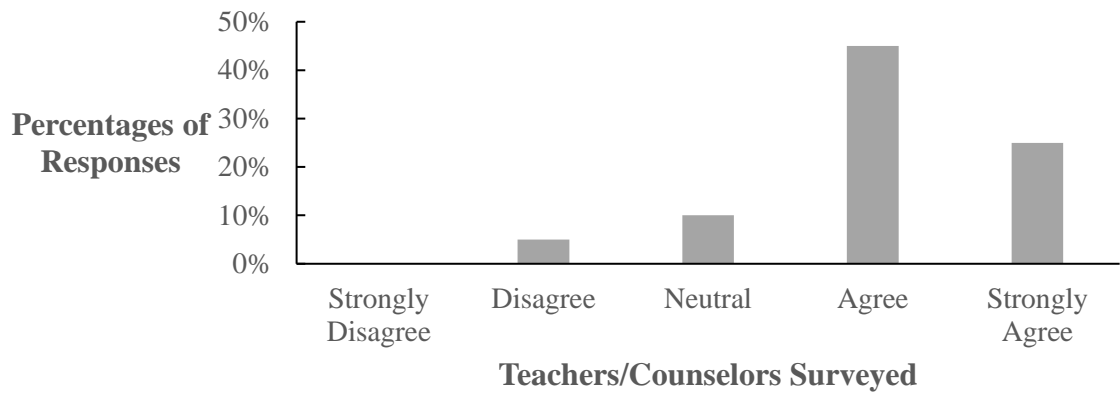
Survey Statement 15

There have been challenges associated with the Leader in Me.

The data revealed 75% *strongly agreed* or *agreed*. The remaining respondents

were *neutral* (5%) or *disagreed* (20%) (see Figure 17). The mean of the Likert-type scale

scores was 3.60.

Figure 17

Challenges
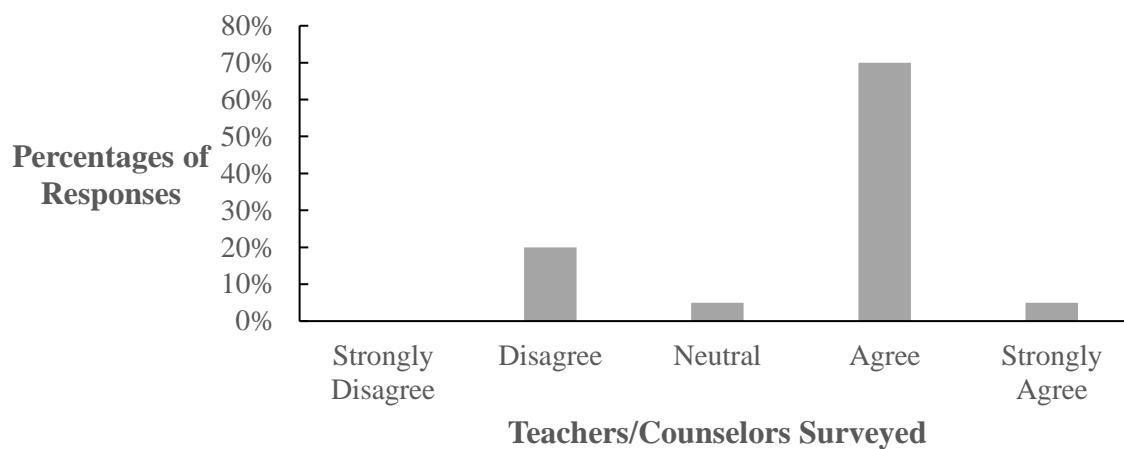
Qualitative Analysis

     The eight interview questions were designed to gather information regarding the

seven habits, culture, and leadership. The questions were developed to determine

perceptions of principals regarding the effects of the Leader in Me. The questions elicited

a variety of responses from the principals, with common themes discussed in this section.

Interview Question One

     What impact has the Leader in Me process had on your school's culture and

climate?

     Principal A stated:

     It has had a tremendous impact on our school culture and climate. The Leader in

     Me solidified us all around a common language, an ordinary meaning, and a

     shared vision. Parents are more vested in our school. Overall, our school culture

     and community – it has anchored us. We always had the heart and mindset, but it

     gave us the ability to define and have that common language around the "why" of

what we wanted our school to be. Our staff has always been empowered, but now

things are on purpose. We were purposeful in how staff are empowered to be part

of the leadership process.

Principal C specified, "Staff is focusing on themselves and being the best they can be

every single day. It is hard to do this job if you are not taking care of yourself. It is about

us living and knowing the habits."

Principal D related the impact of the seven habits as "huge in a positive manner."

Principal C explained, "It carries over to the students and our families as well. I think you

notice a difference with the students in the confidence that they have in themselves."

According to Principal A:

We had a parent email yesterday about how well their student was able to

articulate as a fifth grader because of the years that they have gone through and

hearing us and from the teachers discuss them in all settings.

Principal D shared that systems are helpful within the school. The principal stated, "It is

how we do school systematically. It enables everyone to have a voice. Everyone is able to

set certain things aside academically and be able to support ourselves and students in

ways that we know that they need." Principal B answered in relation to the 2020–2021

school year: "This was a perfect example of the impact. Regardless of what protocol the

team was asked to do, they just kept coming back and saying we are still going to ensure

this happens." The principal also shared it was the toughest year of his career, but the

school team just kept coming back regardless of what protocol or restraint they had to

adhere to with COVID. Principal D stated, "It is the path we are going, and teachers have

evolved systematically. They follow the academics, culture, and leadership."

Principal B shared how deeply rooted the staff is in the habits. The principal mentioned, "Regardless of what protocol or time constraint we were under, it was important to the team that we kept those big rocks in place. Leadership binders, goal setting, our assemblies, and celebrations. They ensured everything still happened." According to Principal D, "The seven habits… the staff believe it and follow it. All students and staff like the celebration piece, too. It is huge." Principal A summarized, "For students, it is really just making them ready to be a contributing member of society later on."

Interview Question Two

What impact has the Leader in Me process had on you personally and professionally?

Principal B replied, "It is the balance piece. That has been a huge, huge paradigm shift in the things that I learned through the Leader in Me and in order to make that happen." According to Principal C, "I think personally it gave me that balance as an administrator, and you know it is a struggle to have a family and stay balanced." Principal A specified, "It has made me more intentional about my time and priorities. It helped me solidify big rocks and what to do and my quadrants of time." Principal D shared, "I believe everyone needs these habits, myself included. It has helped me being a parent and relating to my kids."

According to Principal B, "Setting personal and professional goals for myself and having an accountability partner has helped me find balance. Secondly, the self-care and taking care of myself, so I could be the best for the people at work and home." Principal C discussed personal impact: "I am consistently trying to set personal goals about

ensuring that I have that balance with my family and time for myself." Principal D stated,

"As a leader, I believe that I would never ask anyone to do something that I would not do,

so it is important for me to model these things." In conclusion, Principal A shared:

> The kids ask me what my favorite video game is, and I tell them I have never
>
> played a video game. It is not in the right quadrant. It becomes who you are as an
>
> individual, and it spills over into your family.

Principals also discussed the professional impact of the seven habits. Principal B detailed,

"Professionally, I have had opportunities for additional professional development and

developed professional relationships, and it provided an opportunity for coaching. Our

team benefits from the opportunities that I am part of." According to Principal A,

"Professionally, it reenergized me as a building principal. I clarified my big rocks and

focus and professionally the legacy I want to leave." Principal C stated:

> Using the content from the seven habits, from the principles and paradigms, and
>
> being able to coach staff. We are always checking in with them on their personal
>
> goals, and I think that has opened some of our relationships with staff. The
>
> comfortableness that they feel, being able to come with concerns or issues,
>
> whether it be personal or school-related. I think it has really helped.

Principal D mentioned, "I was a parent of two students who went through the program

before I became familiar with it. I am coming at it from a different standpoint. I would

hear my kids come home talking about the habits." The principal also added the

importance of leadership notebooks and goals in the learning journey. Principal C stated,

"The academic piece is coming together for our building, which has helped me

professionally as well." Principal D replied, "The new staff like having a voice with the systems of Leader in Me and how I can support them."

Interview Question Three

What impact has the Leader in Me process had on your staff? Students?

Principal A stated, "We have had a lot of staff who have set and met personal goals. Everything from health goals to financial and leadership goals." According to Principal B, "I think for the staff, the biggest piece is that the most important things are themselves. They go through the seven habits training and set personal goals. We check in with them on their goals." Principal D responded, "I start every single meeting with celebrations. Teachers light up with celebrations, and our culture continues to thrive on the collaborative culture. The structures have helped with academic teams and reaching those goals."

Principal A responded, "You truly know that it has been internalized whenever you see stuff. Staff members [are] reaching goals and following dreams. When you have been able to watch staff grow and go because of that." According to Principal B, "It is a paradigm shift for them to think about themselves at work. Just knowing that there are opportunities for everyone to have a genius. Without that thinking in place, some staff members would have never come into play." Principal C replied, "They have really started to invest in the whole child aspect every day, especially with the incorporation of our morning meetings. It has been a mindset change." Similarly, Principal A responded, "Their mindsets have also shifted along with those paradigms that all students can lead. All students have genius and potential. That is a big shift."

Principal A stated, "I think it is the same for students. It has helped them identify goals. They are serious about their goals and know what to do to meet them." In the words of Principal D, "It is seeing our students successful and building their confidence and interacting with others. They learn how to be a good citizen, advocate for themselves, and have empathy. The students also learn to set goals." Principal B responded, "For our students, it allows them to be celebrated in a multitude of different ways. They are celebrated for different reasons and given leadership roles no matter how much they struggle with behaviors or academically." According to Principal C, "Students are celebrated in different ways. Kids are given leadership roles no matter how much they may struggle with academics or behavior. There are many ways to invest in students to ensure they are ready for the next grade." Principal B also shared:

> Every child has an opportunity to feel the success of some kind while they are here. Those relationship pieces are just as essential for us to have with staff members as staff members are for students. If you do not have a relationship, you are not going to get the best from them every day. I think you see the effort paying off for the effort they give and the care they show for their friends and teachers here.

According to Principal D, "They have an understanding for others; they are kind and respectful. They work with others and listen. They think about academic goals. The students love the celebration piece, and it is great seeing them in action." Principal A added, "It has also impacted students by recognizing when they do not have voice and choice as they move up into high school, they just cannot tolerate it. We have created wonderfully independent leaders."

Interview Question Four

How are the seven habits utilized in your school?

Principal A shared, "Lead lessons occur daily in the classrooms focusing on the seven habits and the principles and practices. It is embedded in how students talk to one another and how teachers talk to students." According to Principal B, "It is just so naturally embedded, and it is not a stop, drop, and Leader in Me. It is just very naturally embedded throughout instruction." Principal B added, "There was definitely a time when we did that, but that is just not where we are at right now."

Additionally, Principal C shared, "If someone were coming in, they would see it everywhere in the building on signage and the interactions between students and staff because it is everywhere." Principal D stated, "Teachers use the language with purpose and with intention. It is also present aesthetically throughout our building on signs and things. The seven habits are incorporated into lessons during lead time… It is just naturally embedded." According to Principal A, "We are trying to shift away from the seven habits language and take a deeper look with the principles and practices."

Principal B stated, "I feel that you could see it in almost every single interaction as you were walking down the hallway and in every single classroom." Principal A continued, "We focus on teaching the seven habits to students and reinforcing that even with families. When students, staff, or parents are caught using one of the seven habits, we take their picture and celebrate."

In the words of Principal B, "I also think over the last couple of years we are going from the point of just hearing a habit to teaching those deeper paradigms of deeper principles of each habit." Principal A asserted, "Our teachers have really elevated their

game with it instead of always talking about the name, like synergizing." The principals shared the habits are noticed in teachers' lessons and everyone talks with one another within the school.

Interview Question Five

Is shared or collaborative leadership present in your building? What does it look like within your building?

Principal B stated, "We have a student and staff Lighthouse Team and a classified team, as well as a community team. We are trying to make sure everyone has a voice represented in some way." Principal A responded, "The most significant way that we see shared leadership is with the Lighthouse Team and its structure. It is genuinely shared leadership. Classroom, special education, special services teachers, and paraprofessionals are represented on the team." According to Principal D, "We are a community. We have our academic, culture, and leadership teams. We have grade-level PLC's and a Lighthouse team.

Principal B responded:

It is very rare that we make a decision that has not been part of a team and input has been gathered on the topic. If it is going to be a decision that is going to have a ranging impact on the building, we want to make sure that our thinking is followed the same as everyone else. It's very easy to get lost in the administration world and lose sight of another perspective.

Principal D responded, "Things can go upside down if you are putting fires out all of the time and have not empowered teachers to feel like they can be leaders themselves. With shared leadership, I can walk away."

Principal A shared, "Our school nurse and a parent help facilitate action teams and helped plan our Leadership Day. Due to COVID, we had to brainstorm. We ended up inviting students from all the district schools to attend." According to Principal C, "With the staff action teams, someone else is facilitating and leading each of those teams except for the classified team." Principal D mentioned, "I do not have to lead and attend every meeting. I'm merely the facilitator, and I hope I am modeling what teachers do with their students."

Principal A responded, "We also have a student lighthouse team, and they help pick a theme for each school year. They also do a board presentation each year for our board spotlight. The students pick the theme and then design it for the next year." According to Principal C, "The classroom teachers have done a good job of providing shared leadership and collaboration with their classrooms. We are still trying to figure out how it is going to work." All of the principals agreed how powerful it is to watch staff, students, and families grow in their leadership capacity. Principal C specified, "It is exciting to see the team learn to lean in and trust one another."

Interview Question Six

How has the Leader in Me process impacted your parents? Community?

Principal A replied, "The Leader in Me has empowered our parents to do things and give voice to parents' passions. It has helped create meaningful opportunities for students. What we might know as a traditional PTO would now be an action team." Principal C expressed:

Some of the things we have done in terms of families we have had a paradigm shift. We determined that it was going to be up to us to train them, or we can send materials home for parents to read.

According to Principal B:

I think for parents, that was probably the biggest thing at the beginning, which was the hardest, and it took us a while to figure this out. We were rocking and rolling inside the building, and then we realized there were parents on board with us, too.

Principal A shared, "It has helped our parents find their voice in the school, too." Similarly, Principal B discussed how having parent involvement with the Leader in Me has helped the school. According to Principal B, "It (parent involvement) helped create some meaningful opportunities for our students. Even in the pandemic and shutdown, the parent had monthly activities and found ways to do it to meet the guidelines."

Principal A shared, "The Leader in Me has spread through the community. We are now a K–12 Leader in Me district. Now everyone has skin in the game." Principal B mentioned, "We have learned to ebb and flow with the needs of the families and community. Our school was a trendsetter. It was really cool to see the ripple effect across the community and how businesses came on board." According to Principal D, "Our school is a community school. As our community has changed, so we had to wrap around and involve everyone and every parent. We had to sit down and revisit our collective commitments."

Principals agreed having parent support and communication was an effect of the Leader in Me implementation. Principal B stated, "We make sure that the students are

having conversations nightly with the parents and telling them all of the great things they are doing here." Principal D shared, "We have families that move in from all over, like Russia and Mexico, and we have a high number of students in poverty. We had our families do mission statements and our Leader Day to help meet their needs." According to Principal B, "We now have a lot of things in place for parents. We are using our students to coach and teach their parents. There are student-led conferences and IEP meetings." Principal B also shared, "Teachers coach the students on how to explain their leadership notebooks. We hear from parents every year about how their students know all of this stuff."

According to Principal A:

We have promoted the language and seven habits with the Chamber of Commerce. We have had businesses coming in and partnering with us for the Leader in Me. Leadership is a passion for a lot of businesses in the area, and they are wanting to connect with that.

Principal B mentioned, "It is not unusual for me at all to get an email from a business owner who wants to know details about what we do. It has marinated across the community." Principal C shared, "I think you see the impact with the community outreach that the elementary, middle, and high school do as a result of The Leader in Me. They do many things to support families."

Interview Question Seven

What challenges have you faced as a result of the implementation of the Leader in Me in your building?

Principal A responded, "The biggest one still is authenticity. Make sure that everyone is truly authentic in it because kids smell fake, adults smell fake, and everyone smells fake." According to Principal D, "It had started to feel just like something else. So being true to our journey and getting where we needed to go. It was a lot of self-evaluating and discussing barriers."

Principal A clarified, "This is a journey and a process. It is not going to be cookie-cutter, and we must stay authentic in that you have to be very clear about expectations." Principal D responded, "When I took over the school, I started finding out that some of the teachers maybe were not as invested as I thought they were. It was that they had lost their *way* and *purpose*." Principal A noted how important it is not to bow to the negative during the process: "It is important to stay genuine and authentic, and be transparent when there is a mistake. It is a journey and process, and it will look different and go at different paces for everyone."

Principal D shared, "We had to get back to what was our goal for the staff and kids. We started structurally changing some things and moving more into actually implementing the Leader in Me again." According to Principal A, "Being very clear about expectations. There are decisions that require shared leadership, but not all decisions. Being very clear upfront about what there is a choice in is important." Principal D added, "It did not mean that they did not believe it was good… they just had lost the purpose."

Principal B stated, "The biggest challenge by far is where we are at in our journey and when a new staff member comes on board and makes sure they do not feel completely lost." According to Principal C, "I feel like it gets harder for them each and

every year because each and every year they are further behind the eight-ball compared to their peers." Principal B shared, "We have created our own kind of new teacher induction. We do them every month and have to be very intentional."

In response, Principal A explained, "I think another challenge is the time. It has to be ensured that time is built into the schedule, and it is considered a big rock." Principal C stated time is critical: "You are trying to cover the Leader in Me material and the normal academics and what is needed to prepare for testing, and you have a limited amount of time." Principal A mentioned, "No matter what, things always come up that take time, and you have to keep to your big rocks and the time that has been given." Principal D shared concerns over finances: "We are at the crossroads of whether we are continuing the Leader in Me. In my opinion, the rewards outweigh the challenges."

Interview Question Eight

How has the common language with the Leader in Me impacted your school?

The principals reported common language had a positive impact on the school. Principal A responded, "Staff members, community members, students, and parents, it allows everyone to be conducted and centered on the same things. It is a common accountability for one another." According to Principal D, "The simplicity of everyone using the same language so there is no confusion. The expectations are all the same, and there is no confusion of communication. It is the same pathways and information." Principal A added, "The common language is crucial." To clarify, Principal D stated, "Whenever someone says it, you know what they mean. We talk about what the word looks like and the ins/outs of the word itself."

Principal B stated, "We started seeing the language embedded naturally in instruction and in more unstructured settings." According to Principal C, "The common language looks like going from just the buzz words to now having a true understanding of what it does mean to be proactive and what the habits actually mean." Additionally, Principal C mentioned the shift with a focus on the principles: "Now that we have focused on the principles, you do not hear the buzz words as much. It is having a true understanding of what it means to be proactive instead of just using the term."

The principals discussed how the seven habits are related to discipline, and it can be tricky. Principal A stated, "The other thing you have to be careful with is that you don't use it in the negative light. We have really worked not to use it in the negative like… you are not proactive." According to Principal B:

> Now we hear about, again, kind of that ripple effect of what happens outside of school, whether it be a child's extracurricular activities or we hear about them go to middle school. It's not a surface-level understanding; they have a deeper understanding of it. We see our Lighthouse Team members as they progress through middle school being leaders, which is exactly what we want to see. I think that is a big piece, too.

Principal D shared, "Students know these are our expectations and how it works with our discipline. Most of the time, a behavior can be tied to a habit. I have students talk, write, and draw about the habit they could have used." Principal A stated, "The intent is to build kids up."

Summary

In Chapter Four, the survey data were collected and analyzed based on the responses of teachers and counselors and the frequency of responses. The mean of central tendency and frequency of responses was determined. Perceptions were categorized according to culture, seven habits, and leadership.

Finally, the data from the principal interviews were presented. The statements were organized by culture, seven habits, and leadership. Coding was used to determine similarities in interview responses. The statements yielded similar themes in responses. Themes identified included the following: culture and climate (common language, voice, and self-care), seven habits language (common language, habits embedded in learning, scheduled time, and the principles of the habits), principals leading and modeling the habits, and challenges (process/journey, new staff onboarding, clear expectations and goals, time, and district support/cost). An overall theme of "Find Your Voice" was determined. These themes are discussed in-depth in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five includes the findings, according to the descriptive data analysis of each Likert-type statement and the interview responses through open and axial coding. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data are shared with deeper insights. The implications for practice section includes suggestions on how the outcomes of this study can support Leader in Me schools with guidance on culture/climate and leadership for principals, teachers, and counselors. Recommendations for future research are also included.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

One of the strongest forces on earth is group culture (Coyle, 2018). Gordon (2018) defined culture as "connecting people positively" (p. 36). According to Wright (2019), the Leader in Me is a transformation process toward positive change in students and school culture. Wright (2019) stated, "The central premise of this framework is that every child is a leader and capable of achieving greatness" (p. 23).

Tuccinardi (2018) explained that since its origin in 2009, schools worldwide have utilized the Leader in Me as a solution to improve school culture and the well-being of students. The focus on shared leadership needs to be shifted to teaching leadership skills to elementary students to prepare them for the expectations of the 21st century (Xiong, 2017). Henson (2020) determined, "The Leader in Me program utilizes administrators,' school staff, and teachers' innovation and creativity to infuse these seven habits into the curriculum, traditions, and culture of the whole school." (p. 34)

Chapter Five includes the findings and conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis of survey data and the qualitative analysis of the interviews. Implications for practice are provided. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Findings

The responses to the research questions were determined using descriptive statistics based upon the survey responses of teachers and counselors from Leader in Me schools. Interview responses from principals were also collected to answer the research questions. Each survey statement was based on one of the core categories: seven habits, school climate and culture, or leadership and the effects of Leader in Me on each area. Interview responses were coded using the techniques of open, axial, and selective coding.

These results were linked to the core categories. Common themes were identified and are presented in this section.

Research Question One

What are the perceptions of elementary principals, counselors, and teachers about school culture and leadership following implementation of the Leader in Me?

The descriptive data of all three groups revealed positive results. The percentages and coding information resulted in favorable perceptions of the Leader in Me and how it has impacted school culture and leadership. Most of the survey questions were focused on school culture. Two statements were about safety within the school and resulted in a high level of agreement (87%); staff felt safe, and the school was safe and welcoming with the Leader in Me implementation.

Two statements concerned feeling valued and respected within the school, both of which resulted in a high level of agreement (73%) but noticeably lower than the responses on safety. This leaves a considerable number of teachers and counselors (27%) who were *neutral*, *disagreed,* or *strongly disagreed* about feeling valued and respected within the school. Three survey statements were focused on an individual's response to the Leader in Me and building culture. There was fairly high agreement (78%) among teachers and counselors with the impact of the Leader to Me on them as individuals; however, several teachers and counselors (22%) *disagreed* with this statement.

Common themes emerged during the principals' interviews regarding Leader in Me and the culture and climate of the school. All four principals agreed having the Leader in Me has given the schools a common language, purpose, vision, and meaning. Principals shared how the program has united and solidified staff, students, families, and

community members. The Leader in Me has helped everyone head in the same direction with support for the school.

Principal D stated, "Just the knowledge of the Leader in Me itself and the seven habits, help us as human beings. We are all truly partners in education." According to Principal A, "Parents are not just doing fundraisers or supporting agents, but actually partners in education. Not like your traditional PTA."

After a challenging year with COVID, principals attributed their perseverance and continued success to the unification around the common purpose of the Leader in Me. Staff ensured the big rocks continued and navigated protocols and hurdles to continue the important pieces of the Leader in Me process. Principal B stated, "The team persevered and made pivot after pivot. We did that successfully by being deeply rooted in the principles of the seven habits."

Another theme that emerged was how implementation of the Leader in Me has a structure that gives everyone a voice and anchors the staff, students, parents, and community. Principal D shared, "It structurally enables everyone to have a voice." There is a system for all stakeholders to have leadership and to be empowered within the school. Principal C replied, "We have a Student Lighthouse Team, Staff Lighthouse Team, and a Classified Team. We also have a Community Lighthouse Team and then a vertical team where all of those teams come together."

According to Principal B, "Our custodian runs the classified team. We are trying to ensure that everyone has a voice represented in some way. If it is a big-ticket item or decision, everyone has a voice." Principal A stated, "Parents have their own Lighthouse Team. They are structured in the same way as action teams." Empowering staff and being

purposeful in how staff are empowered to be part of the leadership process are crucial

elements. Structures and systems for voice do not happen by accident; they are

intentional. Leadership teams are a critical component of ensuring every stakeholder has

a voice. These are important "big rocks" and pieces to have in place to ensure voice.

There is an overall focus within these schools to take care of oneself and be the

best one can be every day with the seven habits and the principles of the habits. This

starts from the top down. The principals agreed they must model the expectation of

taking care of oneself and using the habits. All principals interviewed were committed to

the seven habits and modeling these personally and professionally. Principal D stated, "If

I want my staff to be invested in the Leader in Me, then I need to do it. I need to show it.

It was an easy sell, relating it to my personal life and school life." According to Principal

A:

> My first day of Leader in Me training was also when my first son was born, and
>
> we adopted him. It is amazing how that is parallel and the work with my doctorate
>
> as well. It helped me solidify my big rocks.

Principals shared how the focus is on staff taking care of themselves first and foremost.

Principal B shared, "The most important thing is themselves, not our school. It is such a

paradigm shift for them to think that someone would care about them like that in the

workplace." Staff use the seven habits daily personally and professionally; staff within

these schools set both professional and personal goals. Principal C explained, "We talk

about the seven habits and the personal goals they set, and we check in on them." This is

a big paradigm shift in the workplace that someone truly cares about them as a person,

not just a staff member. The principals agreed it looks and feels different within the schools and has a big impact. It is a shift for new staff within these schools each year.

Celebrations are also a component of self-care and goal-setting. Principal D shared, "We start every single meeting with celebrations. We have personal and professional celebrations from staff." Teachers overall love the celebrations within these schools, according to principals. It helps build school culture and climate. Staff enjoy hearing from one another and checking in on personal and professional goals with one another.

Principal A specified:

We have a lot of staff who have focused on personal goals. They are tracking healthy and financial goals. I have teachers that pursue leadership and move onto other goals. I have had staff become principals, instructional coaches, and district leaders. I even had a teacher that wanted to stay at home with her kids. She set the goal so she could stay home, and she did. That is the best example of goal setting and a big goal to achieve.

The principal continued, "I have a lot of staff turnover, but it is for good things. Look at the things they are doing, focusing on themselves and goal setting."

Research Question Two

What are the perceived benefits of the common language of the seven habits according to elementary principals, counselors, and teachers in a Leader in Me School?

The descriptive data gathered revealed positive perceived benefits from teachers, counselors, and principals. The three statements related to the common language of the seven habits yielded high percentages. There was high agreement (88%) with the

outcomes with the benefits of seven habits language. Teachers and counselors had low levels of disagreement with all survey statements related to the language of the seven habits.

Several themes evolved from the interviews with the principals concerning the seven habits. The principals agreed the common language of the seven habits is extremely important and helps to get all stakeholders heading in the same direction. It is important all stakeholders are deliberately involved in the language and thinking with the seven habits. Systems need to be in place to ensure staff, students, parents, and community members are trained in the seven habits and offer ongoing support. Principal A shared, "We have a Student Leadership team that focuses on teaching the seven habits to the students and reinforcing them with the families. We also team that focuses on parents and that they are taught the seven habits."

Principal A continued:

In order to have authenticity with the Leader in Me, you have to have the common language with parents. I'll be honest. It still throws me whenever a parent says something like, "We're thinking we've got a third alternative for what we're going to do." It just feels weird. But again, that common language centers and collects and focuses everyone.

According to Principal D, "We have a common language for the way that we do school. The teachers use the language. We did the seven habits work with the parents, and it allowed us to all be heading in the same direction."

The language permeates throughout the school building when implementation is at its best. The principals shared how one can hear and see the language during

interactions among people. The seven habits language appears in conversations with learners in the classrooms and in instruction from the teachers. Principal B shared, "You hear the language of the seven habits in the classrooms, from instructional aides, and from the parents. It's in all interactions within our school."

The principals agreed the seven habits are everywhere within the building and are naturally embedded throughout the school day. The seven habits become the way things are done after a few years of implementing the Leader in Me with fidelity. The principals agreed one eventually sees the seven habits everywhere in the building. The habits can be in words or actions. According to Principal A, "The seven habits are seen in how the students talk to one another and how teachers talk to students. It is how they plan and how their thinking is connected to lessons."

Similarly, Principal C shared, "They (seven habits) are everywhere. You see them as you are walking through the building, on signage, and interactions of students and staff whether that be eye contact, shaking hands, or the language you hear across the building." Principal D replied, "Everybody is using the same vocabulary… We speak the same language. It is used with purpose and intention." Principal A responded, "It's now a natural thing how teachers connect and plan their lessons with the seven habits. I used to feel, I think, that it was forced." These schools also have various opportunities for stakeholders to be celebrated for using habits throughout the school day and in life.

Another consistent theme among principals was that time must be built into the school schedule for a specific focus on the seven habits and principles. All principals shared having this time built into the schedule is crucial to the initial and ongoing implementation of the Leader in Me process. Some components of the Leader in Me

require a specific time frame to be carried out effectively throughout the process.

Principal A shared, "We do Lead Lessons daily." According to Principal D:

> We also have Lead Time, where we do teach around the habits and principles. The students also have a leadership binder where they do work around the seven habits. My third-grade team was amazing, and they created a digital leadership notebook.

Principal B responded, "We have a few times a month where we stop, drop, and Leader in Me. But that is not what you really want to see. You want to see it constantly being lived out and naturally embedded throughout instruction." Principal C added, "Our focus now has really been teaching those deeper paradigms of each habit."

Another theme that emerged was that the principals themselves are living and breathing the seven habits both personally and professionally. Principal D communicated, "The seven habits have to start with the leadership. Everyone needs these habits, across the board, myself included." According to Principal A, "I am intentional about my time and priorities. It becomes part of who you are as an individual and spills into goals you have for yourself and what you do each day." Principal B shared, "The biggest thing for me many, many years ago was the 80th birthday party video and the paradigm shift I was making and what I was making my top priority, which was not my family." In the words of Principal C, "It was the balance piece and setting goals. It's meeting those goals and ensuring I have balance with my family and time for myself."

The principals shared beliefs about demonstrating the habits in their professional roles. Principal D explained he would not ask others to do a job that he would not do himself. The principal noted, "I need to be invested and do it and show it to others.

Relating to my personal life and being a parent makes it a super easy sell." Principal C shared, "I would say professionally, it is using the content from the seven habits and being able to coach staff as well." According to Principal B, "I've had the opportunity to build professional relationships and participate in professional development that also helps grow my staff."

A final theme is the importance of the principles of the seven habits. Principals shared that as a building evolves through the Leader in Me process, there is a shift from the seven habits language to the deeper meaning focused on the principles of the habits. Principal A responded, "We're actually trying to shift away from the language of the seven habits and shift to the principles. We do not want it to stay at surface level. You've really got to if you want to go deeper." According to Principal C, "Our focus now is those deeper paradigms of the deeper principles of each habit. Our students have a better understanding holistically with the focus on the principles." Principal B stated, "You don't hear the buzz words as much. You hear the deeper understanding of the particular habit."

Research Question Three

What are the perceived challenges following implementation of the Leader in Me?

The descriptive data gathered revealed principals, teachers, and counselors agreed there are challenges with implementation. There was high agreement (75%) with the statement; however, 25% were either *neutral* or in disagreement. This was a lower percentage of agreement than other statements rated by teachers and counselors.

The responses to this statement yielded several reoccurring themes from principals regarding challenges faced due to Leader in Me implementation. One major theme was that the Leader in Me is a process and a journey. According to Principal A, "You have to be genuine, authentic, and whenever there is a mistake, be transparent about it. Let there be grace. This is a journey and a process. It is not a program." Principal D responded, "When we looked at where we were in the implementation process, we realized that some staff members were not as invested as I had thought they were. Some staff had lost their *why* during the journey."

Principal B stated, "The biggest challenge by far is where we are at in our journey. When a new staff member comes on board, making sure that they do not feel just completely lost." Likewise, Principal A responded, "It is going to take time and look different, and it will run at different paces for everyone and every school and situation." According to Principal D, "Some of the expectations were kind of lost in our journey. We had to get everyone back on the same page. We had to look back and analyze where we truly were in the process."

Another clear theme was the process of ensuring new staff are onboarded and the heavy lifting they face with Leader in Me. As schools are further along in the process, this gap becomes larger to fill. Principals agreed it is important to have a plan for new staff training. Principal B shared, "We have had to work and created our own kind of new teacher induction. We do this every month, so we have had to be very intentional. We realized probably three years ago that new staff were just lost."

According to Principal C, "I feel like that it gets harder for them each year because they are further behind compared to their peers. There is a limited amount of

time within that first year and so many different things to cover." Principal A responded, "If you want the process to sustain, you need a plan for how you're going to continue to train and onboard people. It is important to get the head knowledge for practice, knowing the heart knowledge will follow."

Clear goals and expectations were other themes that emerged as a challenge with the Leader in Me. As the Leader in Me process is implemented, things might not feel authentic and genuine at first, but it is important to have clear guidelines for the process. The principals agreed clear expectations and guidelines are imperative for implementation. This is also important as the journey continues with the Leader and Me and as building leadership changes along the way.

Principals also noted it is important to discuss what decisions are shared and when there is voice and choice. It must be understood not all decisions are shared. Principal A stated, "There are decisions that we [share], but not all decisions are shared. There are state, federal, and board directives." Principal D related:

> When I first came to the school, they had been a Leader in Me school for a while.
> I had many staff members come to me and say things like… "a lady came and
> talked to us and met with our leadership team, but really it all became a flop."

Clear expectations, continued training, and measures of fidelity are crucial for implementation. Ultimately, leaders must think about what the goal is for students and how they will get to the goal. Leaders must process what is needed to reach the goal, what steps are needed, and anything else necessary in the process. Leaders agreed that with implementation of the Leader in Me, it is important to be honest and reflect upon

where the staff and school are in the process. Principal D responded, "Sometimes you have to get refocused in this journey and assess your current reality with the process."

Time was another challenge that emerged as a theme with principals. Principal A stated, "Another challenge is ensuring time is built into the schedule for The Leader in Me. Things will always come in education that require time, but you have to stay genuine and allocate the time. Staying true can be difficult." The principals agreed it is important to build into the schedule times for Lead Time, assemblies, leadership teams, and leadership notebook work.

Education is ever-changing, and there are always demands put on schools, administration, and teachers. Principals agreed there are already so many things that teachers are trying to fit into the school day, and the Leader in Me must be a priority if it is going to make an impact. Time and work must be intentional and purposeful. According to Principal D, "There is a fear of the time with Leader in Me, and is the time worth it. Teachers are already doing this and this. They are already trying to fit in so many things." Principal D also shared, "There are district PD days, but these are times I am not able to use for the Leader in Me. We struggle finding the time in the schedule to get the needed training."

A final challenge was that of cost and support from the district level. Principals agreed district support is crucial to make implementation truly effective throughout a student's life. Principal D stated, "Depending on what services that you use for Leader in Me, it can be a lot of money. When I tell teachers that the money is tied up and we cannot purchase other things, there becomes an issue." Principal B responded, "We are Leader in Me K–12 in our district. There are components of the Leader in Me in Central Office by

department. It's really marinated now all throughout the community." According to Principal A, "Now our district is a K–12 Leader in Me district. It has expanded throughout the community, where it is now the expectation. All principals, instructional coaches, and directors are now Leader in Me coaches." Principal D shared, "We are at a crossroad in our building if we are going to continue the Leader in Me. Our district has lost students, and budgets are down. There are other things that might take priority."

An overarching theme that surfaced during the research was the importance of habit eight, finding one's voice (Covey, 2005). According to Nandagopal (2020), habit eight is about mindset and finding and sharing the unique set of gifts persons were born with to help and inspire others. All of the principals interviewed mentioned how the systems of the Leader in Me provide an opportunity for all stakeholders within the school system to find their voice. Principal A shared, "Our scholars don't often understand situations where they don't have voice, because they are used to having voice and choice in decisions." Principal C mentioned, "It is important that our classified staff have strong voices, too."

According to Ropos (2019), find your voice is about knowing one's meaning and purpose in life. Covey (2005) specified voice is "our unique personal significance that is revealed as we face our greatest challenges, and are equal to them" (p. 5). All of the principals interviewed mentioned channels for voice of stakeholders including a variety of representation on Lighthouse Teams and Action Teams. Principal B mentioned, "There are opportunities within the Leader in Me for everyone to have genius." Ropos (2019) asserted voice is within four components including passion, talent, need, and conscience (see Figure 18)

Figure 18

Habit 8: Voice
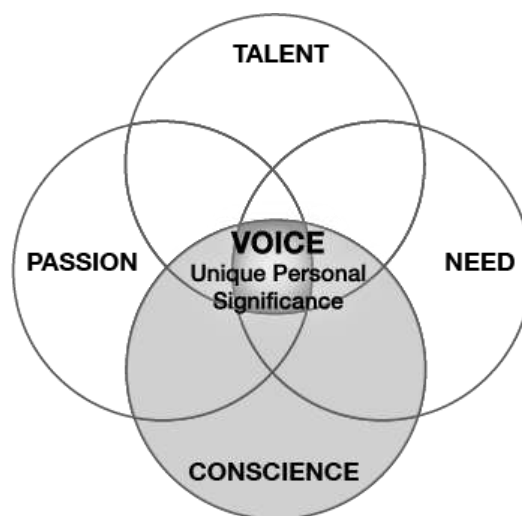
Covey (2005) stated that when work ignites a passion, a greater need arises.

During the principal interviews, it was evident principals were united in passion for their

work. Henson (2020) shared, "When people hone in on their natural talents and share

them to help others, leaders are found and inspired to greatness through habit eight – Find

Your Voice" (p. 22). Kouzes and Posner (2017) emphasized the important of leaders

finding their voice to ensure the work being done within the school is authentic. In order

to lead the way, one's voice must be clear (Kouzes & Posner, 2018).

Conclusions

The conclusions for this study were based on the review of literature and the

responses of the participants involved in taking the survey for teachers and counselors.

Conclusions were also based on the principal interviews. All participants were employed

in Leader in Me schools. This section also includes common perceptions compiled from

the survey and interviews regarding the impact of the Leader in Me on school culture and leadership.

Research Question One

Tidd (2016) stated high-performing schools have a clear mission and vison, a positive culture, and goal setting. Coyle (2018) shared everyone wants a strong culture in life and can sense its presence or absence. According to Stein (2019), culture does not just appear, it needs to be open, maintained, and developed. Gordon (2018) specified it is both the culture and process that drive success. Culture is a fragile thing (Stein, 2019).

With regard to school culture and leadership following implementation of the Leader in Me, elementary principals, counselors, and teachers responded with similar perceptions. The survey included statements focused on areas related to culture (safety, value, respect, personal commitments) and leadership. The principal interviews yielded deeper explanation about what they believed the Leader in Me did to make an impact on culture and leadership. Coyle (2018) explained culture is a set of living relationships that are moving toward a shared goal.

Clear (2018) clarified the process of change starts with awareness; therefore, one must be aware of the habits before change can occur. According to Covey et al. (2014), students can be taught the habits, but if they are not in a good environment, they will not be able to live the habits. Covey et al. (2014) continued, "When students are placed in a highly effective environment, miracles can happen" (p. 66). Henson (2020) shared the Leader in Me improves school culture and created more effective teachers. The teachers' and counselors' perceptions about the Leader in Me and culture were most positive in the areas of safety and personal commitments. The percentage of agreement was significantly

different in the areas of value and respect. As Mintz (2019) stated, Covey referred to

a Character Ethic, meaning to align one's values that have "universal and timeless"

principles, including fairness, integrity, honesty, and truthfulness, and treating people

with respect (para. 3). The responses to the statement regarding leadership and feeling

empowered garnered a slightly lower percentage of agreement compared to the other

areas of focus. Covey et al. (2014) stated, "The best way for students to learn to be

leaders is seeing all adults modeling leadership, not just the principal, …everyone" (p.

76). Henson (2020) suggested making sure staff are living the habits and devoting time to

support efforts helps with implementation. Kouzes and Posner (2017) stated leadership is

all about self-development and being the best one can be. Raleigh (2017) discussed how

the Leader in Me has a relational approach.

Principals' responses were similar in most of the categories. There were different

responses in perceptions of how staff are impacted and the opportunities for shared

leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2018), when there is a common vision and

people feel like they are a part of something that matters, leadership grows.

Based upon the outcomes of this study, Leader in Me schools need to ensure the

systems in place truly provide avenues for all staff to feel valued and respected to build

and foster culture. Mintz (2019) suggested empathic listening is an important skill that

Covey refers to, which is listening until the person feels completely understood. Covey et

al. (2014) stated the definition of leadership is "communicating a person's worth and

potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves" (p. 39).

Gordon (2018) asserted when team members are connected and feel safe, trust,

and like their ideas and thoughts are being heard, everyone can do their very best and

creative work. Gordon (2018) continued to say it is important to find ways to communicate collectively as a team, be intentional, and foster one-on-one communication among members of the team. Based on the data collected, personal commitment to the Leader in Me impacts culture. Covey et al. (2014) shared the Leader in Me process starts with adults applying the habits, and then the process works its way to children. Henson (2020) stated, "Seeing the whole school community put ownership back on the kids as well as hearing others speak about students as capable leaders with greatness within will help make responsible adults" (p. 91).

Schools need to ensure the opportunities for voice truly allow staff to be heard and provide authentic shared leadership. Greatness in leadership can be obtained easily if leaders can motivate others to find their voice (Wise Labs, 2020). A positive impact on staff morale and achievement is obvious when leadership is shared among the principal, teachers, staff, students, and parents (Covey et al., 2014). A team must have shared goals and a clear purpose to have a positive experience together (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (2018) explained it is important to create conditions where everyone's ideas and concerns are heard and understood. Overall, the Leader in Me boosts both staff and student morale (Tuccinardi, 2018).

Henson (2020) shared that if students acquire the seven habits, they can take ownership of their behaviors and learning. According to Newell (2017), the Leader in Me provides opportunities to build leadership in students through direct instruction of leadership skills. Newell (2017) stated teaching the habits to students builds in problem-solving and social skills and teaches students to work together. Henson (2020) explained when students truly see themselves as leaders, they will change on their own, regardless

of the circumstances surrounding them. Wright (2019) shared that true change starts within students when they recognize their own greatness.

According to Henson (2020), the four critical pieces of any effective leadership are trust, purpose, systems alignment, and talent. Raleigh (2017) shared that in order to develop a culture change in schools, teaching of life skills, such as leadership, will be crucial to student success. Leadership comes from the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2018).

Research Question Two

The responses from the teachers and counselors who were surveyed yielded high agreement in the perceived benefits of the common language of the seven habits and the Leader in Me. The research question was divided into statements based around the staff members' use of the habits including the principles, mission statements, and the habits benefiting staff and students. The principal interviews allowed for deeper insights into benefits perceived as a result of the common language associated with the Leader in Me.

Covey (2020) determined the habits are formed around principles that become the basis of a person's character. A benefit of seven habits training is that staff know each other better, begin to use the habits, and start making changes in their personal lives (Covey et al., 2014). Many of the important pieces from the seven habits are integrated into the Leader in Me in meaningful ways, including the principles, actions, and paradigms that help leaders make change (Mohler, 2020). The principal interviews revealed implementation in schools begins with the common language of the seven habits that helps ensure everyone is on the same page, speaks the same language, and shares a common vision. Tidd (2016) shared the common language helps to promote pro-social skills, but it needs to be directly taught to students. The response given the most by

teachers regarding the impact of the Leader in Me on school is that it gives everyone a common language (Covey et al., 2014). Tidd (2016) found the seven habits should be taught beginning as early as pre-kindergarten. According to Tidd (2016), having a common language kindergarten through fifth grade helps with behaviors in schools. According to Tuccinardi (2018), a common language helps educators solve behavioral situations with students and conflicts between students. Tidd (2016) explained when all stakeholder groups use the common language of the seven habits, "it has a huge impact on students' motivation and ability to take charge of their own learning and behavior" (p. 46). Tuccinnardi (2018) asserted overall common language improves communication and benefits student-to-student, teacher-to-student, and staff-to-student interactions. Newell (2017) stated the common language of the seven habits helps students be more kind, not lose their temper, and not put one another down, which all improve culture.

According to Newell (2017), seventh-grade students reported the principles were more beneficial to them than just the simple catch phrases with the habits. Henson (2020) stated one of the biggest pieces of the Leader in Me process is focused on the habits of the principles. The principals agreed that as schools implement the process longer, the shift is made from *habit* language to the *principles* of the habits. Newell (2017) stated schools that have a high level of implementation dive deeper into hands-on instruction with the principles.

Research Question Three

There was strong agreement in response to challenges associated with implementation of the Leader in Me from the teachers and counselors. There was slightly less agreement with this statement compared to others. This research question was

focused solely on possible challenges face with the onboarding of the Leader in Me. The principal interviews brought clarity to some of the challenges faced. There are a variety of challenges schools face when implementing the Leader in Me process.

It is important to recognize the Leader in Me is a process, a journey, and not a program. The Leader in Me is a research-based process focused on developing emotional needs, preparing students with life-long skills, and providing support for a leadership culture (Leader in Me, 2021). Tuccinardi (2018) shared the school transformation process helps create student empowerment and teaches 21st-century life skills. However, clear expectations and guidelines need to be established from the start to ensure implementation occurs with fidelity and can be sustained over time.

Schools that implement the Leader in Me begin with a three-year process (Leader in Me, 2021). The Leader in Me provides a framework for implementation (see Figure 16) (Leader in Me, 2021).

Figure 19

Leader in Me Framework

Leader in Me Framework

SEE Core Paradigms	Paradigm of Leadership		Paradigm of Potential		Paradigm of Change		Paradigm of Motivation		Paradigm of Education	
	NOT THIS	BUT THIS	NOT THIS	BUT THIS	NOT THIS	BUT THIS	NOT THIS	BUT THIS	NOT THIS	BUT THIS
	Leadership is for the few.	Everyone can be a leader.	A few people are gifted.	Everyone has genius.	To improve schools the system needs to change first.	Change starts with me.	Direct and control student learning.	Empower students to lead their own learning.	Educators focus solely on academic achievement.	Educators and families partner to develop the whole person.

DO Highly Effective Practices	Leadership	Culture	Academics
	Start with Adults Learning & Modeling	Create a Leadership Environment	**Achieve Goals**
	• Principal & Coordinator Development	• Physical Environment	• Individual Goals
	• New & Ongoing Staff Learning	• Social-Emotional Environment	• Team Goals
	• Family & Community Partnerships	• Leadership Events	• Aligned School Goals
	Teach Students to Lead	Share Leadership	**Empower Learners**
	• Direct Lessons	• Lighthouse & Action Teams	• Leadership Portfolios
	• Integrated Approaches	• Leadership Roles	• Student-Led Conferences
	• Service Learning	• Student Voice	• Empowering Instruction

GET Measurable Results	Highly effective students and adults who are leaders in their school and community.	A high-trust school culture where every person's voice is heard and their potential is affirmed.	Engaged students who are equipped to achieve and entrusted to lead their own learning.

FranklinCovey | EDUCATION

Note. Adapted from "What is Leader in Me?" by Leader in Me, 2021, para. 7.

El-Attrache (2018) shared how when schools implement the Leader in Me, the focus is on teaching the whole child: collaboration, empathy, problem-solving, and communication. Tuccinardi (2018) stated, "The Leader in Me program follows a logical, sequential and balanced process and it includes coursework, traditions, systems, and culture" (p. 32). According to the Leader in Me (2021), trainers provide staff with professional development days, coaching days, materials, community training days, digital resources, and many other supports for the implementation process. It is important

schools have a clear process for onboarding new staff members with the Leader in Me and a process for continued fidelity and sustainability. The best way for students to learn about the seven habits and become leaders is if all adults are modeling leadership (Covey et al., 2014). All staff must be trained in the seven habits to achieve shared leadership (Covey et al., 2014). Tuccinardi (2018) stated the Leader in Me begins with a personal transformation with adults through direct teaching of the habits.

Tuccinardi (2018) shared appropriate teaching and the actual use of the seven habits and other components of the Leader in Me are crucial for implementation. The gap becomes larger the longer the school has been involved in the Leader in Me process. Covey et al. (2014) determined a strategic plan should include establishing a balanced purpose, path, and pace each year. According to Wright (2019), the seven habits of the Leader in Me are guidelines for all stakeholders to reach their full potential in life.

Schools need to have clear expectations and goals when they begin the Leader in Me implementation. Wright (2019) shared leadership development needs to be systemic in nature, focused, and designed to provide opportunities to practice the skills. Wright continued, "The Leader in Me incorporates these factors in an authentic way" (p. 100). According to Tuccinardi (2018), the Leader in Me leads to school improvement when the program is implemented with fidelity and all of the processes are in place. Tuccinardi (2018) continued, "It takes time" (p. 36). As stated by the Leader in Me (2021), every school is unique, and the process helps to support schools in finding areas of celebration and areas of growth in leadership, culture, and academics. The coaches help schools develop action plans to work toward goals and specific results (Leader in Me, 2021). The Leader in Me framework has a specific runway where new and ongoing staff learning is

embedded in the process. Stein (2019) stated students must be aware of the bigger picture and vision to know where they are headed day-to-day.

According to Tidd (2016), a school culture must exist where the habits and principles are embedded in the school day. Tidd (2016) continued, "A concerted effort must be made by all stakeholders in order to sustain them." (p. 68). Henson (2020) shared principals need to add time during the school day for character education in order for students to experience long-term success. Time needs to be embedded into the school schedule for work surrounding the Leader in Me. Tidd (2016) stated adults need to release control during certain parts of the day and allow students to take ownership.

The process has many components, including student leadership roles (classroom and building), student goals and leadership notebooks, student voices, active student lighthouse teams, and student-led leadership events (Leader in Me, 2021). Tidd (2016) shared how leadership roles help students gain a sense of responsibility and truly deepen understanding of the habits. According to Miller (2016), the essential components of Leader in Me must be implemented in order to make a change. Lessons are built into the start of every day, and teachers set aside about 10–15 minutes for these LEAD lessons (Covey et al., 2014). According to El-Attrache (2018), teaching academic content to students is not the only important component; leadership training to develop students as whole children and prepare them for the future is also crucial. Henson (2020) stated students are building confidence and creating a more positive culture by giving speeches at assemblies and having the opportunity to participate in Leader Days.

District-level support is essential for the effective implementation of the Leader in Me process. The district needs to support schools with resources and time. According to

Wright (2019), the Leader in Me is costly and time-consuming, so it is important to ensure its value and implementation with fidelity. Stipe (2017) determined the Leader in Me program varies based on the number of staff and students served, but the average cost of the program is in the range of $65,000–$75,000 for the first three years of implementation. Included with implementation of the Leader in Me are six full-day school-wide training days (Stipe, 2017). According to Covey et al. (2014), there is true value in involvement at the district level, and the more the district supports the process, the greater the chances the Leader in Me will sustain over time (Covey et al., 2014).

Implications for Practice

Teachers and counselors who were surveyed, and principals who were interviewed, provided responses that indicated the implementation of the Leader in Me has positive effects on school culture and leadership. According to Tuccinardi (2018), the Leader in Me transformation helps students develop values, principles, and self-confidence needed to lead at school and beyond. The experience of the Leader in Me builds a strong leadership culture within the school (Tuccinardi, 2018). Tuccinardi (2018) continued, "Students' attitudes about school have improved since the Leader in Me and that helps school culture" (p. 81).

Everyone wants strong culture in their organizations, communities, and families (Coyle, 2018). Gruenert and Whitaker (2017) stated school leaders must accept that school cultures are a work in progress, people help shape cultures, and cultures also help shape people. Tuccinardi (2018) shared the Leader in Me process has the right tools, common language, and systems for creating a strong climate. The data from this study supported principals and districts seeking to implement a social-emotional program

focused on supporting staff and students, such as the Leader in Me. The research gathered in this study indicated the positive impact of the process in support of school culture and leadership development.

Districts must ensure schools have a Leader in Me implementation plan from the beginning with clear expectations, guidelines, and non-negotiables to ensure the key components of the Leader in Me process are successful sustainable. Wright (2019) shared:

> The Leader in Me was designed to follow a three-year implementation plan and it is vital that schools implement the program with fidelity. This would involve incorporating the program into all facets of the school, and not just some. Since the program is meant to instill leadership skills, practice, and values in students and staff, it is important that the program be central to the whole school. (p. 100)

Data on the Leader Me program and implementation are limited, which makes this research valuable to districts. White (2021) stated there are little data regarding implementation of the Leader in Me process within schools and how to sustain the process. The findings from this study allow districts considering the Leader in Me to hear the voices of a variety of Leader in Me participants and how they perceive the impact of the process.

Covey et al. (2014) affirmed the Leader in Me is not a canned program but a process that encourages staff members and students to add their thinking to make it the school's own personal "heartprint" (p. 36). White (2021) reiterated communication, trust, and collaboration are important steps in making change within a school. Districts need to implement best practices to ensure the major components of the Leader in Me are

successful (Henson, 2020). Following the process helps ensure schools are successful by providing coaching, ongoing training, and a focus on best practices (Redolive, 2018). According to Wright (2019), teachers must see themselves as leaders in order for implementation of the Leader in Me to be complete. Wright (2019) continued, "The Leader in Me process focuses on all staff as agents of changed." (p. 20).

There is a need to see change, reset priorities, and be intentional along the way to have continued momentum (Mohler, 2020). Henson (2020) discussed the importance of all staff having access to the same concepts of implementation and collaboration time to share with one another. A month-by-month implementation plan organizer for schools is provided (White, 2021). For the Leader in Me to be implemented successfully, many tasks must occur, and action teams are necessary to accomplish the tasks (White, 2021). The Leader in Me process takes time, and it can sometimes take years to reach the goals (Covey et al., 2014). Tuccinardi (2018) shared, "It can take several years for students to truly internalize the habits and then apply them to their daily life" (p. 77).

According to Henson (2020), time must be built in at the school-wide level, not just an addition. Wright (2019) suggested, "When teachers have appropriate leadership development, support from the school, and time to practice, effective implementation occurs." Henson (2020) shared having staff members determine their "why" is critical for ensuring implementation with fidelity. According to Henson (2020), "Many schools are meeting their targeted results in leadership, culture, and academics when implementing with fidelity" (p. 34).

Districts and schools must have an organized plan for onboarding new staff each year to sustain the Leader in Me process within schools. Henson (2020) suggested

principals need to stay focused on continuing yearly training on the seven habits for new and returning staff members. The principal interviews allowed for opportunities to share the challenges of the Leader in Me. Training must continue as new staff are hired. According to White (2021), ensuring new staff receive the most effective training possible is essential in maintaining the process. Some schools have an action team that trains new staff (White, 2021).

The Leader in Me framework includes new and ongoing staff learning as part of the professional development runway (Leader in Me, 2021). One principal shared how he had created a new teacher induction process for the Leader in Me. White (2021) recommended a Professional Learning Action Team train new staff and provide ongoing support. Raleigh (2017) stated that without clearly defined strategies for implementation, educators will be left with trial and error rather than intentional tasks. Henson (2020) clarified all staff need the required professional development to implement with success.

There needs to be dedicated time in the school schedule for the work of the Leader in Me. According to Newell (2017), the Leader in Me process is more than just teaching the habits. Newell (2017) explained the Leader in Me has added many more pieces including leadership roles and writing classroom mission statements and then personal mission statements. Teachers are taught to embed the language and practices into their teaching (Newell, 2017). Many tasks are a requirement of effective implementation of the Leader in Me including teaching the habits, building and classroom leadership roles, leadership notebooks, tracking goals, beautifying the school, and planning leadership events (White, 2021). According to Henson (2020), students must have time to participate in leadership roles, explore areas of interest, and find their

true voice. Tidd (2016) shared that when students have leadership roles within the building, they have a true voice when it comes to shaping the culture of the school.

The principals shared how to continue with the "big rocks" of the Leader in Me; they have to have time in the building and district schedule for training and planning. Henson (2020) quantified that for all staff to have clear concepts of implementation, principals must ensure time for all teams to collaborate about what implementation looks like and sounds like within the school. According to Wright (2019):

> When teachers had adequate leadership development, ample opportunities for leadership practice, and a supportive school environment that fostered leadership growth and implementation on a systemic level these teachers became central to school-wide efforts of policy reform aimed at improving student outcomes and achievement through an emphasis on leadership development. (p. 29)

White (2021) recommended teams use common planning for action team tasks. It was also noted by principals that it is important to have time within the school schedule for things such as LEAD time, leadership notebooks, building roles for students, and goal-setting. White (2021) determined being available for everything that needs to be done is a challenge, but building this time into the schedule is imperative for the process.

District-level support for cost and time is essential for the successful and continued implementation of the Leader in Me process. According to Wright (2019):

> Adopting focused programs, such as the youth leadership development program the Leader in Me, is often costly and time-consuming. It is important to ascertain the effectiveness of available programs so that school leaders can determine the value of such an investment of sparse time and money. (p. 17)

Wright (2019) shared that in order for change initiatives to take effect, "individuals at all levels of an organization must be involved, and fully engaged, in improvement efforts and leadership development" (p. 93). The perceptions of principals were that with district-wide support for the process, the system is sustainable, and students are more successful. To maintain the Lighthouse Certification that Leader in Me schools receive, time and funding must be available (White, 2021).

Consistent funding for continued implementation is also critical for the sustainability of the process. Principals of K–12 districts tended to have more district-level support. At one school, it was shared the price tag for three years of the full program was $70,000; other reports calculate the cost between $45,000 and $70,000 (Leader in Me Concerns, 2016). White (2021) concluded schools might lose certification due to funding, and this does not seem fair considering the work put into the process. Districts and schools need a clear plan for funding the Leader in Me that will sustain the process beyond the implementation year.

Recommendations for Future Research

This mixed-methods study was completed to determine the effects of the Leader in Me process on culture, climate, and leadership. Data were collected from Leader in Me educators in Missouri who had implemented the process for a minimum of three school years. For future research, data could be collected and compared with other Leader in Me schools outside Missouri. Collecting data from different locations would open the possibility of comparing socio-economic differences and would allow for a better understanding of staff and student populations and if those factors change the perceptions of program implementation.

The data for this study were collected through responses from teachers, counselors, and principals. However, additional information could be gathered from district personnel, parents, and students to determine if perceptions differ among those groups. This would, in turn, give a much broader view of the Leader in Me process and its implementation. It might be helpful to determine if what school personnel see as effects and impact are aligned with what parents and students perceive to be true. Parents and students might report perceptions contrary to those of school personnel. This would also provide information on what professional development might be needed for groups of stakeholders to aid implementation of the Leader in Me process.

In addition, another possible recommendation would be to vary participants. The data compiled for this study were gathered from teachers, principals, and counselors. In order to ensure solid data, having surveys for all staff members and interviews with counselors would provide a richer data collection to ensure each group had an equal number of participants.

Another recommendation would be to add to the instruments used to collect the data. The data in this study were compiled through teacher and counselor surveys and principal interviews; however, to expand the study, open-ended questions could be asked of the teachers and counselors. In addition, student and parent interviews would yield other perspectives.

Another recommendation would also be to look more closely at schools who have sustained effective implementation over time. This would provide more information regarding what it takes for a district and school to ensure fidelity of Leader in Me over time. This would help districts plan for fidelity and sustainability with the process

knowing what has made other schools successful. This research might focus on Lighthouse Schools that have been able to reach and sustain Lighthouse School status over time.

One final recommendation would be to look closer at systems for ensuring voice of stakeholders within schools. All of the principals interviewed discussed the importance of voice for all stakeholders including staff, students, families, and communities. The Leader in Me provides systems for voice within implementation of the process. Research regarding these systems, what they are, and how they work within a school would be valuable.

Summary

When the Leader in Me is embedded into the school day, the seven habits become part of the students and staff and impact their lives beyond school (Tidd, 2016). Covey et al. (2014) stated the ultimate goal is for students to lead their lives and make a positive contribution to society. Staff communicate, learn from one another, and work toward common goals throughout the years of implementation to help everyone reach their full potential (White, 2021). This mixed-methods study was designed to examine the perceptions of elementary teachers, counselors, and principals regarding the Leader in Me process and its impact on school culture and leadership.

A survey was sent to three Leader in Me schools in Missouri who had implemented the process for at least three years. The survey was administered to counselors and teachers within those buildings. Principals were interviewed. The data was analyzed to determine the effects of implementation of the Leader in Me on school culture and leadership.

Chapter One included a background of the study, the conceptual framework, and the statement of the problem. The purpose of the study and research questions were also included. The significance of the study and definitions of key terms were provided. Chapter One concluded with the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the study.

Chapter Two began with a review of the conceptual framework. Covey et al. (2014) determined the seven habits are as follows: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand and then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw. Research on the seven habits was examined. Chapter Two continued with a review of literature and additional research regarding school culture and leadership.

Chapter Three provided the methodology for the study to explain how the data were gathered. The problem and purpose were provided, and the research questions were re-stated. The research design for a mixed-methods study was described. The population and sample used for the data collection were provided. Purposive and convenience sampling were used, resulting in three Leader in Me schools in Missouri being surveyed.

Elementary teachers, counselors, and principals of Leader in Me schools practicing for at least three years were part of the sample. The teachers and counselors agreed to take a survey, and the principals were interviewed. The descriptive statistics were analyzed using the frequency of responses in percentages and summarizing the data. The principal interviews were analyzed through coding. A description of the reliability and validity of the instrument was also found in Chapter Three. The data collection and data analysis process were discussed. Finally, ethical considerations were provided.

Chapter Four included an overview of the data collection process. A discussion of how the survey was designed was included. Data gathered from the survey were analyzed to determine the percentage of responses for each statement. The themes that emerged from the principal interviews were also discussed at length.

Chapter Five included the findings from the data collected. An analysis and review of data outcomes for each research question was provided. Conclusions drawn from the literature review and data collected from the survey and interviews were detailed. A clear implementation plan for Leader in Me schools would support the impact and effects of the process. In addition, a proactive plan was recommended for onboarding new staff, setting clear expectations and guidelines for the process, and ensuring time is scheduled and set aside for Leader in Me work.

A description of the implications for practice for districts to consider was also available in Chapter Five. These implications included the impact of the Leader in Me process on school culture, climate, and leadership. The importance of a clear implementation plan, a process for onboarding new staff, time built into the schedule, and district support could all positively affect school culture, climate, and leadership.

Finally, recommendations for further research were discussed. The sample could be expanded into other states. Additional subgroups, including parents and students, could be added to gather their perceptions about the Leader in Me process. Another recommendation would be to use a variety of instruments with the different subgroups. Other recommendations included researching Lighthouse Schools that have maintained Leader in Me implementation over time and evaluating different Leader in Me systems

within the process to ensure all stakeholders truly have a platform and opportunity for

voice.

References

Andersen, J. (2014, June 11). Definition of student leadership & how to unlock its

potential.

https://www.leaderinme.org/blog/definition-student-leadership/

Barton, T. (2020, January 14). Principles for effective student leadership. *Serve Learn.*

https://servelearn.co/blog/principles-for-effective-student-leadership/

Bergen, C. (2020, July 14). How to be proactive. *The StartUp.*

https://medium.com/swlh/how-to-be-proactive-6fe5ad97abfc

Billy, J. (2018). *Lead with culture.* Dave Burgess Consulting.

Bluman, A. G. (2019). *Elementary statistics: A step by step approach* (8th ed.). McGraw-

Hill.

Bonazza, N. A., Smuin, D., Onks, C. A., Silvis, M. L., & Dhawan, A. (2017). Reliability,

validity, and injury predictive value of the functional movement screen: A

systematic review and meta-analysis. *The American Journal of Sports Medicine,*

45(3), 725–732. http://www.jgme.org/doi/pdf/10.4300/JGME-D-15-00566.1

Boudah, D. J. (2019). *Conducting educational research: "Guide to completing a thesis,*

dissertation, or action research project." SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

Boyle, J. (2016, February 19). Leader in Me motivational program set for major

expansion. *Citizen-Times.* https://www.citizen-

times.com/story/news/local/2016/02/19/leader-me-motivational-program-set-

major-expansion/79898046/

Brooks, J. (2016, May 17). City school board hears objections to "The Leader in Me"

    school curriculum. *Nelson County Gazette.*

    http://nelsoncountygazette.com/?p=28867

Bryant, B. (2017). *The experience of educators applying the leader in me initiative to*

    their classrooms (Publication No. 10257607) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest.

Buenger, V. (2020). *Managing projects: Steven Covey: Paradigms and the 7 habits*

    [Handout]. Texas A&M University.

Burchard, B. (2017). *High-performance habits*. Hay House.

Campbellsville University. (2019, July 25). Building student leadership in the classroom.

    https://online.campbellsville.edu/education/student-leadership-in-the-classroom/

Caprino, K. (2020, May 19). The seven habits of highly effective people: How we can

    apply them today. *Forbes.*

    https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2020/05/19/the-7-habits-of-highly-

    effective-people-how-we-can-apply-them-today/?sh=37faec5454ba

Carter, D. (2017). *The abundance mentality: Conquering scarcity to find the key to your*

    dreams [Kindle edition]. https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B06WP4G9F6

Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic habits*. Penguin Random House.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2021). The Leader in Me.

    https://pg.casel.org/leader-in-me/

Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives. (2021). Qualitative coding.

    CESSDA Training. https://www.cessda.eu/Training/Training-

    Resources/Library/Data-Management-Expert-Guide/3.-Process/Qualitative-

    coding

Covey, S. R. (2004). *The seven habits of highly effective people.* (Revised ed.) Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Covey, S. R. (2005). *The 8th habit*. Free Press.

Covey, S. R. (2020). *The seven habits of highly effective people.* (30th Anniversary ed.) Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Covey, S. R., Covey, S., Summers, M., & Hatch, D. (2012). *The Leader in Me*. (1st ed.) Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Covey, S. R., Covey, S., Summers, M., & Hatch, D. (2014). *The Leader in Me*. (2nd ed.) Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Coyle, D. (2018). *The culture code.* Random House books.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.) Pearson.

Creswell J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design.* SAGE Publications.

Crossman, A. (2020). Understanding purposive sampling. https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727

Davis, W. (2018, July 23). The levels of listening. *England Logistics.* https://www.englandlogistics.com/the-levels-of-listening

Delve. (2021, April 3). How to do open, axial, and selective coding in grounded theory. https://delvetool.com/blog/openaxialselective

DeWitt, P. (2018). *School climate.* SAGE Publications.

DeWitt, P. (2019, December 15). 12 issues facing education in 2020. *Education Week.* https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-12-critical-issues-facing-education-in-2020/2019/12

El-Attrache, S. (2018). *The Leader in Me? Understanding student and teacher perspectives of Leader in Me* [Master's thesis, Abilene Christian University]. https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/metl/9

Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N., & Hyun, H. (2019). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Franklin Covey Education. (n.d.). Introduction to the measurable results assessment. https://sites.google.com/franklincovey.com/districtmembership/resources/mra

Franklin Covey Education. (2012). *Field guide: Creating culture*. Franklin Covey Co.

Franklin Covey Education. (2016). *Field guide: Launching leadership*. Franklin Covey Co.

Franklin Covey Education. (2021). Leader in Me. https://www.leaderinme.org/what-is-leader-in-me-form/

Glen, S. (2021). Central tendency (measures of location): Definition and examples. *Statistics How To.* https://www.statisticshowto.com/central-tendency-2/

Gordon, J. (2018). *The power of a positive team*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired.* ASCD.

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2017). *School culture recharged*. ASCD.

Hardy, D. (2020). *The compound effect.* Hachette Book Group.

Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2015). Validity and reliability in quantitative studies. *Evidence-Based Nursing.* https://ebn.bmj.com/content/18/3/66

Henson, N. (2020). *Perceptual differences between lighthouse team members and non-lighthouse members regarding school attendance, classroom discipline, and*

school climate in Leader in Me schools [Doctoral Dissertation, Lindenwood University]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2446975423?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

Ho, G. W. (2017). Examining perceptions and attitudes: A review of Likert-type scales versus Q-methodology. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 39*(5), 674–689

Homer, M. (2016). The future of quantitative educational research methods – Bigger, better, and perhaps, Bayesian? In *Hilary place papers* (3rd ed.). University of Leeds. http://hpp.education.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/2016/02/HPP2016-3-Homere.pdg

Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2020). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (7th ed.). SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

Kaiser, G., & Presmeg, N. (2019). *Compendium for early career researchers in mathematics*. Open Access.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2017). *The leadership challenge.* John Wiley & Sons.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2018). *The student leadership challenge.* A Wiley Brand.

Lavrakas, P. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. SAGE Publications.

Leader in Me. (2018, September 18). *Why Leader in Me works* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_sLqmOCg4U

Leader in Me. (2021). What is Leader in Me? https://www.leaderinme.org/blog/what-is-leader-in-me

Leader in Me Concerns. (2016). The Leader in Me: Too good to be true? https://leaderinmeconcerns.wordpress.com/how-much-it-costs

McKay, B., & McKay, K. (2020, September 11). The 7 habits: Sharpening the saw. *Art of Manliness.* https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/habits/the-7-habits-sharpen-the-saw/

McKay, B., & McKay, K. (2021, September 25). The 7 habits: Synergy (beyond the eye-rolling buzzword). *Art of Manliness.* https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/habits/the-7-habits-synergize-beyond-the-eye-rolling-buzzword/

Miller, C. A. (2016). *The effect of the Leader in Me, a school-wide positive behavior intervention system (SW-PBIS), based on student achievement and office discipline referrals for fifth grade students in a rural elementary school in north central Washington state* [Master's thesis, Heritage University]. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565636.pdf

Mintz, S. (2019, March 12). Covey's 7 habits of highly effective people: An ethics perspective. *Ethics Sage.* https://www.ethicssage.com/2019/03/coveys-7-habits-of-highly-effective-people-an-ethics-perspective.html

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). Missouri comprehensive data system. https://apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS/home.aspx?categoryid=1&view=2

Mister Smart. (2019, January 27). *Synergize! However, what is synergy*? [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqcU_Kb-K1c

Mohler, B. (2020, November 6). Two education leaders share insights on creating change. *Leader in Me.* https://www.leaderinme.org/blog/two-education-leaders-share-insights-on-creating-change/

Nandagopal, N. (2020, September 20). The 8th habit by Stephen R. Covey: A review. *Almost Practical.* https://almostpractical.com/the-8th-habit-stephen-r-covey-review/

Newell, L. G. (2017). *The influence of the Leader in Me program within a middle school in Virginia* [Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Tech]. https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/85568

Nica, I. (2016, June 22). How to adopt the "7 habits of highly effective people" to boost productivity. *Hubgets.* https://www.hubgets.com/blogg/habits-boost-productivity-work/

Nones, P. (2017, February 17). Getting a handle on survey response rates. *Nones Notes.* https://nonesnotes.com/2017/02/15/getting-a-handle-on-survey-response-rates/

Office of Institutional Review Board. (2018). *Guidance for risks in social, behavioral, and educational research.* Lindenwood University.

Raleigh, D. R. (2017). *The adoption of the "Leader in Me" and school culture: A grid and group case study* [Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University]. https://hareok.org/handle/11244/299542

Redolive. (2018, August 22). How do schools measure the success of the Leader in Me process? *Leader in Me.* https://www.leaderinme.org/faq/how-do-schools-measure-the-success-of-the-leader-in-me-process/

Reizen, J. (2019, November 17). The four disciplines of execution: Summary. https://medium.com/swlh/the-four-disciplines-of-execution-295d6c2ec102

Rezat, S., & Vollstedt, M. (2019). *An introduction to grounded theory with a special focus on axial coding and the coding paradigm.* Springer. https://link.springfer.com/chapter/10.1007

Ropos, K. (2019, October 15). The eighth habit by Stephen R. Covey. *Association for Career & Technical Education.* https://www.acteonline.org/the-eighth-habit-by-stephen-r-covey/

Rybak, M. (2020, December 3). Sharpen the saw. *Exude.* https://www.exudeinc.com/blog/sharpen-your-saw/

Samuels, E. (2016, June 30). How to cultivate your school's character and culture. *ExpandED Schools.* https://www.expandedschools.org/blog/how-cultivate-your-schools-character-culture

Schmitz, T. (2016, October 2). Empathy – empathetic listening. *Conover.* http://www.conovercompany.com/empathy-empathetic-listening

Schwantes, M. (2016, July 26). Science says 92 percent of people don't achieve their goals. www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/science

Shafer, L. (2018). What makes a good school culture? *Usable Knowledge.* https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/07/what-makes-good-school-culture

Sherry, M. (2016, May 12). Blue Springs is the latest battleground for education program. *Flatland KC.* https://www.flatlandkc.org/news-issues/character-flaw/

Sincero, J. (2020). *Badass habits: Cultivate the awareness, boundaries, and daily upgrades you need to make them stick.* Penguin Random House.

Soutter, M. (2018). *The role of The Leader in Me in the social and emotional learning and youth voice development of elementary students* [Doctoral dissertation, Boston University]. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED587056

Stein, A. (2019). *Raise your game.* Hachette Book Group.

Stipe, S. (2017). *Frequently asked questions about the Leader in Me.* Henderson County Education Foundation. https://hcefnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/HC-Leader-in-Me-FAQ.pdf

Tidd, C. (2016). *Staff perceptions of the effect of the Leader in Me on student motivation and peer relationships in elementary school* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University].

https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu.cgi.viewcotent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.coom//&httpsredir+1&article+4648&context=dissertations

Tuccinardi, J. (2018). *Administrators and character education: The Leader in Me.* [Master's thesis, California State University San Marcos]. http://hdl.handle.net/10211.3/202886

Walter, D. (2020). *The power of discipline: How to use self-control and mental toughness to achieve your goals.* Daniel Walter.

West, T. (2019, June 2). Habit 3: A family exercise in putting first things first. *Leader in Me.* https://www.leaderinme.org/blog/habit-3-a-family-exercise-in-putting-first-things-first/

White, K. (2021). *A case study on the implementation process of the Leader in Me* [Doctoral Dissertation, St. John's University]. https://scholar.stjohns.edu/theses_dissertations

Wise Labs. (2019a). Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

https://weekplan.net/habit-5

Wise Labs. (2019b). Habit 6 of highly effective people: Synergize.

https://weekplan.net/habit-6

Wise Labs. (2020). Habit 8: From effectiveness to greatness. https://weekplan.net/8th-

habit

Wright, J. L. (2019). *Examining the influence of the Leader in Me on school grades*

[Doctoral dissertation, University of North Florida].

https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1945&context=etd

Xiong, P. V. (2017). *Perceptions from school principals about the role of schools in*

developing student leadership (Doctoral dissertation, Hamline University).

https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/4332

Appendix A

Teacher and Counselor Survey

Use this sentence stem to respond to each statement:

As a result of being in a Leader in Me school…

1. I feel safe at (Name of School).

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. My ideas are valued by my peers and principal(s).

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The school is safe and provides a welcome environment.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I am treated with respect by students, staff, and principal(s).

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I look forward to coming to work each day

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. My opinions are valued and respected.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I empower student learning through high expectations for my students.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. I know and use the seven habits in my daily life.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I am empowered to be a leader at my school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. The Leader in Me has had a positive effect on me personally and professionally.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. The Leader in Me has helped our school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I pause and respond based on principles and desired results.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I have created and live by a Personal Mission Statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. The common language of the Leader in Me has benefited our staff and students.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. There have been challenges associated with the implementation of the Leader in Me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appendix B

Principal Interview

1. What impact has the Leader in Me process had on your school's culture and climate?

2. What impact has the Leader in Me process had on you personally and professionally?

3. What impact has the Leader in Me process had on your staff? Students?

4. How are the Seven Habits utilized in your school?

5. Is shared or collaborative leadership present in your building? What does this look like within your building?

6. How has the Leader in Me process impacted your parents? Community?

7. What challenges have you faced as a result of the implementation of the Leader in Me in your building?

8. How has the common language with the Leader in Me impacted your school?

Appendix C

IRB Approval

May 10, 2021 4:52:17 PM CDT

RE: IRB-21-164: Initial - The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership

Dear Amber Sainz,

The study, The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership, has been **Approved as Exempt**.

Category: Category 1. Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

The submission was approved on May 10, 2021.

Here are the findings:
IRB Discussion
The PI is reminded that compliance with the recruitment policies at an external site resides with the PI.

Should the policies of an external site require authorization from that site's IRB or another office, the PI must obtain this authorization and upload it as a modification to their approved LU IRB application prior to recruiting subjects at that site.

Regulatory Determinations
This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Sincerely,

Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review Board

Appendix D

Superintendent Permission for Research

Date:

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study
as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is entitled *The Leader in Me and
Its Effect on School Culture and Leadership*. The purpose of this study is to gather data to
determine the impact of the Leader in Me and its effects on the culture and leadership of
a building after the implementation process. Your participation may help to increase the
knowledge base around the Leader in Me and may benefit other educators in the future.

Elementary teachers and counselors in grades K–5 will be asked to complete a survey. I
understand everyone's time is valuable, and I have designed the survey to ensure it
should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. The elementary principal(s) will be
asked to schedule an interview. The interview will consist of eight questions.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. The names of the participants and the
school will remain confidential.

If you are willing to have your elementary teachers, counselors, and principal(s)
participate in the study, please let me know via email by April 30, 2021.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact Amber Sainz at 417-294-5504
or ajs278@lindenwood.edu**.** Upon request, I will be happy to email a summary of
this research study.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Amber J. Sainz

Appendix E

Principal Letter of Introduction

Date:

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student from Lindenwood University, and I am conducting
a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. Your superintendent has
given permission for me to conduct my study entitled *The Leader in Me and Its Effect on
School Culture and Leadership* at the elementary school. The purpose of this study is to
gather data to determine the impact of the Leader in Me and its effect on the culture and
leadership of a building after the implementation process. Your participation may help to
increase the knowledge base around the Leader in Me and might benefit other educators
in the future.

My study includes a brief survey for teachers and counselors in grades K–5 at your
elementary school. I understand everyone's time is valuable, and I have designed the
teacher and counselor survey to ensure it should take no longer than 10 minutes to
complete. I have included the consent form and a link to the survey for the teachers and
counselors. If you would be willing to forward these to the appropriate person to move
forward, it would be appreciated.

If you are willing to participate in an eight-question interview (via video chat or phone),
please let me know, and we can schedule a date and time convenient for you. The consent
form and a copy of the questions for the principal interview are included in this email.

Should you have questions regarding this study, please contact Amber Sainz at 417-294-
5504 or ajs278@lindenwood.edu**.** Upon request, I will be happy to email a summary of
this research study.

Thank you very much for the consideration.

Sincerely,
Ms. Amber J. Sainz

Appendix F

LINDENWOOD

Research Study Consent Form

Teachers and Counselors: Survey

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Amber Sainz under the guidance of Dr. Sherry DeVore at Lindenwood University. We are conducting this study to gather data to determine the impact of the Leader in Me and its effects on the culture and climate of a building after the implementation of the Leader in Me process. We will be asking about 50 other people to respond to the statements. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

There are no risks from participating in this project. We will not collect any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Amber Sainz ajs278@lindenwood.edu
Dr. Sherry DeVore sdevore@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window. Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

<link to survey>

Appendix G

LINDENWOOD

Research Study Consent Form

Principal: Interview

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are conducting this study to gather data to determine the impact of the Leader in Me and its effects on the culture and climate of a building after implementation of the Leader in Me process. During this study, you will complete an eight-question interview via phone or video chat. It will take about 30 minutes to complete this interview.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. We will not collect any data which may identify you.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data include members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Amber Sainz ajs278@lindenwood.edu
Dr. Sherry DeVore sdevore@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu

Vita

Amber J. Sainz completed her undergraduate studies at Missouri State University in 2000. She furthered her education by receiving a Master of Science in Education in Reading in 2003 and a Master's of Science in Educational Administration in 2014 both from Missouri State University.

Amber began her teaching career in public education in as a second-grade classroom teacher at Willard School District in 2000. Following her five-year tenure at Willard, she took a Title I Reading position with the Republic School District. During her tenure at Republic she was a Title I Reading teacher, classroom teacher, and a Literacy Coach. Following 10 years with Republic, she took her first administrative job in 2015 as a principal at Hollister Elementary School in the Hollister District. After two years she returned back to Republic, where she spent three years as a principal before pursuing her dream role as a principal in South Carolina where she currently resides.