

An Evaluation of the “Leader in Me” Program Implementation in a Central Georgia  
Elementary School

A dissertation submitted  
to the Graduate School  
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology  
of the College of Education and Human Services

August 3, 2019

Patricia Bolden

M.Ed., Columbus State University, 2003

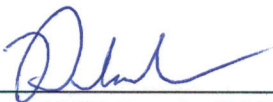
B.S., Berry College, 1997

©Copyright 2019 by Patricia Bolden

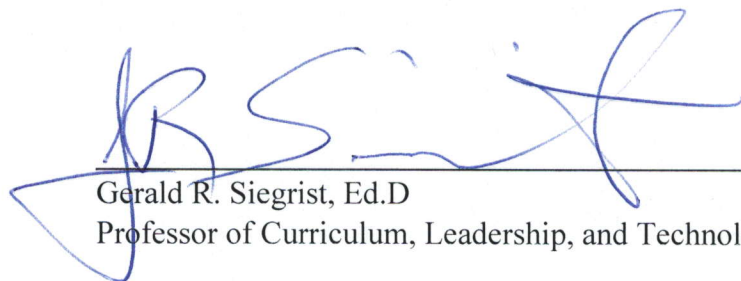
All Rights Reserved

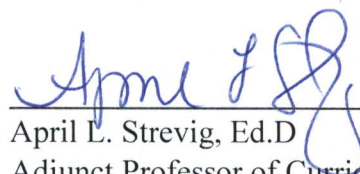
This dissertation, "An Evaluation of the 'Leader in Me' Program Implementation in a Central Georgia Elementary School," by Patricia Gail Bolden, is approved by:

**Dissertation  
Committee  
Chair**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Donald W. Leech, Ed.D  
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

**Committee  
Member**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerald R. Siegrist, Ed.D  
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
April L. Strevig, Ed.D  
Adjunct Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

**Associate Provost  
For Graduate  
Studies and  
Research**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Becky K. da Cruz, PH.D., J.D.  
Professor of Criminal Justice

**Defense Date**

27 June, 2019

### FAIR USE

This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

### DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature *Jamila Bolden*

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this program evaluation was to investigate the effects of implementing Covey's "Leader in Me" program on student achievement and student discipline in a Title 1 school in central Georgia. Gains have been posted in schools showing reduced student discipline issues and increased student motivation, as well as increased student academic achievement (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011). However, no studies had taken place on schools in Georgia. This researcher tested the claim on student achievement by studying the effects of implementing the "Leader in Me" program in a Title I school in central Georgia using results from the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), as well as the perceived impact on student achievement and behavior by analyzing the results of a school faculty survey, parent interviews, and the average number of discipline referrals by teacher each year. School data from the Georgia reading CRCT showed an initial spike in test scores, but a decline in percent passing by the time the program was completely implemented as defined by the school achieving "Lighthouse" status. This aligns with the staff survey and parent interview results. The average number of discipline referrals by teacher did not adhere to the same pattern. There was an initial increase in referrals from the baseline year to the first year of "Leader in Me" implementation. Referrals then dropped drastically, data that is further supported by both staff surveys and parent interviews. The study findings suggest an unfavorable impact on academics and a positive impact on student behavior, findings that are not aligned to other studies as the "Leader in Me" program has been implemented throughout the world. Possible reasons for this study to not align with other findings are discussed in the final chapter.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Theoretical Framework .....	3
Statement of the Problem .....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Evaluation Questions.....	7
Procedures .....	7
Limitations .....	8
Definition of Key Terms .....	9
Significance of the Study .....	11
Organization of the Study .....	12
Chapter II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	13
School Accountability .....	13
Character Education – A Theological Overview .....	16
Character Education – Programs and Results .....	17
Classroom Management/Student Discipline – A Theological Overview .....	21
Classroom Management/Student Discipline – Programs and Results .....	22
The Leader in Me – History and Overview.....	22
The Leader in Me – Seven Habits .....	25
The Leader in Me – Academic Results .....	27
The Leader in Me – Behavior Results.....	29
The Leader in Me – School Culture/Climate Results .....	31
The Leader in Me – Lighthouse Status .....	33
Chapter III: METHODOLOGY.....	36
Design of the Study .....	37
Limitations of the Study .....	27
Ethical Considerations.....	38
Participants and Setting.....	38
Sample .....	38
Instrumentation validity, reliability.....	39
Procedures .....	40
Data Collection.....	40

Descriptive Analysis .....	41
Summary .....	42
Chapter IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	43
Data Analysis and Findings.....	43
Chapter V: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION .....	59
Overview of the Study.....	59
Related Literature .....	60
Methods.....	63
Participants .....	63
Procedures and Data Analysis.....	64
Limitations .....	64
Summary of Findings .....	64
Discussion .....	66
Recommendations for Further Research .....	72
REFERENCES .....	75
Appendix A: IRB for Valdosta State University .....	83
Appendix B: Houston County Permission to do Research 1 .....	85
Appendix C: Houston County Permission to do Research 2 .....	87
Appendix D: Staff Survey.....	89
Appendix E: Parent Interview Questions.....	94
Appendix F: Staff Survey Results .....	96
Appendix G: Parent Interview 1 .....	103
Appendix H: Parent Interview 2 .....	107
Appendix I: Parent Interview 3.....	111

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Percent of grade three through five students at the study school passing the Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test by year.....	44
Table 2: Percent of students passing Reading on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test by year and grade level .....	46
Table 3: Participant Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test Mean Score by year.....	47
Table 4: Participant Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test Mean Score Increase or Decrease by year .....	48
Table 5: Faculty survey responses to the question, “As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at your school, to what extent do you feel about yourself?” .....	50
Table 6: Faculty survey responses to the question, “As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at your school, to what extent have you observed the following regarding parents?” .....	51
Table 7: Faculty survey responses to the statement, “Following implementation of the “Leader in Me” at your school,” .....	52
Table 8: Average number of discipline referrals per teacher by year.....	55



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my committee for their continued support and encouragement: Dr. Donald Leech, my committee chair; Dr. Gerald Siegrist; and especially Dr. April Strevig. I truly appreciate the learning opportunities provided throughout this process.

My completion of this project could not have happened without the support of my parents and the rest of my family. Your encouragement and advice are the reason I am who I am. I love you all!

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

With the implementation of *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and *Georgia's Single Statewide Accountability System*, educators were looking for ways to improve student achievement in their schools, providing determinations of accountability that supported continuous improvement in reducing achievement gaps and boosting student achievement (Reichrath & Cox, 2006). Within this system, the percentage of students meeting standards must continue to increase, and the expectation is that all children can and will be able to meet or exceed established levels in reading and math within the specified time. In 2010 only 77.4% of Georgia schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward meeting the goal (Tucker Elementary 2009-2010 Report Card).

According to Bear and Duquette (2008), another focus of education dealt with creating and maintaining a learning environment that was both safe and orderly by correcting student misbehavior. The authors highlighted the need to teach self-discipline to students, stating that developing this trait in students encourages the ability to discriminate between right and wrong, teaches personal responsibility, strengthens cooperative behaviors, and promotes empathy for others (Bear & Duquette, 2008).

Covey (1989), in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, stated that real change begins in the inside rather than on the outside. With school students and staff members learning and applying these seven habits, individuals in each group were

expected to set personal goals, behave more responsibly, and work more cooperatively with others. Utilizing each of these habits affected life skills as well as academic success, and schools could hope to see increases in student assessment scores (Covey, 1989).

According to Hatch (2011), Covey's "Leader in Me" process consisted of three steps. The first step involved FranklinCovey training in Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* for all school staff in every grade and position in the school. In the next step, the staff members took the principles and made them ubiquitous, embedding them within the instruction and environment of the school while staff and students were given new leadership opportunities and responsibilities. The final step spread the focus to families and communities as students and staff took their learning to their homes (Hatch, 2011).

The study school implemented Covey's "Leader in Me" program in the fall of 2009 with all staff being trained in either October or December. The school then established a plan to integrate the language and principles of the program into the classrooms and around the school, from students giving personal anecdotes on using the habits over the intercom to academic lessons inferring how characters and historical figures used the principles in their lives. A FranklinCovey consultant worked with the staff for additional days in the spring and fall of 2010, then also met with a "Lighthouse" team of school teachers and administrators in fall 2010 to help build an action plan to guide the school through full implementation. In January of 2012, the school was named a "Lighthouse" school by FranklinCovey. This happened when a team came in to assess the school's implementation of the "Leader in Me" program in nine different areas and found the program fully implemented (lighthouse team, leadership environment,

integrated instruction and curriculum, staff collaboration, student leadership, parent involvement, goal tracking, measurable results, and leadership events). The study school was the first school in Georgia to receive this recognition and was the twenty-first school in the world. (Grant, 2012).

### *Theoretical Framework*

Birrell, Ostlund, Egan, Young, Cook, DeWitt, & Tibbitts, C. B. (1998) maintained that the application of the seven habits can enable an organization to embed learning in daily operations. Bear and Duquette (2008) stated that “by fostering self-discipline, educators develop students who understand and appreciate the difference between right and wrong, assume responsibility for their actions, recognizing the importance of cooperative relationships, and show genuine care and interest in others” (para. 4, page 1). Through the implementation of Covey’s “Leader in Me” program, a program incorporating Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in schools, students learn those seven habits as a means of changing the way they live and respond (Covey, 2008).

According to Covey (2008), the first three habits, “be proactive,” “begin with the end in mind,” and “put first things first,” were habits that a person works on by themselves. He stated that the next three, “think win-win,” “seek first to understand, then to be understood,” and “synergize” were habits that deal with collaboration and cooperation – habits that a person used when working with others. The seventh habit, “sharpen the saw,” encompassed the other six to remind the individual that “balance is best” (Covey, 2008, 46-47).

Hatch and Collinwood (2011) linked implementing Covey’s “Leader in Me” program in schools to increased academic achievement and decreased discipline rates.

According to the authors, the “Leader in Me” was a process by which students were taught leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills, including setting goals, time management, working in teams, problem solving, respecting diversity, and balancing life. They went on to say that the program, based on Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, started at North Carolina’s A.B. Combs Elementary School in 1999 and has spread to over 450 schools across the world. Among the results cited were increased student self-confidence, a decline in discipline problems, increased student achievement, increased staff and student satisfaction, and greater teacher development. Specifically detailed by Hatch and Collinwood, end-of grade test scores for A.B. Combs Elementary, located in Raleigh, North Carolina, increased from 84% to 87% when they partially implemented the program (pilot classrooms) and rose to 94% the following year when the entire school implemented the “Leader in Me” principles. Hatch and Collinwood (2011) also said that English Estates Elementary, located in Fern Park, Florida, posted increases as high as 35% in their first year of implementation while meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the first time in years. The authors detailed information about a third school, Dewey Elementary located in Quincy, Illinois, that previously had an eight-year average of 64.5% passing rate on the reading and 79.3% on the math section of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). They showed that after the first year of implementing the “Leader in Me” principles, the school achieved at 89% in reading and 98% in math (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011).

The basis of Covey’s “Leader in Me” program is Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey coined the phrases he used as “habits” and taught them at the university level before publishing a book about them in 1989 (Hatch, 2011).

Hatch goes on to state that Covey came up with the habits through a study of “success” literature spanning 200 years. For the first several years, the focus was on adults using the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, even when the habits were taken into education. Muriel Summers, principal of A. B. Combs Elementary School in North Carolina, spoke with Covey in 1999 about using the habits at an elementary school level and this conversation began the work of the “Leader in Me” (Covey, 2008).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

During the 2008-2009 school year, the study school served students in grades second through fifth. Although the school met adequate yearly progress as measured by CRCT scores, 9.1% of the students did not meet the standard in reading and 18.3% did not meet the standard in math (AYP 2009). In addition, there was an average of four and a half discipline referrals per teacher (school data).

Covey (2010) maintained that living in an ever-changing and complex world compounded by economic unpredictability, parents know that even though reading, writing, and arithmetic are necessary, they are not enough to adequately prepare our children. He also worried that the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* might create a focus on creating students who are better test takers and said that “partnerships between schools and parents in educating the whole child, which includes developing both the character strength and the competencies required to really succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” is needed to solve the issue (Covey, 2010, para.4, page 1). McCaw (2007) also stated that schools’ concentration on reading, math, and science scores could put current learners at an increased risk. She went on to say that our nation must focus on educating the whole child and suggested Covey as an individual encouraging the development of such.

According to Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future*,

We tend to have this garage repair mentality of education—we fix what’s wrong with kids. The truth is people are happier and perform better when they are building on their strengths. Obviously we need to make sure that children are literate and numerate, but beyond that base of fundamental skills we must believe it is important for children to discover their own strengths. (McCaw, 2007, para. 10)

Covey (2008) maintained that when students do not feel either socially or emotionally connected in school or life, success in school is less likely and deviant behavior is more likely. Covey’s “Leader in Me” is a program that addresses these needs.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this program evaluation is to investigate the effects of implementing Covey’s “Leader in Me” program on student achievement and student discipline in a Title 1 school in central Georgia. Gains have been posted in schools showing reduced student discipline issues and increased student motivation, as well as increased student academic achievement (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011). However, no studies have taken place on schools in Georgia. This researcher plans to test the claim on student achievement by studying the effects of implementing the “Leader in Me” program in a Title I school in central Georgia using results from the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), as well as the perceived impact on student achievement and behavior by analyzing the results of a school faculty survey, parent interviews, and the average number of discipline referrals by teacher each year.

### *Evaluation Questions*

1. What is the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student academics as documented through stakeholder perceptions and Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) reading scores?
2. What is the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student behavior as documented through stakeholder perceptions and school discipline referrals?

### *Procedures*

A program evaluation design will be utilized for this study. Program evaluation can be used to ensure that what is being done matches what is intended, as well as verifying results of the program being implemented (basic guide). The certified staff at the study school who were staff throughout the full implementation process from pre “Leader in Me” implementation to the school being awarded “Lighthouse” status will be asked to complete an anonymous survey about their perceptions on the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student academics and student behavior. Parents who attended more than one session on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* offered by school staff will be invited to participate in an interview session. Information from both the survey and the interviews will be analyzed to identify perceptions on the “Leader in Me” program implementation at this school.

In addition, archival data of the Georgia CRCT reading section will be examined to determine the effects of the implementation of the “Leader in Me” program on student test scores. Data will be disaggregated to remove students who were not continuously enrolled at the school over the course of the study and the three years of implementation.



Baseline study students' CRCT data for the 2008-2009 academic year will be reported showing a baseline of the percent of students not meeting the standard on the reading Georgia CRCT. CRCT reading data from the three years after initial implementation of the "Leader in Me" program in the school (the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 academic years) will then be reviewed for continuously enrolled students and analysis will be performed. To analyze the effects of the "Leader in Me" program implementation on behavior, the researcher will analyze school discipline data in the average number of office referrals by teacher on each of the years in the study. Scores by individual teacher over the study years are not available.

### *Limitations*

As there are academic initiatives and factors occurring during an academic year, effects of the "Leader in Me" program in exclusion of other practices and strategies used by teachers cannot be analyzed. The use of the Georgia CRCT data ensures a valid and reliable test measure.

A second limitation for the study involves the sample. Although the "Leader in Me" program is being implemented in schools worldwide, very few schools in Georgia are at the full implementation stage in this process. For this reason, the study is limited to the students at the study school in central Georgia. CRCT data from three consecutive years is required and the study school is a grade two through five school, therefore only one grade of students who attended the school during the partial and full implementation years met the delimitations of the study. Parent "Leader in Me" classes were offered annually for four years, however many parents either did not choose to attend or chose to attend only one session. The researcher chose to interview parents who attended at least

two classes throughout the years the children attended the study school, a very limited pool. There was also a large staff turnover at the study school after the school achieved “Lighthouse” status, first from a zoning change within the district, then from staff choosing to leave for various other reasons. The staff survey was given when there was still many staff in place who worked at the school from pre-implementation to full implementation and “Lighthouse” status, however the turnover just after completion of that data collection limited the ability for follow-up and the ability to get additional data.

A third limitation of the study is researcher bias. This study is being done at the elementary school in which the researcher worked as an administrator for eleven years. She was a part of the implementation of the “Leader in Me” program and participated in school-wide decisions about the program.

A final limitation to the study is the length of time that passed between the time when the parent interviews occurred and the time the interviewees’ children attended the study school. Fifth grade students who left the school in May of 2012 were in ninth grade when the parent interviews were held.

#### *Definition of Key Terms*

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* – part of the accountability profile, AYP is based on a set of performance goals that must be achieved by every school, Local Educational Agency (LEA), and state within the stated timeline to meet the proficiency goal of 100% established by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (Reichrath & Cox, 2006).

*Be Proactive (Habit 1)* – defined as being responsible, taking initiative, and choosing one’s own actions, attitudes, and moods (Covey, 2008). A proactive person takes the blame for wrong actions rather than blaming others.

*Begin with the End in Mind (Habit 2)* – defined as planning ahead, setting goals, and contributing to the mission and vision of the school and classroom (Covey, 2008).

*Discipline Referrals* – the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a referral as “the act of sending someone to another person or place for treatment, help, advice, etc.” and discipline as “behavior that is judged by how well it follows a set of rules or orders” (Merriam-webster). A discipline referral is written when a student breaks school rules and the teacher refers the student to the office for an administrator to determine a consequence and/or plan of support for the misbehavior.

*Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)* – a test given to Georgia students in grades three through eight to measure student skill and knowledge acquisition of grade level Georgia Performance Standards (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Scores are used both as an individual measure of student success, as well as a gauge for school, system, and state quality education.

*Lighthouse Status* – a recognition earned by *Leader in Me* schools who have implemented the *Leader in Me* program with fidelity according to standards set by FranklinCovey (FranklinCovey, 2016a).

*No Child Left Behind Act* – reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The *No Child Left Behind Act* was created with the purpose of improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps between subgroups (Reichrath & Cox, 2006). In response to this act, states are required to develop academic standards,

ensure that all students meet proficiency at these standards by the year 2014, and create/implement an accountability system within the state.

*Put First Things First (Habit 3)* – defined as allocating time to the most important things and setting priorities (Covey, 2008).

*Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood (Habit 5)* – defined as listening to the ideas and thoughts of others without interrupting, trying to see things from their viewpoint (Covey, 2008).

*Sharpen the Saw (Habit 7)* – defined as caring for oneself by getting proper food, rest, and exercise (Covey, 2008). Also included is taking advantage of many ways and places to learn, as well as spending time helping others.

*Synergize (Habit 6)* – defined as valuing and learning from others and working well in a group situation (Covey, 2008).

*Think Win Win (Habit 4)* – defined as considering others’ feelings in addition to what the person wants (Covey, 2008). This also includes making “deposits in others’ Emotional Bank Accounts” (Covey, 2008, 21).

### *Significance of the Study*

According to Hatch and Collinwood (2011), the “Leader in Me” program is a process by which students are taught leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills, including setting goals, time management, working in teams, problem solving, respecting diversity, and balancing life. Gains have been posted in schools who implemented this program, showing reduced student discipline issues, increased student motivation, and increased student academic achievement. However, no studies have taken place on schools in Georgia. This researcher tested the claims by studying the effects of implementing the

“Leader in Me” program in a Title I school in central Georgia, studying the effects on the Georgia CRCT and the average number of discipline referrals by teacher, as well as perceptions of school staff members and parents. This study can be used to evaluate the claims of this program and can be used when the study school is making decisions on continuation of the program.

### *Organization of the Study*

The following chapter provides a literature review in the areas of school accountability, social and emotional learning programs, character education, and the “Leader in Me” program. Chapter 3 will explicate on the methodology of the study, including study population, variables, sampling plan, validity and reliability, and plans for statistical analysis. Study findings will be detailed and summarized in chapter 4, along with a discussion of the data and conclusion of the study in chapter 5.

## Chapter II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The nation's public schools are under extreme pressure to show that every child is being thoroughly and efficiently educated, with test scores being used as proof to this level of education (Noddings, 2005). According to Blau (2010), by the year 2014 all students must meet state-set minimum requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, ensuring that each has achieved academic success at a standard level. In answer to meeting these increasing requirements, Hatch and Collinwood (2011) have linked the "Leader in Me" program with large academic gains when it is implemented in public schools. As an additional positive, the same source credits program implementation with decreases in discipline and negative behavior instances in schools, also a major focus in schools across the nation (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011).

This review will be comprised of literature on school accountability, character education, and classroom management/student discipline. It will end with information on the "Leader in Me" program and program implementation, showing how this program aligns itself to meeting school needs in the areas of accountability, character education, and classroom management/student discipline.

### *School Accountability*

Webley (2012) maintained that the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* was intended to improve United States education, exposing academic needs and gaps in

education (Webley, 2012). All states are now required to develop an accountability system including standards and standardized tests (Denaux, Stevenson, & Eichler, 2012). The act required states and schools to appoint high standards and assist all students in successfully meeting those standards by the year 2014 (Schraw, 2010). Aske, Connolly, and Corman (2012) emphasized that the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* was developed to meet the ideals of equity and efficiency in education.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* required states to classify schools based on their ability to make “adequate yearly progress,” or AYP (Dee & Jacob, 2010; Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011). AYP is calculated and reported separately on individual subgroups based on student disabilities, economic status, and language origin, looking specifically at the areas of attendance, reading proficiency, math proficiency, and test participation (Denaux, et al., 2012). The intended outcome of this legislation includes transforming lower-performing schools into schools that are successful at providing a high-quality education to all students (Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011). Dee and Jacob (2010) further explained that states must provide sanctions or rewards based on whether schools succeeded in making such progress. The authors maintained that these sanctions and rewards will ultimately improve school focus and productivity (Dee & Jacob, 2010). Webley (2012) reported consequences for not making sufficient progress towards meeting the ultimate standard or closing achievement gaps. These consequences are layered, from having to fund increased professional development for teachers and additional academic opportunities for students after two consecutive years of failure to possibly replacing staff, administrators, curriculum after five failing years, or ultimately a school being taken over or closing after six years of failing (Webley, 2012).

A step system has been set up in the state of Georgia that establishes bars of accountability that systematically increase as schools and systems are asked to ensure they are making gains toward the end result of 100% student success (Reichrath & Cox, 2006). According to *Mapping Georgia's Educational Progress 2008* (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b), data collected by the state of Georgia shows that 17.8% of the 2,489 schools in the state of Georgia did not meet adequate yearly progress in the 2006-2007 school year as compared with 30% of the 98,905 schools in the United States. This means that 34,359 school in the nation, 763 from the state of Georgia, did not meet AYP requirements for the year (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b).

Webley (2012) reported that 48% of schools in the United States failed to meet AYP in 2011. The author added teachers and administrators maintain the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* sets impossible standards and leads to a narrowed curriculum as teachers have to focus on what is being tested. Webley (2012) also maintained the large number of schools failing to meet the benchmarks has forced states to lower their standards. Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, conveyed concern over the testing focus in America, asserting such a focus has made teaching less satisfying and learning less enjoyable (McCaw, 2007).

Rubin (2005) defined "raising the bar" as "elevating what teachers expect of each student, what each student expects of him or herself and what accountability we attach to those expectations" (48). He went on to list the purpose of raising the bar as not only to elevate the students' performance, but to raise their expectations and capacity. Academic growth is an individualized process, as students have different strengths and weaknesses.



Teachers must assess, challenge, and build capacity in students to meet state and national standards (Rubin, 2005).

Leonard (2008), in a longitudinal study on learning goals, found students who set goals to improve specific competencies achieved competency better than students who did not set goals. If the “Leader in Me” program impacts student achievement, thereby also helping schools meet the improvement and academic goals set by states and the national government, the program meets a major need in schools and education today. The *Leader in Me Parent Perceptions Survey Report* had 73 percent of responding parents of students in a *Leader in Me* program report being highly satisfied with “the academic improvements made by their students” (Lighthouse Research and Development, Inc., 2015, pg. 6)

#### *Character Education – A Theological Overview*

Historically in the United States, schools were created for both academic and moral education (Noddings, 2005). The 1818 *Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia* by Thomas Edison included “morals, understanding of duties to neighbors and country, knowledge of rights, and intelligence and faithfulness in social relations” as components of primary education (Noddings, 2005, pg. 10). Pearson and Nicholson (2000) discussed the ideas of theorists Piaget, Kohlberg, Havighurst, and Loevinger. They stated all four focused on child development, and although their ideas were different each discussed a progression from a self-centered perspective to one centered more around others. Specifically, the authors discussed that Piaget’s move from egocentric to sociocentric, taking on others’ perspectives. They go on to share Kohlberg maintained a move from preconventional moral reasoning with punishments and rewards

to conventional moral reasoning and social conformity. Havighurst is credited with discussing a move towards developing a conscience and Loevinger's conformist stage promotes cooperation with others. The authors asserted the foundation laid by these theorists has paved the way for many character education programs. They also suggested character education programs should be designed with thought of the nature of the child (which level they are at) rather than designed to move students to the highest level (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000).

McCaw (2007) asserted leading thinkers in today's society are concerned the narrowed focus on reading, math, and science test scores may be putting the current generation at a disadvantage by not preparing them to be successful citizens. She also referenced Daniel Pink and his determination that a strengths-based system is needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, where he suggested making sure kids are literate and numerate then going beyond to help them discover their own strengths.

Scherer (2006), in an article covering an interview with Mel Levine, quoted Levine as saying one of the most critical things children can learn to prepare them for adulthood is identifying their strengths. Moran, Kornhaber, and Gardner (2006), in discussing multiple intelligence theory, suggested using a profile in order to identify the learner's specific needs, a compilation of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to Gardner's linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and existential intelligences.

#### *Character Education – Programs and Results*

Barna and Brott (2011) emphasized test scores, grades, and graduation rates are not good predictors of students' future success or emotional state. They did maintain

increasing evidence indicated a positive link between academic success and personal/social development, including development in emotional, social, and behavioral aspects (Barna & Brott, 2011). According to Brannon (2008), character education programs are linked to positive changes in student achievement, behavior, and test scores. She maintained when character education programs are implemented consistently, time on task and students' enjoyment of learning results (Brannon, 2008).

According to Pearson and Nicholson (2000), the education system has struggled for hundreds of years with how to encourage the development of character in children. The authors stated they can find no common definition for character education, however they also felt character traits can be grouped into three areas: how people relate to self (responsibility, discipline, courage, and self-respect), how they relate to others (including honesty, respect, kindness, and empathy), and how they relate to the community as a whole (including fairness, justice, and civic virtue). Durlak and Weissberg (2010) stated that schools are an integral part of raising "knowledgeable, happy, caring contributing children when they successfully foster pupils' cognitive, social, and emotional development" (pg. 4). The authors defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as a means to obtain the knowledge, attitude, and skills for emotion management, goal setting and achievement, having a caring and considerate attitude, retaining positive relationships, making informed decisions, and effectively dealing with interpersonal situations. In their three scientific reviews of studies of children or adolescents who received SEL, they found SEL programs can have a positive impact on both student behavior and academic performance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010). Stiff-Williams (2010) suggested character education should incorporate experiences that help develop decision

filters in students, filters that can be used to foster an ability to make sound judgments. The author also maintained successful adults are able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate, all cognitive processes. He stated successful adults are also able to receive, respond, value, resolve conflict, and apply a value system; all affective processes.

Catherine Gewertz (2008) affirmed business and educational leaders argue in favor of necessary skills relating to innovation, problem-solving, and collaboration, finding these as important as subjects like algebra or history in a technological, global society. She quoted the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills president Ken Kay as saying “Fifty years ago, the ticket up the economic ladder was content mastery of four or five subjects. Today, it’s the ability to think critically, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, use technology and be globally competent” (Gewertz, 2008, 22). McCaw (2007) maintained society loses with the nearsighted view that success is purely tests and measurements.

Iowa’s new state core curriculum now includes financial, health, and technology aspects, as well as training in integrity, initiative, leadership, and cooperative learning (Gewertz, 2008). According to Stiff-Williams (2010), in 2008 eighteen states already had mandated character education standards while eight more states had legislation encouraging character education. The author stated the federal government used grants to fund forty states teaching character education in schools.

Stiff-Williams (2010) maintained adding an emphasis on noncore subjects is likely to cause resistance as schools are pressured to meet state-mandated standards. She suggested a compilation of character education and instruction standards. Her five step process included identifying the values and character emphasis highlighting decision-

making, having teachers analyze state standards for teaching targets and areas for character education infusion, providing the training and time necessary for teachers to create units of study combining character education and core standards, supporting unit implementation, and finally promoting teacher use of assessments that allow for evaluation of character development as well as academics (Stiff-Williams, 2010).

Bear and Duquette (2008) suggested social studies and language arts are two areas where social and moral issues can easily be integrated, developing social and moral problem solving. Pearson and Nicholson (2000) maintained the ideal character education program design includes collaboration between administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents. They also stated the students should be taught through modeling rather than telling. (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). Leming (1997) detailed ten different character education programs, looking at program objectives, pedagogy, and research/results. One program he highlighted, *Character Education Curriculum* created by the Character Education Institute in 1996, focuses on twelve values to be taught. According to Leming (1997), these values included truthfulness, generosity, respect, and equality. He stated that the program includes components on responsibility and cooperative learning, as well as concepts such as table manners and taking turns. He further detailed teachers use discussions, role plays, and questioning to teach lessons within the units, and reported questionnaire data detailed in the article shows fewer problem behaviors with students. Another program detailed by Leming (1997) was *Community of Caring*. Details from Leming on this program targets decision-making skills and five common values, including respect and responsibility. Reported research indicated growth in students' grade point average and a reduction in disciplinary problems (Leming, 1997). In their

surveys of parent perceptions on the implementation of the “Leader in Me”, 78 percent responded with “highly satisfied” with how implementing the program encouraged students’ character building and development. Some of the specific character traits listed included building responsibility, thinking proactively, and respecting others (Lighthouse Research and Development, Inc., 2015).

Although there are many character education programs, they are varied and results on student behavior are not available on all of them. The “Leader in Me” program’s habit-centered approach meets many of the characteristics of character education programs in the values imbedded within the habits and the skills needed to succeed at each level (Covey, 2008).

#### *Classroom Management/Student Discipline – A Theological Overview*

Bear and Duquette (2008) listed a primary goal of public education as the development of self-discipline. A second goal was creating a safe and orderly learning environment. They purposed when one goal gains more attention than the other, the imbalance undermines the safety of schools. The authors stated fostering self-discipline enables educators to develop students who “understand and appreciate the difference between right and wrong, assume responsibility for their actions, recognize the importance of cooperative relationships, and show genuine care and interest in others” (Bear & Duquette, 2008, 10).

Parker, Nelson, and Burns (2010) suggested a classroom environment that is conducive to learning is a mandatory component for effective classroom instruction. They contended there is a relationship between behavioral engagement and academic outcomes, indicating decreased problem behaviors and increased academic engagement

are inverse operations. They proposed that interventions that allow children to regulate themselves are most effective because the students are able to generalize the ideas and apply them to situations beyond the initial setting (Parker et al., 2010).

#### *Classroom Management/Student Discipline – Programs and Results*

Hoffman, Hutchinson, and Reiss (2009) stated it is imperative for schools to provide a safe environment in order for students to achieve the academic, character, and emotional intelligence outcomes society wants accomplished. In a study involving students in first through fifth grades, Parker et al. (2010) found implementation of the *Smart Character Choices* program appeared to affect problem classroom behavior. The authors felt decreasing behavior problems is a reciprocal to increasing academic engagement in the classroom. They indicated programs which include student regulation of themselves might also positively affect problem classroom behavior (Parker et al., 2010). A classroom/school in which behavior problems are fewer allows for increased time and attention to academic pursuit and deeper character development.

#### *The Leader in Me – History and Overview*

Implementation of the “Leader in Me” program could be the answer to meeting schools’ needs in the areas of academic achievement and accountability, character education, and classroom management/discipline (Hatch, 2011). Covey (2008), in his book *The Leader in Me*, defined leadership as “communicating people’s worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves” (41). Muriel Summers, principal of A.B. Combs Elementary, attended a seminar on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and wanted to know why educators and business leaders waited to teach the concepts to individuals after they became adults rather than when they are children

and habits have not set (Covey & Hatch, n.d.). When A.B. Combs Elementary School set their mission statement, “To Develop Leaders One Child at a Time”, the intent was to make sure each child internalized the knowledge that their worth was more than a grade on a report card or a score on a paper or test (Covey, 2008, pg. 41). The “Leader in Me” program, founded by Stephen Covey, teaches students personal leadership skills as well as skills such as setting goals, time management, collaboration, problem solving, appreciating diversity, and balance (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011).

Hatch (2011) explained the program in detail. He stated there were three important steps to starting the process. According to Hatch, the first step was for all school staff to become trained in Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989). He went on to explain that the second step occurs when students learn about the habits as teachers and staff members incorporate the language and information in lessons, displays, leadership opportunities, and schoolwide systems. The third step was achieved when the students take what they have learned at school and use and share it in their homes and the community. Hatch (2011) explained three phases of the “Leader in Me” program implementation. He stated phase one involved establishing a leadership culture. He further explained during phase two, the tools of leadership are applied in the school. In phase three you maximize results. Hatch maintained individual schools determine the length of time they spend in each of the phases and each school sets up a Lighthouse team to lead the school through the process (Hatch, 2011).

Hatch (2011) also described six keys to successful implementation of the “Leader in Me” program. The first key was shared leadership with an emphasis on a principle-centered approach that is not principal-centered. All the staff members in the school need



to be a part of the process. The second key, a ubiquitous strategy, was important because Hatch stated implementing the program cannot be another thing for teachers to do, but is instead integrated into lessons, conversations, and systems. The third key Hatch described involved student leadership, giving students opportunities and responsibilities in and around the school. A supportive environment, the next key given inspires responsibility and innovation. His fifth key was parent and community involvement, essential because it provides opportunities and role models for the students. The last key Hatch gave is modeling/caring; school staff members teach the habits by using them personally, which enable staff and students to build strong relationships and trust in the classrooms and school (Hatch, 2011).

The “Leader in Me” program had its beginning in 1999 at A.B. Combs Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011). The *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) became the school value system where the teachers at the school were able to illustrate the seven habits when teaching the academic subjects (Kingsbury, 2008). Covey (2008) described this as a better way to do what was being done in his book *The Leader in Me*. A.B. Combs Elementary School went from being an academically low performing school to being recognized as the number 1 magnet school in the country (Kingsbury, 2008; Covey & Hatch, n.d.). Stephen Covey is quoted in Kingsbury’s (2008) article as stating “The program No Child Left Behind trains teachers to train students to take tests, so they get high scores. But they ignore the whole child. Childhood is social, so social skills need to be learned. And character skills. The 7 Habits does that” (para. 6, page 1). The principles that the “Leader in Me” program focuses on, according to Covey (2008), deal with helping

students take responsibility for their life and their learning, learn to work successfully with others, and do the right thing. One benefit of the program is the emphasis on developing a well-rounded student that is aware of their own strengths and talents (Covey, 2008). The “Leader in Me” program is a form of character education.

*The Leader in Me – Seven Habits*

Martin (2004) described a habit as knowing what to do and why you should do it and then wanting to do it. She also stated that habits determine a person’s behavior and shapes their character (Martin, 2004). Stephen Covey’s seven habits can be explained by the following excerpt from his 2008 book *The Leader in Me*:

Habit 1: Be Proactive

I am a responsible person. I take initiative. I choose my actions, attitudes, and moods. I do not blame others for my wrong actions. I do the right thing without being asked, even when no one is looking.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

I plan ahead and set goals. I do things that have meaning and make a difference. I am an important part of my classroom and contribute to my school’s mission and vision, and look for ways to be a good citizen.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

I spend my time on things that are most important. This means I say no to things I know I should not do. I set priorities, make a schedule, and follow my plan. I am disciplined and organized.

#### Habit 4: Think Win-Win

I balance courage for getting what I want with consideration for what others want. I make deposits in others' Emotional Bank Accounts. When conflicts arise, I look for third alternatives.

#### Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

I listen to other people's ideas and feelings. I try to see things from their viewpoints. I listen to others without interrupting. I am confident in voicing my ideas. I look people in the eyes when talking.

#### Habit 6: Synergize

I value other people's strengths and learn from them. I get along well with others, even people who are different than me. I work well in groups. I seek out other people's ideas to solve problems because I know that by teaming with others we can create better solutions than any one of us alone. I am humble.

#### Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

I take care of my body by eating right, exercising, and getting sleep. I spend time with family and friends. I learn in lots of ways and lots of places, not just at school. I take time to find meaningful ways to help others. (Covey, 2008, pg. 21-26)

Covey (2008) divided the seven habits into three groups. He maintained using the first three habits will help a person become more independent, having a "private victory". He went on to state embracing habits four, five, and six leads to a "public victory" and helped individuals become more interdependent. Covey (2008) ended with habit seven

deals with the principle of renewal and is in a category of its own. Peggy Crim, a United Way Board Member and City Treasurer in Quincy, Illinois, stated the best thing with the “Leader in Me” program is that it is for every student regardless of social history or economic background (FranklinCovey, n.d.b.).

#### *The Leader in Me – Academic Results*

According to Kingsbury (2008), implementing the “Leader in Me” program is being attributed to significant academic gains in multiple schools. The author found Dewey Elementary School in Dewey, Illinois posted scores of 89.7 percent of students on grade level in reading and 100 percent of students on grade level in math on the ISAT, up from 57.4 percent in reading and 77.4 percent in math after only one year of implementation (Kingsbury, 2008). Hatch and Collinwood (2011) found A.B. Combs Elementary began by piloting the program with one teacher per grade level the first year. The school posted an end-of-grade test average score increase from 84 percent the previous year to 87 percent the first year. According to Hatch and Collinwood (2011), when all teachers participated in the program the next year, scores jumped to an average of 94 percent. Hatch and Collinwood (2011) discovered English Estates Elementary School in Fern Park, Florida showed test score increases as much as 35 percentage points in some subject areas and made adequate yearly progress the first year of implementation, something they had not achieved for years. Collinwood (2009), in an eight-year study, found the four schools in the study posted a six-year average test score of 69.6 percent of students meeting or exceeding the Illinois state standards for reading, but the average went to 84.9 percent for the two years following implementation of the “Leader in Me” program principles. The author found math scores went from an average of 84.3 percent

to 92.3 percent in the same time period (Collinwood, 2009). Elihu Greenwood Leadership Academy in Boston, Massachusetts was a failing school about to close prior to implementing the principles of the “Leader in Me” program. After implementation, they made academic gains and hit AYP goals in English Language Arts (ELA) and math for the first time (FranklinCovey, n.d.b).

Writing scores at Beaumont Elementary School in Waterford, Michigan posted a 31 percent increase after implementing the “Leader in Me” program principles (FranklinCovey, n.d.b). Winchester Elementary School in West Seneca, New York went from their highest ranking from 2005-2010 of 50<sup>th</sup> out of 225 schools in Western New York (a score based on 50 percent math scores and 50 percent English language arts scores) to achieving a rank of 33<sup>rd</sup> after only one year of the “Leader in Me” program implementation (Hatch, 2012). Hatch went on to discuss St. Johns County Florida’s Wards Creek Elementary School. This school showed the greatest writing increase in the district on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in 2011. The school showed an increase of 21 percent from the past year, which the principal attributes to the “Leader in Me” program. Other schools referenced in his article include Hallowell Elementary of Horsham, Pennsylvania, increasing from 72.1 percent to 90.9 percent on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade writing test and Tampa Florida’s Sulphur Springs Elementary with 99 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scoring a four or above on the state writing assessment (Hatch, 2012).

Klostermarksschkolen, a school in Roskilde, Denmark, is using the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* with students and staff (FranklinCovey, 2010b). According to this article, results within two years of the training included teacher reports of increased student desire for learning and more positive approaches to their education.

Ohlson and Dow (2011) detailed a “Mentoring and Student Assistance Initiatives Grant” approved by the South Florida Workforce Development Board in 2010. The grant was proposed to improve school performance of at-risk, low performing students and to reduce dropout rates. They stated the goals were to be achieved through enhanced instruction, a mentoring program, and leadership training for students utilizing the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Although all gains cannot be firmly linked with the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* work, 94 percent of students in the program increased lexile scores and attendance by 15 percent (Ohlson & Dow, 2011). Ross, Laurenzano, and Daniels (2012) conducted a case study evaluation at two “Leader in Me” schools. The authors reviewed trends in reading/language arts and math achievement scores both before and after program implementation as well as stakeholders’ perceptions on behavior. Though there was positive support for impact on achievement, limited implementation of one or two years was too early to show a correlation between the “Leader in Me” program implementation and achievement increases (Ross et al., 2012).

#### *The Leader in Me – Behavior Results*

A decline in discipline issues is also attributed to program implementation (FranklinCovey, 2010a). Joseph Welch Elementary School in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada saw a reduction in discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions following “Leader in Me” implementation (FranklinCovey, 2010a). Shepard Boulevard Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri saw an immediate decrease of 15 percent in discipline referrals upon implementation (FranklinCovey, n.d.b). Dewey Elementary School referrals decreased 64.5 percent in the first four months of the first year of implementation (FranklinCovey, 2007a). English Estates Elementary in Fern

Park, Florida posted a decrease in discipline referrals, from 225 to 74 in a little more than one year. Suspensions at First Nation (Native American) school in Nova Scotia dropped from 20 suspensions the year prior to zero suspensions the first year of implementation (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011). Just five months after implementing the program, Heritage Elementary in Highland, Michigan saw an 85 percent decrease in behavior referrals (FranklinCovey, n.d.b).

Jean-Claude Brizard, CEO of Chicago Public Schools in Chicago, Illinois, attributed noticeable self-esteem and low occurrence of discipline issues in schools where students are doing the work of leading (FranklinCovey, n.d.b). The author stated a fifth-grade student from Missouri is quoted as saying living the habits negates a need for a bullying prevention program (FranklinCovey, n.d.b). Neil Armstrong Elementary in Port Charlotte, Florida posted a 60 percent decrease in discipline referrals two years after program implementation (Hatch, 2012). Hatch stated after training bus drivers in the program principles, Winchester Elementary of West Seneca, New York saw a steady decline in bus referrals, from over 100 a year in the 2008-2009 school year to less than 40 in the 2010-2011 school year. From the beginning of school through January of 2011, there were less than ten bus incidents at their school (Hatch, 2012). Another school, Fremont Elementary School in Fremont, North Carolina, posted a 60 percent decline in disciplinary referrals (FranklinCovey, 2011a). Ohlson and Dow (2011) described a leadership mentoring program utilizing the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Although all gains cannot be firmly linked with the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* work, throughout the program none of the participants had any discipline referrals.

*The Leader in Me – School Culture/Climate Results*

Joyce Hanley, in a study detailed by Collinwood (2008a), evaluated the effects of the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* training at California University of Pennsylvania on the campus culture. She documented recognized improvements in the culture as statistically significant ( $p > .001$ ) positive behavior change perceptions in each of the seven habits. Collinwood's 2007 article on the same study quoted Hanley's study findings where participants in the training claimed a positive change in both their own behaviors as well as the organization. Collinwood discussed a study by Baile involving data from six schools, districts, or colleges in which the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* had been taught to most of the faculty and staff, three in the state of Georgia. He stated that Baile found interviewees described the workplace satisfaction had increased due to the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* training. A teacher in Collinwood's article attributed a shared vision in her school to the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and a high school principal attributed a reduction in violence of 88 percent to the training (2008a).

Administrators and school board members from Colegio Americano, a private preschool through high school institution in Guayaquil, Ecuador were trained in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in September of 2002 (FranklinCovey, 2011b). Keith Miller, Director General (Headmaster) of the school from 2002-2011, credited this training as contributing to the school's success. In the past, Colegio Americano was not doing well with funding, had physical building issues, and low morale of students and staff. In 2011, the school served over 1500 students from 23 countries, and 20 percent of the students who graduate from the school go to college in the United States. Dr. Miller



is quoted in the article as saying without FranklinCovey and the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* training, there would be no school (FranklinCovey, 2011b).

Collinwood (2008b) shared information about the country of Guatemala, where the average age of the citizens is 18 and over 40 percent of the population is under fourteen years of age. The author stated the Minister of Education of Guatemala decided the country needed to utilize the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* training with the school staff as well as students in their final year of school. He shared the magnificence of the program put in place is approximately one million students trained over ten years. Collinwood (2008b) described early results of the program including 95 percent of parents observing a positive attitude change in children, as well as 88 percent of the parents indicating students with a clearer vision of their future after going through the training. Teachers in the program were also surveyed, and 96 percent stated the training changed their personal lives, while 99 percent believed it changed the lives of the students involved (Collinwood, 2008b). A Puerto Rican private university utilized the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in helping gain their vision of developing a high quality, technologically advanced, international learning community (FranklinCovey, 2007b). More than 500 employees were trained in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* curriculum from 2003 through 2007, and an innovative, open culture is emerging.

Shutoku High School in Tokyo, Japan incorporated the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Junior* into the curriculum of the school culture (FranklinCovey, 2008). A high school girl is quoted as saying she became a stronger person because of the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Junior*. A male high school student stated the time management piece encouraged him to study and increase his academic performance.

Another female high school student said through *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Junior* she learned about academics as well as relationships, being more careful in the words she used (FranklinCovey, 2008).

Staten Island School of Civic Leadership, a “Leader in Me” program school with 69.5 percent of students in poverty and 20 percent served with special needs, was named the highest rated school in New York City in 2012 (Wong & Wong, 2012). Independent School District (Texas) is a “Leader in Me” program district, with the superintendent as a licensed *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* facilitator who initiated training for district administrators and teachers (FranklinCovey, 2006). Over seven years, the district saw significant increases in student achievement and was recognized as the “school district of choice” in the region (FranklinCovey, 2006).

#### *The Leader in Me – Lighthouse Status*

The next step for schools having gone through the “Leader in Me” program process is an extensive FranklinCovey on-site review to determine whether the school has achieved “Lighthouse” status (Hatch & Covey, n.d.). Schools must meet certain criteria in nine areas, including lighthouse team, leadership environment, integrated curriculum and instruction, staff collaboration, student leadership, parent involvement, goal tracking, measurable results, and leadership events (FranklinCovey, n.d.a). Becoming a “Lighthouse” school is the highest honor and recognition that a “Leader in Me” program school can receive.

Application for being named a “Lighthouse” school often occurs after three to five years of “Leader in Me” program implementation. FranklinCovey awards this distinction to schools having demonstrated a school environment that reinforces

leadership through language usage in hallway/classroom displays, leadership integration in curriculum and instruction, and staff collaboration on building a leadership culture in the school. Students in a “Lighthouse” school are given opportunities to serve in class and school leadership positions, parents learn about Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and get involved in school activities that support the “Leader in Me” model, and school, classroom, and personal goals are set and tracked.

“Lighthouse” schools hold leadership events for families and communities. Events allow student application of leadership skills while a school leadership team works to coordinate the “Leader in Me” implementation so all leadership areas are showcased. Final areas in which “Leader in Me” schools must show evidence to become a “Lighthouse” school involves proof the school has made gains in teacher engagement, student behavior, academics, and parent satisfaction. A comprehensive study of a “Leader in Me” school showing evidence of meeting each of these criteria leads to the awarding of the coveted “Lighthouse” status. (FranklinCovey, 2016a).

Hatch and Covey (2012) reviewed survey results from twelve principals of “Lighthouse” schools. Surveys covered the impact of “Leader in Me” program implementation on different areas of their schools. One hundred percent of principals surveyed stated the implementation had a positive impact on discipline referrals. Eighty-three percent told of a positive impact on attendance, parent satisfaction, and parent attendance at conferences, 75 percent told of a positive impact on bullying, climate, student satisfaction, and teacher retention, 67 percent said they felt there was a positive impact on teacher satisfaction and school safety, and 58 percent replied there was a positive impact on parent involvement. Specifically, in academics, ten of the 12 schools

reported they had quantitative data to support the “Leader in Me” program’s positive impact on both reading and math scores (Hatch & Covey, 2012).

The study school became the twenty-first school in the world to be named a Lighthouse School by FranklinCovey, receiving this honor in January of 2012. The school was the first school in the state of Georgia with this distinction, although the number of Lighthouse Schools in the world has risen to more than 300 in December of 2018, seven in the state of Georgia. Being named a “Lighthouse” school shows the school has fully implemented the “Leader in Me” program. (Grant, 2012).

The “Leader in Me” program has been linked to increases in academic achievement, can be described as a character education program containing many of the characteristics of successful and mandated programs, and has been to a decrease in student misbehavior/discipline infractions (Principal perspectives on whole-school improvement programs and TLIM). If implementation of this program does in fact meet the needs of character education while also increasing academic achievement and decreasing student discipline, the “Leader in Me” program may be a key to school success.

### Chapter III METHODOLOGY

The “Leader in Me” is being implemented in schools around the world. Since 2009, over 3000 schools in 50 different countries have implemented the program (FranklinCovey, 2016b). The program, designed after Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, has been linked to gains in student achievement and decreases in student discipline referrals, though the researcher has found no data from the state of Georgia. The purpose of this evaluation is to investigate the stakeholder perceptions and data-driven effects of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student achievement and student discipline in a Title 1 school in central Georgia. This chapter will explain the methodology used in the study. In it will be information on the participants, study design, limitations, instrumentation, data collection, sample, and descriptive analysis. This evaluation employs both quantitative data and qualitative data to answer the following questions.

1. What is the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student academics as documented through stakeholder perceptions and Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) reading scores?
2. What is the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student behavior as documented through stakeholder perceptions and school discipline referrals?

### *Design of the Study*

This mixed-methods evaluation used surveys, interviews, and archival data as a program evaluation. The archival data consisted of CRCT scores from the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 academic years and discipline referral data in the form of the average number of teacher referrals from the same years. The surveys and interviews gave the researcher information beyond the archival data.

### *Limitations of the Study*

*Threats to internal validity.* Purposive sampling was used in the study as all students who attended the study school from fall 2008 through the spring of 2012 were included. This selection was a threat to internal validity. As the researcher was an administrator at the school throughout the implementation of the “Leader in Me” program and over the course of the study, researcher bias was also a threat to internal validity. Survey and interview results were interpreted by the researcher and filtered through the researcher’s bias, which may have led to skewed data. After the spring of 2014, the school underwent a change in school zones and grades served. This changed the dynamics of the school in such a way that limited further groups. Staff changes were also substantial and many unfamiliar with the “Leader in Me” joined the school. The administration changed in that the position of Assistant Principal for Discipline was held by five different individuals between 2012 and 2018, both the Assistant Principal of Instruction and the Counselor changed in December of 2016, and the Principal changed in June of 2018.

*Threats to external validity.* This study’s population consisted of 2011-2012 fifth grade students who were continuously enrolled at the study school in central Georgia

since 2008. This school and system may not be representative of other schools and systems. Generalizing the results of the study and application to other populations should be done with caution.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and discipline data used in this study were archival. The researcher presented a staff survey and held parent interviews. Information remained anonymous and at no time were names of individual staff, parents, or students used. The study was approved by the Houston County School Superintendent and the Valdosta State University Institutional Research Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and Research-Related Activities IRB (Appendix A, B, & C).

### *Participants and Setting*

For the purpose of this evaluation, participants included all fifth grade students in the 2011-2012 school year who attended the study school for grades two through five, parents who attended more than one session offered by school staff on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, as well as all certified staff members at the school in central Georgia who were employed at the school for the 2009-2014 academic years and willing to complete the survey.

### *Sample*

According to school records, 63 of the 93 fifth-grade students at the study school in the spring of 2012 had attended since the fall of 2008. As one student took the CRCT M (modified) in reading, scores were only available for 62. Subjects included 29 females and 33 males. The ethnic breakdown of the students was 6 percent Asian, 48 percent

African American, 42 percent Caucasian, 2 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent multiple ethnicities. Sign-in sheets from the parent sessions on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* held at the school were reviewed to identify any parents who attended more than one session. Three parents met the criteria and were asked to interview. Thirty-one certified teachers work at the study school, with three serving part-time. Surveys were given to those teachers still at the study school in the spring of 2014.

*Instrumentation validity, reliability*

The survey used for the staff as well as the interview questions were compiled based on survey results published by FranklinCovey. This enabled the researcher to analyze trends in the study school's data as compared to data compiled from other "Lighthouse" schools. The survey contained four open-ended questions for staff members to complete as they wished. The rest of the survey contained twenty-two statements in three different categories (feelings about themselves, observations about parents, and observations about the school), of which respondents completed with one of four answers: not observed, slightly observed, moderately observed, and strongly observed. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix D of this study.

The interview questions for this study utilized three of the four open-ended questions that were on the survey, as well as five other open-ended questions aligned with the survey and intended to investigate the parent perceptions on the effects of implementing the "Leader in Me" on the parents and students at the study school. A copy of the interview questions is included in Appendix E of this study.

Discipline referrals are completed on students for major or minor behavior incidents in the classroom or around the school. Discipline referrals are completed by



teachers when the teacher observed a student had committed a major infraction such as fighting or when a student had multiple minor infractions which continued to disrupt learning. The number of discipline referrals completed by each teacher is reflected on the teacher's annual evaluation as compared with the school average number of referrals by teacher.

Results from the reading section of the Georgia CRCT were also used for this study. This is a test designed to measure skill and knowledge acquisition in the areas of reading, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The test was given to Georgia students in second through eighth grades. This test was administered during the month of April for each year of the study. Scale scores below 800 indicated a failure to meet the state standard while scores above 849 indicated that a student had exceeded the standard.

### *Procedures*

Valdosta State University IRB approval was obtained prior to data collection for this study (Appendix A). In addition, permission was obtained from the principal at the study school and from the school system's superintendent (Appendix B and C). Since the researcher changed schools before the study was completed, the researcher's next principal also gave permission for the study.

### *Data Collection*

Data in the form of responses from the anonymous staff survey were analyzed and reported in the study. Interviews with the three parents were set up and recorded. Recordings were transcribed by the researcher and analyzed for the study. Archived data was collected from the central Georgia school system. The system received raw CRCT

data exported into an Excel spreadsheet. The researcher had access to all data through her role as assistant principal of instruction at the school used for the study. Discipline referral data were entered into a county system and reported on teachers' annual evaluations. This study used only the school's teacher referral average for the years of the study due to the inaccessibility of individual teacher data.

### *Descriptive Analysis*

This study assessed the effects and perceptions of the effects of implementing the "Leader in Me" program on student achievement and student behavior. Certified staff members were given the opportunity to complete a survey on the "Leader in Me" program implementation and the effects of the implementation. Parents who attended more than one class of the *Seven Habits of Successful Families* training at the study school were invited to participate in an interview on the effects of the "Leader in Me" program implementation. Data in the form of responses from both the survey and the interviews were analyzed and reported to show stakeholder perceptions on the impact of implementing the "Leader in Me" program on student academics and student behavior. Baseline data for the 2008-2009 academic year were reported showing a baseline of the percent of students not meeting the standard on the reading section of the Georgia CRCT. Data from three years after the start of implementation of the "Leader in Me" program in the school (the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 academic years) were pulled for continuously enrolled students and descriptive analysis was performed. The researcher reviewed discipline data on the average number of office referrals for each of the years in the study.

### *Summary*

The data collected during this study were used to investigate possible effects of the implementation of the “Leader in Me” program on students at the study school. The survey and interview data were used to further explain the results and explore the stakeholders’ perceptions of implementation effects. The study results can be used to support future initiatives involving this program. Chapter 4 will provide the study findings, while chapter 5 will include a discussion of the findings and future research implications.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of implementing Stephen Covey's "Leader in Me" program on student achievement and discipline in a Title 1 school in central Georgia. The "Leader in Me" program requires resources and dedication towards complete implementation, and educators need to know if the posted gains in academics and behavior found in other schools, systems, and countries can also be found in schools in this area. This researcher studied the effects of implementation using results from a school faculty survey, parent interviews, the reading section of the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), and the number of discipline referrals at the school.

#### *Data Analysis and Findings*

*Evaluation Question 1:* What is the impact of implementing the "Leader in Me" program on student academics as documented through stakeholder perceptions and Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) reading scores?

Initial staff training in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in the fall of 2009 started the process and paved the way for full school implementation of the "Leader in Me" program as recognized as a "Lighthouse" school by FranklinCovey in January of 2012. Results from the spring 2009 CRCT reading test establish a baseline of 92.9 percent of the students passing the Georgia reading CRCT prior to any "Leader in Me" program implementation or staff training in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

This means that 92.9 percent of the grade three through five student population at the study school scored at or above the minimum requirement on the assessment. Staff members were trained in October or December of 2009; April 2010 CRCT results had 92.5 percent of the grade three through five students passing reading. CRCT reading scores for 2011 showed an increase of 0.8 percent, with 93.3 percent of the students passing the test. CRCT scores in 2012, the year in which the school was recognized as a “Lighthouse” School, showed 95.5 percent of students passing reading, an increase of 2.2 percent from the previous year and 2.6 percent since the baseline prior to the implementation of the “Leader in Me.” This data shows that a greater percentage of students were at or above grade level on reading after implementation of the “Leader in Me.” Using an average of 290 for the number of students in grades three through five during these tested years, this translates to only thirteen total grade three through five students not reading at grade level in 2012 as compared to twenty-one total students not reading at grade level in 2009, reducing the number not passing by over one third. This data is based on all students in third through fifth grade in the study school, not just the students who were continuously enrolled since the start of the program.

Table 1

*Percent of grade three through five study participants passing the Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test by Year*

Year	Percent of students passing Reading CRCT	Net gain or loss
2009	92.9%	Baseline
2010	92.5%	-0.4%
2011	93.3%	+0.8%
2012	95.5%	+2.2%

CRCT scores for students who were continuously enrolled at the study school from the 2008-2009 academic year through the 2011-2012 academic year were also collected. The study students were in second grade for the 2008-2009 academic year, the year prior to any school staff training or “Leader in Me” program implementation. In spring 2009, 95.2 percent of these students passed the second grade Reading CRCT, 1.5 percent above the system second graders and 3.3 percent above the state. This indicates that three students were not reading on grade level as scored on this assessment.

Scores in 2010 showed the students as third graders, with 95.2 percent passing the third grade Reading CRCT, again with three not reading on grade level. That year, the system and state third grade scores dropped. By maintaining a 95.2 percent pass rate, the study school scored 2.5 percent above the system and 5.2 percent above the state and indicated that more students at the study school were reading on grade level than students at other schools in the county and state. As fourth graders in spring 2011, 88.7 percent of the students in the study passed the fourth grade Reading CRCT. Although this is a decrease from the previous year’s results, the system and state averages both showed decreases as well. The school dropped to 2.4 percent below the system average but 0.8 percent above the state average. This was a large decrease because it meant that the study school now had seven students who had been at the school for three years that were now not reading on grade level, more than double the three students from previous years. It is also important to note that district test scores for this grade level were only down 1.6 percent while the scores at the study school dropped 6.5 percent.

Spring 2012 scores compared the fifth graders at the study school to fifth graders in the system and state. There were increases in all three categories with 93.6 percent of

the system’s fifth graders passing the Reading CRCT. The school percent passing was 1.7 percent below the system at 91.9 percent, only 0.4 percent above the state average. This means that five students in their final year at the study school were not reading at grade level as indicated on this assessment. It is important to note that although the test is given each year in the state of Georgia and is a standardized, valid, and reliable assessment, it should be acknowledged that the test is changed each year. Field test questions are added or deleted, cut scores change based on the number of questions, and standards tested are also updated annually. Those scores by school, system, and state are in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Percent of students passing Reading on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test by year and grade level*

Year	Grade level	School – Study Participants Only	System	State
2009	2 <sup>nd</sup>	95.2	93.7	91.9
2010	3 <sup>rd</sup>	95.2	92.7	90
2011	4 <sup>th</sup>	88.7	91.1	87.9
2012	5 <sup>th</sup>	91.9	93.6	91.5

The mean score of April 2009 CRCT results for the study participants was 844.45 on the second-grade test. CRCT mean reading scores in 2010 showed a decrease of 3.35 points to 841.10 on the third grade reading CRCT. Scores in 2011 showed a further decrease of 4.16 points to a mean of 836.94 on the fourth-grade assessment. CRCT scores in 2012, the year in which the school was recognized as a “Lighthouse” School, showed a decrease of 3.38 points from the previous year, 10.89 total points since the baseline prior to implementation of the “Leader in Me.” A score of 800 is considered passing on this reading assessment. With the average score decreasing, students near the

800 cutline were in danger of moving from passing the assessment to not passing.

Although the fact that this is an average decrease and does not mean that every student's score went down, the data detailed above in the number of students passing showed that more students did score in the "did not meet" category and the overall trend in scores was negative.

Table 3

*Participant Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test Mean Score by Year*

Test Year	Mean Score	Net gain or loss
2009	844.45	Baseline
2010	841.10	-3.35
2011	836.94	-4.16
2012	833.56	-3.38

When looking at individual study participant scores, more than half of the students' scores decreased each year. From the second-grade assessment in 2009 to the third-grade assessment in 2010, 26 of the 62 students (42 percent) had scores that increased, 35 (56 percent) had scores decrease, and 1 (2 percent) scored the exact same both years. Looking at the scores from second to third grade, 2010 to 2011, 25 students (40 percent) had an increase in test scores, 33 students (53 percent) had a score decrease, and 4 students' (6 percent) scores remained the same. Students in the fourth grade in 2011 took the fifth-grade assessment in 2012; 26 students (42 percent) had scores increase, 36 student's (58 percent) score decreased, and no student scored the same in fourth and fifth grade. This again shows a negative trend in scores though the first years of the program from initial start to full implementation. Table four includes the percent



of student scores that increased, decreased, or remained the same over the four years of program implementation.

Table 4

*Participant Reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test Score Increase or Decrease by Year*

Test Year	Percent of Students Whose Score Increased	Percent of Students Whose Score Decreased	Percent of Students with No Change in Score
2009	baseline	baseline	baseline
2010	42%	56%	2%
2011	40%	53%	6%
2012	42%	58%	0

A staff survey was given at the study school and three parent interviews utilizing similar questions were conducted to answer this question. A copy of the survey responses and interviews are included in Appendix F, G, H, and I.

Twenty-five surveys were completed by certified staff members who were at the school during the 2009 school year for the initial program implementation and were still faculty members during post-planning in May 2014. The survey contained both open response questions and Likert scale questions. The questions asked staff members to tell about their personal satisfaction and commitment/implementation, but also asked the staff members to evaluate any change(s) they had seen regarding students, parents, and the school. Question one asked if the respondent’s level of satisfaction with the school changed since implementation of the “Leader in Me” program. Eleven faculty members

responded to this question, with seven (64 percent) answering with “yes,” three (27 percent) with “no,” and one (9 percent) with a statement rather than strictly answering the question. Faculty members who answered “yes” included statements such as “the school culture has benefited immensely and that increases my satisfaction” and “students have become more responsible due to the fact that (they) have taken ownership of their behavior, academics, and goal setting.” One respondent answered “yes” but went on to say “however, it has been difficult not to make 7 habits ‘one more thing.’ I also don’t believe that our test scores are improving since 7 habits.” Only one of the respondents who answered “no” went on to include more detail in their answer. That respondent said, “I really don’t think they apply the information to everyday situations. They may feel good about having a job-but they don’t act like a leader in other situations.”

Question two on the faculty survey asked how the respondents felt about themselves as a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at the study school. The question utilized a Likert scale on eight statements about themselves, asking if they felt the statement did “not” describe them, “slightly” described them, “moderately” described them, or “strongly” described them. All twenty-five respondents felt they had a good understanding of the seven habits, with ten answering “moderately” and fifteen answering “strongly.” All twenty-five indicated they model the seven habits with twelve stating “moderately” and thirteen stating “strongly”. The other six statements had more of a spread in the responses. There was one response of “not” on the statement “I work more effectively with my team” but the other responses were all “moderately” or “strongly.” On the statements “I am more organized/focused in my classroom” and “I seek to understand student and parent needs more,” one faculty

member answered “not” and three answered “slightly.” One answered “not” and seven answered “slightly” on the statement “I integrate the seven habits into my lesson plans.” Two respondents answered “not” and five answered “slightly” on “my talents are utilized more” and three answered “not” and three answered “slightly” on “we share ‘Leader in Me’ ideas with one another.” There is not an indication on whether those who answered “not” were unhappy with the implementation or if they were happy before and felt that no change was needed/warranted. The faculty survey responses to this question are listed in the Table 5 below.

Table 5

*Faculty survey responses to the question, “As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at your school, to what extent do you feel about yourself.”*

	Question	Not	Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
a.	I have a good understanding of the seven habits.	0	0	10	15
b.	I model the seven habits.	0	0	12	13
c.	I work more effectively in my grade level team.	1	0	13	11
d.	I am more organized/focused in my classroom.	1	3	13	8
e.	We share “Leader in Me” ideas with one another.	3	3	10	9
f.	I seek to understand student and parent needs more.	1	3	9	12
g.	I integrate the seven habits into my lesson plans.	1	7	10	7
h.	My talents are utilized more.	2	5	11	7

Question three on the faculty survey asked respondents to determine the level they had observed an impact on parents since the implementation of the “Leader in Me” and teaching of the seven habits. Responses to this question were listed in each scale of the

Likert response, with a majority in the “not observed” and “slightly observed” for the statements “parents report the students apply the seven habits at home,” “parents are more involved at school,” and “more parents attend student conferences.” Only eleven responses were in those categories for the final question, “parents are more satisfied with the school in general.” Twelve respondents chose “moderately observed” and two answered “strongly observed” for that statement. The faculty survey responses to this question are listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6

*Faculty survey responses to the question, “As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and teaching the seven habits at your school, to what extent have you observed the following regarding parents?”*

	Question	Not Observed	Slightly Observed	Moderately Observed	Strongly Observed
a.	Parents report that students apply the seven habits at home.	4	9	10	2
b.	Parents are more involved at the school.	7	13	4	1
c.	More parents attend student conferences.	8	9	6	1
d.	Parents are more satisfied with the school in general.	4	7	12	2

Question four on the faculty survey asked respondents to answer statements on changes since the implementation of the “Leader in Me” at the school. Ten statements were listed, and respondents were asked to choose between “not observed,” “slightly observed,” “moderately observed,” and “strongly observed.” A majority of at least 75 percent answered in the “moderately observed” and “strongly observed” category on nine of the ten statements, asking about whether the seven habits had become a common language at the school, if the school’s mission and goals were more clear and focused,

there was an effective way to measure progress toward goals, hallway displays were inspiring, school administrators modeled the seven habits, the leadership theme was visible in school-wide activities, the seven habits were reinforced in staff meetings/trainings, a strong team was in place to lead the “Leader in Me” efforts, and the overall culture of the school had improved. The only question to not have a similar response was on whether non-teaching staff actively participate in the “Leader in Me”. For this statement, two respondents answered “not observed” and seven answered “slightly observed,” leaving only 64 percent to answer in the moderately or strongly observed categories. The faculty survey responses to this question are listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Faculty survey responses to the statement, “Following implementation of the “Leader in Me” at your school,”*

	Question	Not Observed	Slightly Observed	Moderately Observed	Strongly Observed
a.	The seven habits have become a common language.	1	3	9	12
b.	The school’s mission and goals are more clear and focused.	1	2	4	18
c.	We have an effective way to measure progress toward goals.	1	4	8	11
d.	Hallway displays are inspiring.	1	3	8	14
e.	School administrators model the seven habits.	1	1	7	14
f.	The leadership theme is visible in school-wide activities.	1	3	5	16
g.	Non-teaching staff actively participate in the “Leader in Me”.	2	7	7	9
h.	The seven habits are reinforced	1	5	3	16

	in staff meetings/trainings.				
i.	A strong team is in place to lead the “Leader in Me” efforts.	1	2	8	14
j.	The overall culture of the school has improved.	3	2	12	7

The final three questions on the faculty survey were open-ended questions.

Question five asked, “Have you experienced a change in your confidence that students are learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?” Of the seventeen who answered the question, six (thirty-five percent) answered with “no” or “minimal changes” and one added “students are still not showing self-control/respect”. Seven respondents (41 percent) answered “yes,” adding statements such as “7 habits are principle based and therefore VERY relevant to their future,” “they have become inspired to become a leader and set an example for others,” “students are learning to set goals and create a plan of action that can be used throughout life,” and “being in charge of their actions and setting goals will be skills that are used in life.” The remaining four (twenty-four percent) did not answer “yes” or “no,” but gave the answers, “some students have drastically learned life-changing skills and some have not yet applied them,” “I believe the program has changed the majority of the students,” they have adjusted well to data/discussion talks and classroom jobs,” and “students are able to learn how to balance the 7 habits and learn how to apply them at school and later in society.”

When asked in question six to list the three greatest student benefits of implementing the “Leader in Me,” only one respondent (four percent) listed academics while many listed things such as leadership, responsibility, goal setting, collaboration, jobs, work ethics, and creativity. Question seven asked for the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for staff/school, and the fourteen answers included such things as

creating confidence, improving school culture, goal setting, progress monitoring, collaborating, and personal growth with one person answering “none.”

The parent interviews consisted of eight open-ended questions where parents were also asked about the changes in the school, their students, and their personal experiences because of the program implementation. All three of the interviewed parents answered their level of satisfaction with the school changed after “Leader in Me” implementation. These parents had each attended special parent classes on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, so they were also very familiar with the habits and the program when their children were at the study school. One of the parents was proud to be part of the school and program, another was thrilled and mentioned the energy and enthusiasm at the school, while a final was impressed with the consideration the staff and administration took when implementing the “Leader in Me.” Parents were asked about the three greatest student benefits as well as the three greatest school benefits, but none of the parents listed academics for either category. Parents saw more of a focus on the future, students having more self-confidence, and additional opportunities as results of the program and did not say that they saw the change in mindset or behavior impacting the learning or learning process at the school.

*Evaluation Question 2:* What is the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on student behavior as documented through stakeholder perceptions and school discipline referrals?

During the 2008-2009 academic year, prior to any training or program implementation, the average number of discipline referrals by teacher was four and a half. Using an average of 31 teachers working at the study school, that would compute to

approximately one hundred forty referrals through the year. The school’s staff was trained in Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in either October or December of 2009. That academic year, 2009-2010, the school average of discipline referrals by teacher was five for approximately 155 referrals, a number that dropped to less than one per teacher in 2010-2011, or less than thirty-one total referrals. The school was named a “Lighthouse” school in January of 2012. Referrals over the 2011-2012 academic year maintained an average of one per teacher, or about thirty-one total referrals for administrator involvement. This suggests as teachers were trained in the “Leader in Me” and began implementing training in the classroom, student behavior either improved or relationships between teachers and students improved and teachers were able to manage behaviors in the classroom without administrator involvement.

Table 8

*Average number of discipline referrals per teacher by year*

School year	Average number of discipline referrals per teacher
2008-2009	4.5
2009-2010	5
2010-2011	<1
2011-2012	1

This question was also answered utilizing the staff survey responses and parent interviews. With the staff surveys, when asked if the level of satisfaction with the school changed since implementation of the “Leader in Me,” seven respondents (28 percent) stated “yes” and listed explanations such as “the students are taking responsibility for themselves,” there were more “classroom and school-wide management strategies,” and students have taken “ownership of their behavior.” Three staff members (12 percent) did



not have a change in their level of satisfaction. This could be due to an already high level of satisfaction, not understanding the program implementation, or a resistance to change. One staff member (four percent) did not state whether or not the satisfaction level changed but wrote he/she had “really enjoyed the ‘Leader in Me’ program at the school. The students take ownership of behaviors and allows for more quality education to occur.” Of questions answered with a Likert scale, nineteen of the twenty-four staff members (79 percent) noted “moderately” or “strongly” that the culture of the school improved after implementation of the “Leader in Me.”

The surveys did not show a large majority of the staff experienced a change in confidence that students were learning the skills necessary to be successful in life. Of the seventeen who answered the question, four answered “no,” one answered “not really,” another answered “minimal changes,” and a final one answered, “some students have drastically learned life-changing skills and some have not yet applied them” (41 percent). Seven respondents (41 percent) answered “yes.” Three did not answer “yes” or “no,” but gave the answers, “I believe the program has changed the majority of the students,” they have adjusted well to data/discussion talks and classroom jobs,” and “students are able to learn how to balance the 7 habits and learn how to apply them at school and later in society.” In response to the question, “What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the ‘Leader in Me’ for students,” thirteen of the seventeen respondents (76 percent) listed one of these four responses: students learning responsibility, students taking ownership of their behavior, students being in-charge of their actions, or changing attitudes on school culture/climate.

The first parent interview showed parents felt similar because his or her student(s) tried to use the habits at home and listed the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students as “focus more on looking beyond elementary school,” “concern for others,” and “wanting to do the right thing,” all of which could be tied to improving behavior. This parent was “impressed” the study school was the first in the county and the state to have implemented the program and went on to say his/her children were more likely to try to implement the seven habits at home when they were at the study school as well as now many years have passed. This parent also liked the recognition and reputation of the school when it received the “Lighthouse” recognition for full implementation of the “Leader in Me”. When asked if there was anything else the parent would like to share, this respondent answered, “it does not have the focus that it once did. And I think that if you could bring that back somehow, then I think it would still be a great thing for the school. I think it has lost some of its excitement and maybe, yeah, I mean maybe it didn’t have the results that they wanted so the effort wasn’t put into it anymore.” The parent ended with “the effects of what they (the students) have learned or have been shown or have felt from their administration or their teachers is lasting.”

The second parent interview respondent was “thrilled with the program after hearing and learning what it was about” and “excited to see the energy and enthusiasm that it brought”. The parent explained his/her youngest daughter would come home and get her work done before play time, putting “first things first”. The parent also gave a specific example of when he/she heard children use what they had learned about the habits to verbalize a need to work something out in a different way, having a “win-win” attitude. This respondent listed positives for the students and school such as developing

self-confidence, learning habits that would benefit them for the rest of their lives, unity, and working towards a common goal.

The third parent was proud when the school was the first in Georgia to fully implement the “Leader in Me” and thought the students at least tried to apply the habits at home. The parent was happy with the school in general both before and after the implementation but liked the opportunities and experiences the “Leader in Me” gave the students. He/she said the program “gives them structure” and “builds confidence” but was unsure of whether the “Leader in Me” program being implemented at the elementary school made a difference because the son and daughter had always been leaders. All three parents gave positive feedback on the school and the “Leader in Me” program, but none talked specifically about feeling that the students learned more or the behavior was better because of the program implementation.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

#### *Overview of the Study*

A “Leader in Me” school is one that takes Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and guides students and staff into using these habits throughout the day. When a school is judged to have completely implemented the program according to a FranklinCovey rubric with nine standards, the school is named a “Lighthouse” school (Hatch & Covey, n.d.). There are published gains in academic scores and decreases in discipline incidents being posted in schools around the world, all linked to implementation of the “Leader in Me” program (Collinwood, 2009, FranklinCovey, 2010a, Hatch, 2012, Kingsbury, 2011). This researcher set out to test whether these results were seen after the program was implemented in a middle Georgia public elementary school.

The study school began implementation of the “Leader in Me” program during the 2009-2010 school year with staff training. A group of staff members were trained in October, with the remainder of the staff being trained in December. The school continued implementing the program and were recognized for full implementation as a “Lighthouse” school in January of 2012 (Grant, 2012). This researcher looked at archival data detailing discipline referrals as well as Criterion Referenced Competency Test reading results for the year prior to implementation through the year the school was named a “Lighthouse.” The researcher also used staff surveys and parent interviews to

identify staff and parent perceptions of the effects of implementing the “Leader in Me” program on the students at the school.

### *Related Literature*

This study looked at literature in four areas: school accountability, character education, classroom management/school discipline, and the “Leader in Me” program.

*School Accountability.* As the challenges faced by children in the twenty-first century continue to evolve, education must also change. According to Bae (2018), “Schools bear a greater responsibility to prepare students for college, career, and life and must be held accountable for more than just testing and reporting on a narrow set of outcomes aimed at minimal levels of competency” (pg. 3). The Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mentioned in the beginning of the study has now moved to a Georgia Milestones End of Grade Assessment and College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Schools are no longer required to just meet goals on the academic tests with the eventual goal of one hundred percent of students operating at grade level mastery. According to the Georgia Department of Education (n.d.b), the CCRPI is a platform for school improvement, accountability, and communication. Schools are assessed on content mastery, but also on progress, closing achievement gaps, percent of students reading on grade level, attendance, financial efficacy, and school climate. Schools must broaden their focus beyond academics to include areas such as behavior, student engagement, and character education (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). In answer to meeting these increasing requirements, Hatch and Collinwood (2011) have linked the “Leader in Me” program with large academic gains when it is implemented in public schools. As an

additional positive, the same source credits program implementation with decreases in discipline and negative behavior instances in schools, also a major focus in schools across the nation (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011).

*Character Education.* McCaw (2007) asserted leading thinkers in the current society were concerned the narrowed focus on reading, math, and science test scores may have been putting the current generation at a disadvantage by not preparing them to be successful citizens. Agboda and Tsai (2012) defined character as “the way we express our inner and outward being; that imbedded value that is within us and will make some of us go out of our ways to express compassion, caring, integrity, respect, and all other values that go with virtue” (pg. 168). According to Brannon (2008), character education programs are linked to positive changes in student achievement, behavior, and test scores. She maintained when character education programs are implemented consistently, time on task and students’ enjoyment of learning results (Brannon, 2008). Although it is not the only program that meets these needs, the “Leader in Me” program is supported by these pieces of research and supports the changes detailed in school accountability.

*Classroom management/student discipline.* Along with the changes in accountability and character development, there is also a change in the expectations and procedures in dealing with student behavior. According to Davis (2017), schools are having to reconceptualize the way they look at classroom management, moving from the old system that is firmly linked to discipline and control towards a new system focusing on creating a more positive learning environment. Hoffman, et al (2009) stated it is imperative for schools to provide a safe environment for students to achieve the academic, character, and emotional intelligence outcomes society wants accomplished.

A classroom/school in which behavior problems are fewer allows for increased time and attention to academic pursuit, and deeper character development, and improves school culture and climate. Parker, et al (2010) suggested a classroom environment that is conducive to learning is a mandatory component for effective classroom instruction. They contended there is a relationship between behavioral engagement and academic outcomes, indicating decreased problem behaviors and increased academic engagement are inverse operations. They proposed that interventions which allow children to regulate themselves are most effective because the students are able to generalize the ideas and apply them to situations beyond the initial setting (Parker et al., 2010).

*“Leader in Me.”* Implementation of the “Leader in Me” program could be the answer to meeting schools’ needs in the areas of academic achievement and accountability, character education, and classroom management/discipline (Hatch, 2011). Results of a study by Barkley, Lee, and Eodens found a statistically significant difference in school climate as well as discipline referrals in schools that had implemented the “Leader in Me” program as compared with schools that had not (2014). The “Leader in Me” program teaches students personal leadership skills as well as skills such as setting goals, time management, collaboration, problem solving, appreciating diversity, and balance (Hatch & Collinwood, 2011). Hatch and Covey (2012) reviewed survey results from twelve principals of “Lighthouse” schools. Surveys covered the impact of “Leader in Me” program implementation on different areas of their schools. One hundred percent of principals surveyed stated the implementation had a positive impact on discipline referrals. Eighty-three percent told of a positive impact on attendance, parent satisfaction, and parent attendance at conferences, 75 percent told of a positive impact on

bullying, climate, student satisfaction, and teacher retention, 67 percent said they felt there was a positive impact on teacher satisfaction and school safety, and 58 percent replied there was a positive impact on parent involvement. Specifically, in academics, ten of the 12 schools reported they had quantitative data to support the “Leader in Me” program’s positive impact on both reading and math scores (Hatch & Covey, 2012).

### *Methods*

This mixed-methods study utilized archival data, faculty surveys, and parent interviews in a program evaluation. The archival data consisted of Criterion Referenced Competency Test scores from the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 academic years and discipline referral data in the form of the average number of teacher referrals from the same years. The staff surveys and parent interviews gave the researcher information beyond the archival data.

### *Participants*

For the purpose of this evaluation, participants included all fifth grade students ( $n = 62$ ) in the 2011-2012 school year who attended the study school for grades two through five and had a score on the CRCT for all four years, parents who attended more than one session offered by school staff on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* ( $n = 3$ ), as well as all certified staff members at the school in central Georgia who were employed at the school for the 2009-2014 academic years and willing to complete the survey ( $n = 25$ ).

### *Procedures and Data Analysis*



Data in the form of responses from the anonymous staff survey were analyzed and reported in the study. Interviews with the three parents were set up and recorded. Recordings were transcribed by the researcher and analyzed for the study. Archived data were collected from the central Georgia school system in the form of raw CRCT data exported into an Excel spreadsheet and the school's teacher referral average for the years of the study. The researcher used descriptive analysis to identify trends and discuss study findings indicated by the data.

### *Limitations*

Purposive sampling was used in the study as all students who attended the study school from fall 2008 through the spring of 2012 were included. This selection was a threat to internal validity and external validity. This school and system may not be representative of other schools and systems due to location, population density, socio-economic status, parental involvement, and school size. Generalizing the results of the study and application to other populations should be done with caution. As the researcher was an administrator at the school throughout the implementation of the "Leader in Me" program and over the course of the study, researcher bias was also a threat to internal validity. Survey and interview results were interpreted by the researcher and filtered through the researcher's bias, which may have led to skewed data.

### *Summary of Findings*

School data from the third through fifth grade Georgia reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test showed an initial decrease in school scores from 92.9 percent passing in 2009 to 92.5 percent passing in 2010, then an increase to 93.3 percent in 2011 and a high of 95.5 percent in 2012. However, when looking at just the student

participants and comparing their scores with the system and state averages at that level, this researcher found an initial positive impact from 1.5 percent above the school system average to 2.5 percent above (3.3 percent to 5.2 percent above the state) after the initial year of implementation ended in a decrease to 1.7 percent below the system average and only 0.4 percent above the state by the final year of the study. This means there was an initial spike in test scores, but there was a decline in percent passing by the time the program was completely implemented as defined by the school achieving “Lighthouse” status. This aligns with the staff survey results as only one to two of the twenty-five staff members surveyed (for any given question) felt that a rise in academics in general were a positive outcome of implementing the program, with one staff member specifically stating that he or she did not believe test scores went up after implementation. The three parents who were interviewed also did not list academics or a raise in test scores as a positive outcome from implementing the “Leader in Me.”

Although the reviewed literature boasts positive changes in test scores in many geographic locations, additional research would need to be done to prove causation for program implementation to be a factor in student achievement. Continued tracking of this program and results was not possible because of school rezoning/restructuring and staffing and administrative changes, which prevented the ability of this researcher to learn if a positive impact on academics was lagging in this situation.

The average number of discipline referrals by teacher did not adhere to the same pattern. There was an initial increase in referrals, from 4.5 to 5 per teacher from the baseline year to the first year of “Leader in Me” implementation. Referrals dropped drastically to less than one per teacher in 2011 and ended at one per teacher in 2012.

This data is further supported by thirty-two percent of the staff who noted student behavior change in their written answers, seventy-nine percent who moderately or strongly felt the school culture improved, and two of the three parents noting positive behavior changes in their personal children. Based on the discipline data collected and stakeholder perception gathered through surveys and interviews, there is a suggested positive impact of “Leader in Me” program implementation on changing behaviors. Stakeholders’ perceptions of the positive effects of implementing the “Leader in Me” program in the middle Georgia elementary school focused more on character development in skills such as responsibility and leadership.

### *Discussion*

Both evaluation questions in this study dealt with the impact of implementing the “Leader in Me” program. Evaluation question one specifically looked at student academics as documented through stakeholder perceptions and reading Criterion Referenced Competency Test results. Gains posted in the literature included Dewey Elementary School student ISAT scores moving from 57.4 percent of students reading on grade level to 89.7 percent reading on grade level following implementation of the “Leader in Me” (Kingsbury, 2011). A.B. Combs Elementary in North Carolina showcased a gain of three percent on end of grade test scores (from 84 percent to 87 percent) when one teacher from each grade level was piloting the program, then scores grew to 94 percent reading on grade level the following year when all teachers were participating in the “Leader in Me” (Hatch and Collinwood, 2011). This study showed a negative impact on reading CRCT scores as over half of the students in the study posted lower scores each year of the study. The study school went from 95.2 percent reading on

grade level in 2009 prior to program implementation to 91.9 percent reading on grade level in 2012 following “Lighthouse” recognition as shown on the reading CRCT. This researcher is unsure of why the study findings were so different than the published literature but has some suggestions on what could have happened.

This researcher did not study whether the effects were short term or long term. Although the studies cited had immediate positive results on academics, a longer study may have highlighted effects at the study school that were not initially shown. The study school was rezoned after the 2013-2014 school year, changing grade levels served, neighborhoods attending, and staffing. The school went from a grade two through five school to a school serving students in grades Pre-kindergarten through fifth. Zoning led to a change in the students coming to the school, sending some current students to another elementary school as well as moving new students into the zone of the study school. During this school year, only some of the students in third through fifth grades were familiar with the “Leader in Me.” The program was new to all students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, and second grades. There were major staffing changes as well, with some staff being moved in and others moved out to other schools to better serve the grades with teachers experienced at that level. Additional training was done to keep the study school in the program, but with so many new staff and students new to the program, the school was not at the same implementation level as when it was named a “Lighthouse” school. Continuing to collect data would have led to skewed results.

This study did not take fidelity of implementation during the years of the study into account. This program was considered fully implemented at the study school as evidenced by the awarding of “Lighthouse” status by FranklinCovey. This showed that

the school met the implementation criteria in the nine required areas, however the staff survey showed that implementation was not ubiquitous as eight of the twenty-five certified staff members (32 percent) stated that they did not or only slightly integrated the seven habits into lesson plans while seven respondents (28 percent) strongly integrated them. Since some students were not being taught the habits as evidenced in the lesson plans and the habits were not integrated into the curriculum in all areas, some students may have had much less exposure to the program. The study did not differentiate between classes and the anonymous surveys did not give information on grades or subjects taught, so there was not a way to disaggregate the data based on what the teacher did with program implementation within the classroom. Staff in the schools that posted gains in academics may have been more focused on integrating the habits and principles into the curriculum. They may have also worked together more so that there was a more ubiquitous implementation.

It is difficult to isolate the effects of one practice on student behavior and academics as there are many other things that could simultaneously affect student work. Schools and systems entertain many new initiatives and programs each year. Curriculum changes and new resources are brought in each year to meet the needs of students. Some of these changes can have a positive effect on student academics and behavior. Others can take time away from learning and can confuse or detract from learning, having a negative effect. Since education is multi-faceted, there is not the opportunity to introduce one change at a time. As the study school was the first “Lighthouse” school in Georgia and the researcher was unable to find any studies on Georgia schools implementing the “Leader in Me,” it is possible that Georgia schools would not follow the trends found in

states such as Florida, Illinois, and North Carolina. Therefore, it is possible that the results of this study on “Leader in Me” implementation are skewed by other initiatives that had positive or negative effects on academics.

A final consideration is whether there are underlying issues in a school that were not identified during the study. The study school experienced some staffing changes due to the re-zoning discussed earlier in the chapter. There were also major staffing changes due to staff choosing to leave the school for various reasons. The assistant principal of discipline position was filled by four different individuals in the ten years from the start of “Leader in Me” implementation in 2009 to 2018. A new counselor and assistant principal of instruction was hired in January of 2017 when both individuals left the school. A new principal was hired in 2018, as well as another new assistant principal of discipline. A majority of the teachers and support staff, including newly hired individuals who worked for one year or less, left the study school over the same ten years. Due to staff turnover, only four of the approximately forty staff members on staff from 2009-2012 were still employed at the school in August of 2018. If there were unidentified issues and concerns that led to such a significant school restructuring, the data in the study could have been impacted and skewed.

Evaluation question two in this study looked at student behavior as documented through stakeholder perceptions and school discipline referral data. In this area, study data is similar to data reported in numerous studies cited in current and previous chapters. Discipline referrals in the study school went from an average of four and a half referrals per teacher in the year prior to “Leader in Me” implementation to an average of one per teacher in the year the school was named a “Lighthouse.” This is a decrease from

approximately 140 referrals per year to approximately 31 per year. Similarly, English Estates Elementary in Florida posted a decrease from 225 referrals to 74 referrals in a little more than one year (Hatch and Collinwood, 2011). Another school, Neil Armstrong Elementary, had a 60 percent decrease in discipline referrals two years after they implemented the “Leader in Me” (Hatch 2012). This researcher is unclear as to why behavior data matched other studies and academic data did not. It could be that teachers in the study school were more consistent in teaching students the habits as all twenty-five survey respondents either moderately or strongly said they had a good understanding of the habits as well as modeled the habits. There could also have been less detractors to behavior change as compared to academic change.

The study findings suggest an unfavorable impact on academics and a positive impact on student behavior, findings that are not aligned to other studies as the “Leader in Me” program has been implemented throughout the world. Research tied to this program indicates schools have seen positive changes in both academics and behavior, even though this study only found positive impacts on behavior. There are many possible reasons for this study to not align with other findings. For one, the extreme staff changes within five years of the end of the study could suggest that there were underlying issues that may have skewed the data. Also, this is a purchased program through a company in business to make money. It is possible that data showcasing a positive impact was more widely shared and advertised as it would be used to recommend the program to other schools. It is also possible that the program was not implemented with the same fidelity in the study school and this was shown in the academic results. This study looked at one

school in middle Georgia and the results should not be generalized but instead taken as information for this school at the time of initial implementation.

Another thing to consider when looking at the study results is whether academics are of equal or greater importance than character and discipline. Academics are a major focus of schools, but individuals do not always use many of the academic skills learned throughout years in school once they graduate. Many occupations focus on a limited or very specific knowledge base while school curriculums cover a broad spectrum of information. It is possible that much of the curriculum tested using the Criterion Referenced Competency Test is not necessary to be successful in life. On the other hand, components of discipline including character, responsibility, and the ability to work with others are skills that are used throughout many careers and in daily life as individuals interact with others. Perhaps the results of this study in the area of discipline are more important than academic results as these skills are ones that matter most.

This study was limited and data was possibly skewed due to major school, staff, and administrative changes. Not all schools go through this number of changes, but change is inevitable in education. Each year, a group of students move on to other elementary schools or middle school, while new students come in every grade. Staff members retire, move, or resign, while new staff members come in to take their places. Funding changes dictate availability to continue certain initiatives. The Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) underwent changes each year and testing for grades one and two was eliminated after the Spring 2012 testing. The state replaced the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) with the Georgia Milestones Assessment System after Spring 2014. These changes all impact program implementation and data



analysis. These are good reasons why researchers should view the results of individual studies with caution and avoid generalizations.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

Researchers interested in this field could replicate this study with new schools implementing the program. Georgia's new assessment system, the Georgia Milestones, provides schools with both a test score for each child as well as a growth score that compares each student with other students across the state with the same previous scores. This additional data would allow for a better comparison to test whether the gains being seen at a school were lower, in line with, or higher than gains in non-"Leader in Me" schools. Comparing two schools within a school system where one is implementing the "Leader in Me" and the other is not could reduce the number of extra initiatives and programs skewing the data. Gathering data from multiple schools could allow for more generalization of results.

A second line of research could be to study the continued effects on student academics and behavior when the school or students continue in the "Leader in Me" program. This option would be limited to schools who stayed with the program for a longer period or systems that have elementary, middle, and/or high schools implementing the "Leader in Me" together. Students who start at a "Leader in Me" school at the age of four for pre-kindergarten would have seven years in the program before moving to middle school for three years and high school for another four, versus the four years from second to fifth grade for this study. Continuing with the study would also allow a researcher to look at the teachers' years of experience in the "Leader in Me" program or

fidelity of implementation to test whether this experience translates to higher impact on student academics and behavior.

A third option for research would be to study if the effects of implementation lasted through middle or high school when the middle and high schools are not implementing the program. In the study system, students from multiple elementary schools combine into one middle school. Likewise, high schools are composed of students who attended different middle schools. This study would enable a researcher to compare students from a “Leader in Me” elementary school with students from a non-“Leader in Me” school who are sitting in the same middle or high school classrooms to study whether academic or behavior gains continue once students leave “Leader in Me” schools.

A fourth option would be to look at the effects of implementation on staff, students, and the families/community with the culture and climate of the school. Results of a study by Barkley, et al. found a statistically significant difference in school climate in schools that had implemented the “Leader in Me” program as compared with schools that had not (2014). According to Hatch (2008), Covey’s “Leader in Me” process consisted of three steps. The first step involved FranklinCovey training in Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* for all school staff in the school. In the next step, the staff members took the principles and made them ubiquitous, embedding them within the instruction and environment of the school while staff and students were given new leadership opportunities and responsibilities. The final step spread the focus to families and communities as students and staff took their learning to their homes (Hatch, 2008). A researcher could design the study to look at school climate and focus on the three

groups named in the steps of implementation: staff, students, and families/community. A study could take a school implementing the “Leader in Me” and analyze stakeholder perceptions from each of the three groups to identify the effects of program implementation on the climate of the school.

Administration and district personnel must make decisions each year on whether to continue allocating the time, resources, and training needed to continue implementing programs such as the “Leader in Me” with fidelity. Decisions would have to be made on whether the effects are worth the cost. More study, including a possible meta-analysis of all “Leader in Me” schools, is necessary to determine the full academic, behavioral, and climate effects of this program for future participating schools, and educators also have to decide which skills and results are most important.

## REFERENCES

- Agboda, A & Tsai, K. C. (2012). Bring character education into classroom. *European Journal of Educational Research, 1*(2). 163-170. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. EJ1086349).
- Aske, D. R., Connolly, L. S., & Corman, R. R. (2012). Accessibility or accountability? The rhetoric and reality of No Child Left Behind. *Proceedings of the Academy for Economics and Economic Education, 15*(2), Allied Academics International Conference, 1-3.
- Bae, S. (2018). Redesigning systems of school accountability: A multiple measures approach to accountability and support. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 26*(8), (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. EJ1169485).
- Barkley, B., Lee, D., & Eodens, D. (2014). Perceptions of school climate and culture. *eJournal of Education Policy, Fall*. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. EJ1158085).
- Barna, J. S. & Brott, P. E. (2011). How important is personal/social development to academic achievement? The elementary school counselor's perspective. *Professional School Counseling, 14*(3). 242-249.
- Bear, G. C. & Duquette, J. F. (2008). Fostering self-discipline. *Principal Leadership, 9*(2), 10-14.
- Birrell, J. R., Ostlund, M. R., Egan, M. W., Young, J. R., Cook, P. F., DeWitt, P. F., & Tibbitts, C. B. (1998). Collaboration, communities, and Covey: A model for personal and professional change. *The Clearing House, 71*(6), 359-362.
- Blau, H. (2010). *Improving student test scores: Winning the game without losing your soul*. Greenleaf Education, LLC: Waynesville, Missouri.
- Brannon, D. (2008). Character education – a joint responsibility. *Education Digest, 73*(8). 56-60.

- Collinwood, D. W. (2007). The effects of “7 Habits” training on perceived change at California University of Pennsylvania. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/7H\\_at\\_Cal\\_U.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/7H_at_Cal_U.pdf)
- Collinwood, D. W. (2008a) Organizational impact of the 7 Habits on schools and colleges. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Impact\\_of\\_7H\\_on\\_Schools\\_Colleges.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Impact_of_7H_on_Schools_Colleges.pdf)
- Collinwood, D. W. (2008b). Dreaming big in Guatemala. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Dreaming\\_Big\\_In\\_Guatemala\\_.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Dreaming_Big_In_Guatemala_.pdf)
- Collinwood, D. W. (2009). Preliminary reports on Quincy schools and the 7 Habits. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Quincy\\_Schools\\_and\\_TLIM.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Quincy_Schools_and_TLIM.pdf)
- Covey, S. R. (1989). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press: New York.
- Covey, S. R. (2008). *The Leader in Me*. Free Press: New York.
- Covey, S. R. (2010, April 20). Our children and the crisis in education [Web log post]. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-r-covey/our-children-and-the-cris\\_b\\_545034.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-r-covey/our-children-and-the-cris_b_545034.html)
- Covey, S. R., & Hatch, D. K. (n.d.). Promising news in education: How chambers of commerce, businesses, foundations and non-profits are working with schools to create leaders, one child at a time. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/sponsor\\_article.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/sponsor_article.pdf)
- Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (n.d.). Georgia Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci\\_testing.aspx?PageReq=CI\\_TESTING\\_CRCT](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_testing.aspx?PageReq=CI_TESTING_CRCT)

- Davis, J. R. (2017). From discipline to dynamic pedagogy: A re-conceptualization of classroom management. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 6(2), 129-153. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. EJ1169835).
- Dee, T. S., & Jacob, B. A. (2010). The impact of No Child Left Behind on students, teachers, and schools. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 149-207. Retrieved from [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/projects/bpea/fall%202010/2010b\\_bpea\\_dee.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/projects/bpea/fall%202010/2010b_bpea_dee.pdf)
- Denaux, Z. S., Stevenson, M., & Eichler, B. (2012). Can the schools in the state of Georgia meet 100% educational proficiency requirements by 2014? *Review of Business Research*, 12(1), 38-46.
- Discipline and referral. Retrieved 9/10/16 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>
- Durlak, J., & Weissberg, R. (2010). Social and emotional learning programmes that work. *Better: Evidence-based Education*. 4-5. Retrieved from [http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/better\\_social\\_emotional\\_learning1.pdf](http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/better_social_emotional_learning1.pdf)
- FranklinCovey (n.d.a). *Achieving schoolwide goals: Level 2 – lighthouse team training*. FranklinCovey.
- FranklinCovey (n.d.b). *The impact of The Leader in Me*. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Impact\\_Praise\\_for\\_TLI\\_M.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Impact_Praise_for_TLI_M.pdf)
- FranklinCovey (2006). *Success story: Independent school district*. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Independent\\_School\\_District\\_TX.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Independent_School_District_TX.pdf)

FranklinCovey (2007a). *Success Story: Dewey Elementary School, Quincy, Illinois*.

FranklinCovey. Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org>.

FranklinCovey (2007b). *Vision at a Puerto Rican university*. FranklinCovey.

Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/>

[Vision\\_at\\_Puerta\\_Rican\\_Univ.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2008). *Culture change at Shutoka High School*. FranklinCovey.

Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/>

[Shutoku\\_High\\_School.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2010a). *Joseph Welch Elementary School*. FranklinCovey. Retrieved

From [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Joseph\\_Welch](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Joseph_Welch)

[\\_TLIM.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2010b). *Klostermarksskolen, Roskilde, Denmark: What do we want for*

*our children?* FranklinCovey. Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org/>

[uploads/Documents/results/Klostermarksscholen\\_Denmark.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2011a). *The Leader in Me at Fremont Elementary School*.

FranklinCovey. Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/>

[Documents/results/Fremont\\_Elementary\\_TLIM.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2011b). *The 7 Habits in Equador: Colegio Americano*. FranklinCovey.

Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents>

[/results/Colegio\\_Americano\\_Ecuador.pdf](#)

FranklinCovey (2016a). *Questions and Answers*. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from

<http://www.theleaderinme.org/footer-menu/q-a/>

FranklinCovey (2016b). *What is the Leader in me?* FranklinCovey. Retrieved from

<http://www.theleaderinme.org/what-is-the-leader-in-me/>

- Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.). College and Career Ready Performance Index. Retrieved from <https://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx>
- Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.). Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci\\_testing.aspx?PageReq=CI\\_TESTING\\_CRCT](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_testing.aspx?PageReq=CI_TESTING_CRCT)
- Gewertz, C. (2008). States press ahead on '21<sup>st</sup> century skills'. *Education Week*, 28(8), 21-23.
- Grant, Caryn (2012, January 26), Tucker Elementary in Perry becomes state's first Lighthouse School, *Macon Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.macon.com>.
- Hatch, D. (2011). *The Leader in Me: What it is, how it is delivered, and the promising results it is seeing*. *Franklin-Covey Education*.
- Hatch, D. (2012). *The Leader in Me: Promising results*. Meeting of the Arkansas State Legislature, p.1-11. Retrieved from <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2013/Meeting%20Attachments/410/110574/The%20Leader%20in%20Me%20Promising%20Results.pdf>
- Hatch, D., & Collinwood, D. (2011). *The Leader in Me: Promising results*. FranklinCovey. Retrieved from <http://www.theleaderinme.org>.
- Hatch, D., & Covey, J. (2012). *The Leader in Me: Developing leaders, one child at a time! Impacts of The Leader in Me at Lighthouse Schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Lighthouse\\_Schools\\_Impact\\_v3.12.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Lighthouse_Schools_Impact_v3.12.pdf)
- Hoffman, L. L., Hutchinson, C. J., & Reiss, E. (2009). On improving school climate: Reducing reliance on rewards and punishment. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 5(1), 13-24.
- Kingsbury, K. (2008, November 21). The 7 habits of highly effective schools. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com>



- Leming, J. S. (1997). Whither goes character education? Objectives, pedagogy, and research in education programs. *Journal of Education, 179* (2), 11-34.
- Leonard, D. C. (2008). The impact of learning goals on emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence competency development. *Journal of Management Development, 27*(1), 109-128.
- Lighthouse Research and Development, Inc. (2015, April), *The Leader in Me Parent Perceptions Survey Report*.
- Maleyko, G., & Gawlik, M.A. (2011). No Child Left Behind: What we know and what we need to know. *Education, 131*(3), 600-624.
- Martin, L. T. (2004). The seven habits of highly effective physical educators. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 75*(2). 47-52.
- McCaw, D. S. (2007). Dangerous intersection ahead. *School Administrator, 64*(2), 32-34.
- Moran, S., Kornhaber, M., & Gardner, H. (2006). Orchestrating multiple intelligences. *Educational Leadership, 64*(1), 22-27.
- Noddings, N. (2005). What does it mean to educate the whole child? *Educational Leadership, 63*(1), 8-13.
- Ohlson, M., & Dow, J. (2011). Leaders for life: Summative evaluation report. Grant submitted to South Florida Workforce Development Board, Florida Department of Education.
- Parker, D. C., Nelson, J. S., & Burns, M. K. (2010). Comparison of correlates of classroom behavior problems in schools with and without a school-wide character education program. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*(8), 817-827.
- Pearson, Q. M., & Nicholson, J. (2000). Comprehensive character education in the elementary school: Strategies for administrators, teachers, and counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development, 38*(4). 243-251.

- Principal Perspectives on Whole-School Improvement Programs and “The Leader in Me” (2016, January 7), *Education Direction Center for Education Reform*, Retrieved from <http://eddirection.com/white-papers/principal-perspectives-whole-school-improvement-programs-leader/>
- Reichrath, M. R., & Cox, K. (2006). Guidance for the implementation of Georgia’s Single Statewide Accountability System State Board of Education Chapter 160-7-1. *In State of Georgia Consolidated State Application Workbook* (pp. 64-96). Retrieved from <http://archives.doe.k12.ga.us>
- Ross, S., Laurenzano, M., & Daniels, C. (2012). Implementation quality and outcomes of *The Leader in Me* (TLIM) program: Case studies at two diverse elementary schools. Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from [http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Johns\\_Hopkins\\_cases.pdf](http://www.theleaderinme.org/uploads/Documents/results/Johns_Hopkins_cases.pdf)
- Rubin, H. (2005). What does “raise the bar” really mean? *School Administrator*, 62(11), 48.
- Scherer, M. (2006). Celebrate strengths, nurture affinities: A conversation with Mel Levine. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 8-15.
- Schraw, G. (2010). No school left behind. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(2), 71-75.
- Stiff-Williams, H. R. (2010). Viewpoint: Widening the lens to teach character education alongside standards curriculum. *The Clearing House*, 83(4). 115-120.
- Tucker Elementary 2009-2010 School Report Card, Retrieved from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&SchoolId=23579&T=1&FY=2010>
- Tucker Elementary 2010-2011 School Report Card, Retrieved from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&SchoolId=23579&T=1&FY=2011>

Webley, K. (2012). Why it's time to replace No Child Left Behind. *Time*, 179(3), 40-44.

Wong, H., & Wong, R. (2012). The highest rated school in New York City. *Teachers.Net Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://teachers.net/wong/FEB12/wongprint.html>

Appendix A: IRB from Valdosta State University



*Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
for the Protection of Human Research Participants*

**PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT**

---

PROTOCOL NUMBER:      IRB-03005-2013                                      INVESTIGATOR:      Patricia Bolden  
PROJECT TITLE:              An Evaluation of the "Leader in Me" Program Implementation in a Central Georgi Elementary School

---

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is exempt from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) 1&2. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator ([irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu)) before continuing your research.

---

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:**

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal:

- If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

---

*Elizabeth W. Olphie*                                      1/15/14  
Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator          Date

*Thank you for submitting an IRB application.  
Please direct questions to [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) or 229-259-5045.*

Appendix B: Permission to do Research from Houston County 1



DR. JAMES R. HINES, JR., SUPERINTENDENT

FRED WILSON, VICE CHAIRMAN  
HELEN HUGHES  
DAVE McMAHAN

**BOARD MEMBERS**  
DR. MARIANNE MELNICK, CHAIRMAN

SKIP DAWKINS  
JIM MADDOX  
DR. RICK UNRUH

DATE: February 26, 2014  
TO: Patricia Bolden  
Tucker Elementary School  
FROM: Sharon Moore  
Director of Professional Learning  
SUBJECT: **RESEARCH APPROVAL REQUEST**

Your request to conduct research for your graduate program at Valdosta State University is approved. The purpose of your study, *"An Evaluation of the "Leader in Me" Program Implementation in a Central Georgia Elementary School"*, will be to examine the Program implemented by Tucker Elementary from 2009 through the current school year. The timeframe for this research study is one year from the date of system approval.

Thank you for submitting your IRB form, focus group questions, survey, and the principal approval letter.

Please keep in mind that you will be responsible for compiling the data for your research. The staff at Tucker Elementary School and the Department of Testing and Information Technology is unable to compile data for your research. Board policy also prohibits the use of system email for personal research. Please also remember student and teacher anonymity is of utmost priority for this research project.

I have attached to this memorandum the Houston County Schools Requirements for Conducting Research.

I wish you the best as you work toward earning your graduate degree. Please let me know if I may be of any assistance to you again in the future.

cc: Mark Scott  
Kim Halstead

P.O. BOX 1850 • PERRY, GEORGIA 31069  
(478) 988-6200 • FAX (478) 988-6259  
WWW.HCBE.NET

Appendix C: Permission to do Research from Houston County 2





SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
DR. MARK SCOTT

BOARD MEMBERS  
MR. FRED WILSON, CHAIRMAN

HELEN HUGHES, VICE CHAIRMAN  
LORI JOHNSON  
DR. RICK UNRUH

DAVE CROCKETT  
HOKE MORROW  
BRYAN UPSHAW

DATE: March 8, 2017  
TO: Patricia Bolden  
Thomson Middle School  
FROM: Sharon Moore  
Director of Professional Learning  
SUBJECT: **RESEARCH APPROVAL REQUEST**

Your request to conduct research for your graduate program at Valdosta State University is approved. The purpose of your study, "*An Evaluation of the Leader in Me Program Implementation in a Central Georgia Elementary School*", will be to investigate the effects of implementing Covey's "Leader in Me" program on student achievement and student discipline at Tucker Elementary, a Title 1 school in central Georgia. The timeframe for this research study is one year from the date of system approval. This is the second approval request. The original request was approved on February 26, 2014.

Thank you for submitting your IRB Form, focus group questions, and the principal approval letters.

Please keep in mind that you will be responsible for compiling the data for your research. The staff at Tucker Elementary School, Thomson Middle School, and the Departments of Assessment & Accountability and Technology Services is unable to compile data for your research. Board policy also prohibits the use of system email for personal research. Please also remember student and teacher anonymity is of utmost priority for this research project.

I have attached to this approval e-mail the Houston County Schools Requirements for Conducting Research.

I wish you the best as you work toward earning your graduate degree. Please let me know if I may be of any assistance to you again in the future.

cc: Cindy Flesher  
Walter Stephens  
Kim Halstead

P.O. Box 1850 • PERRY, GEORGIA 31069  
(478) 988-6200 • FAX (478) 988-6259  
WWW.HCBE.NET

## Appendix D: Staff Survey

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled “An Evaluation of the ‘Leader in Me’ Program Implementation in a Central Georgia Elementary School,” which is being conducted by Patricia Bolden, a student at Valdosta State University. This survey is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Patricia Bolden at 478-396-8146 or [pgbolden@valdosta.edu](mailto:pgbolden@valdosta.edu). This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

- 1. Has your level of satisfaction with the school changed since implementation of the “Leader in Me”? Please explain.**

---



---



---



---



---

- 2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at your school, to what extent do you feel about yourself:**

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>	<b>Slightly Observed</b>	<b>Moderately Observed</b>	<b>Strongly Observed</b>
<b>a.</b>	<b>I have a good understanding of the seven habits.</b>				
<b>b.</b>	<b>I model the seven habits.</b>				
<b>c.</b>	<b>I work more effectively in my grade level team.</b>				
<b>d.</b>	<b>I am more organized/focused in my classroom.</b>				

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>	<b>Slightly Observed</b>	<b>Moderately Observed</b>	<b>Strongly Observed</b>
<b>e.</b>	<b>We share “Leader in Me” ideas with one another.</b>				
<b>f.</b>	<b>I seek to understand student and parent needs more.</b>				
<b>g.</b>	<b>I integrate the seven habits into my lesson plans.</b>				
<b>h.</b>	<b>My talents are utilized more.</b>				

**3. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and teaching the seven habits at your school, to what extent have you observed the following regarding parents:**

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>	<b>Slightly Observed</b>	<b>Moderately Observed</b>	<b>Strongly Observed</b>
<b>a.</b>	<b>Parents report that students apply the seven habits at home.</b>				
<b>b.</b>	<b>Parents are more involved at the school.</b>				
<b>c.</b>	<b>More parents attend student conferences.</b>				
<b>d.</b>	<b>Parents are more satisfied with the school in general.</b>				

**4. Following implementation of the “Leader in Me” at your school,**

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>	<b>Slightly Observed</b>	<b>Moderately Observed</b>	<b>Strongly Observed</b>
<b>a.</b>	<b>The seven habits have become a common language.</b>				
<b>b.</b>	<b>The school’s mission and goals are more clear and focused.</b>				

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>	<b>Slightly Observed</b>	<b>Moderately Observed</b>	<b>Strongly Observed</b>
<b>c.</b>	<b>We have an effective way to measure progress toward goals.</b>				
<b>d.</b>	<b>Hallway displays are inspiring.</b>				
<b>e.</b>	<b>School administrators model the seven habits.</b>				
<b>f.</b>	<b>The leadership theme is visible in school-wide activities.</b>				
<b>g.</b>	<b>Non-teaching staff actively participate in the “Leader in Me”.</b>				
<b>h.</b>	<b>The seven habits are reinforced in staff meetings/trainings.</b>				
<b>i.</b>	<b>A strong team is in place to lead the “Leader in Me” efforts.</b>				
<b>j.</b>	<b>The overall culture of the school has improved.</b>				

**5. Have you experienced a change in your confidence that students are learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?**

---



---



---



---



---



---

**6. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students?**

---



---



---



---



---

**7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for your staff/school?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Appendix E: Parent Interview Questions

## Parent Interview Questions

1. Did your level of satisfaction with the school change after the implementation of the “Leader in Me”? Please explain.
2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and the teaching of the seven habits at your child’s school, do you feel that the students applied the seven habits at home?
3. Did you feel more involved at the school?
4. Did you attend more student conferences?
5. Did you feel more satisfied with the school in general?
6. Do you think that students are learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?
7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students?
8. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for the elementary school?



## Appendix F: Staff Survey Results

## Staff Survey

There were twenty-five respondents to the staff survey. Responses are as follows:

1. Has your level of satisfaction with the school changed since implementation of the “Leader in Me”? Please explain.

Response 1: *No. I don't really think they apply the information to everyday situations. They may feel good about having a job – but they don't act like a leader in other situations.*

Response 2: *Yes. The school culture has benefited immensely and that increases my satisfaction.*

Response 3: *Yes, increased community, common language and bigger purpose.*

Response 4: *Yes! The students are taking responsibility for themselves and their certain roles.*

Response 5: *Yes, there is more classroom and school-wide management strategies*

Response 6: *No*

Response 7: *Yes students are more easily able to handle leadership roles*

Response 8: *Yes. Students have become more responsible due to the fact that (they) have taken ownership of their behavior, academics, and goal setting*

Response 9: *Yes; however, it has been difficult not to make 7 habits “one more thing”. I also don't believe that our test scores are improving since 7 habits.*

Response 10: *I have really enjoyed the Leader in Me program at our school. The students take ownership of behaviors and allows for more quality education to occur.*

Response 11: *No*

2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and applying the seven habits at your school, to what extent do you feel about yourself:

	Question	Not	Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
a.	I have a good understanding of the seven habits.	0	0	10	15
b.	I model the seven habits.	0	0	12	13
c.	I work more effectively in my grade level team.	1	0	13	11
d.	I am more organized/focused in my classroom.	1	3	13	8
e.	We share “Leader in Me” ideas with one another.	3	3	10	9
f.	I seek to understand student and parent needs more.	1	3	9	12
g.	I integrate the seven habits into my lesson plans.	1	7	10	7
h.	My talents are utilized more.	2	5	11	7

3. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and teaching the seven habits at your school, to what extent have you observed the following regarding parents:

	Question	Not Observed	Slightly Observed	Moderately Observed	Strongly Observed
a.	Parents report that students apply the seven habits at home.	4	9	10	2
b.	Parents are more involved at the school.	7	13	4	1
c.	More parents attend student conferences.	8	9	6	1
d.	Parents are more satisfied with the school in general.	4	7	12	2

4. Following implementation of the “Leader in Me” at your school,

	Question	Not Observed	Slightly Observed	Moderately Observed	Strongly Observed
a.	The seven habits have become a common language.	1	3	9	12
b.	The school’s mission and goals are more clear and focused.	1	2	4	18
c.	We have an effective way to measure progress toward goals.	1	4	8	11
d.	Hallway displays are inspiring.	1	3	8	14
e.	School administrators model the seven habits.	1	1	7	14
f.	The leadership theme is visible in school-wide activities.	1	3	5	16
g.	Non-teaching staff actively participate in the “Leader in Me”.	2	7	7	9
h.	The seven habits are reinforced in staff meetings/trainings.	1	5	3	16
i.	A strong team is in place to lead the “Leader in Me” efforts.	1	2	8	14
j.	The overall culture of the school has improved.	3	2	12	7

5. Have you experienced a change in your confidence that students are learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?

Response 1: *Not really – students are still not showing self-control/respect*

Response 2: *Yes*

Response 3: *Yes, 7 habits are principle based and therefore VERY relevant to their future. They provide a framework for teaching and learning.*

Response 4: *No*

Response 5: *Yes, they have become inspired to become a leader and set an example for others*

Response 6: *Some students have drastically learned life-changing skills and some have not yet applied them.*

Response 7: *No*

Response 8: *No*

Response 9: *Yes*

Response 10: *No*

Response 11: *Yes*

Response 12: *I believe the program has changed the majority of the students*

Response 13: *They have adjusted well to data talks/discussions and classroom jobs*

Response 14: *Students are able to learn how to balance the 7 habits and learn how to apply them at school and later in society.*

Response 15: *Yes. Students are learning to set goals and create a plan of action that can be used throughout life*

Response 16: *Minimal changes*

Response 17: *Yes – being in charge of their actions and setting goals will be skills that are used in life*

6. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students?

Response 1: *Students feel like they are important having a job/responsibility*

Response 2: *Student work ethics. School culture*

Response 3: *Improved culture, language to articulate these principles, practice setting and achieving goals.*

Response 4: *Leadership jobs*

Response 5: *Leadership jobs have changed some attitudes in a positive way*

Response 6: *Responsibility, being a production leader, being a role model for younger students*

Response 7: *Taking responsibility, working with others, setting goals*

Response 8: *Student growth (academically), student responsibility (accountability), leadership opportunities*

Response 9: *None*

Response 10: *Goal setting, focus on future, positive climate*

Response 11: *Fosters creativity in areas outside leadership, students accept leadership roles/responsibilities, common language school-wide*

Response 12: *Responsibility, goal-setting, leadership*

Response 13: *Classroom jobs/data notebooks/leadership cards/(orange cards)*

Response 14: *Taking ownership of behavior, applying habits to real life, setting them up to success*

Response 15: *Students take ownership of their actions/learning, students applies the habits outside of school, increase of student confidence*

Response 16: *Leadership roles for students, becoming familiar with long and short term goals, and motivating students to focus on leadership traits*

Response 17: *Being in charge of their actions, setting goals and checking to see if they met that goal*

7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for your staff/school?

Response 1: *Creating confidence in students. Modeling the habits. Improving school culture.*

Response 2: *Targeted goal setting and measuring student progress with scoreboards, common framework for classroom management, personal growth.*

Response 3: *Believing in the students, giving out more responsibility to students, doing less work*

Response 4: *Setting goals, modeling leadership, working together*

Response 5: *Maybe it helps some have tools to use (or language) with students.*

Response 6: *Sharing leadership roles, balance work/play, time management*

Response 7: *None*

Response 8: *Goal setting, focus on future, positive climate*

Response 9: *Releasing control to students, building 7 habits lifestyle, working toward common goals*

Response 10: *Holding ourselves and helping others accountable. Collaboration.*

Response 11: *Self-awareness/improvement, classroom jobs, leadership cards*

Response 12: *Working smarter not harder as a team, balancing home and work*

Response 13: *Learned the importance of balancing school/home*

Response 14: *Students set goals and regularly evaluate those goals to see if they are met and to set new goals for learning and for behavior.*

Appendix G: Parent Interview 1



## Parent Interview 1

All of this is dealing with the implementation of the leader in me at a local elementary school that you were involved in and I specifically am only trying to get questions from parents who went to some of the classes, some of the parent classes on the leader in me because I feel like they know more about what the program really is.

1. Did your level of satisfaction with the elementary school change with the implementation of the “Leader in Me”? Please explain.

*I always, um, I loved the school that my kids went to. Um, in the beginning, it, being as their school was the first one in the county to have implemented, or even in Georgia I think if I remember correctly to have implemented this, yes, I was very impressed. Um I think it's a great idea. Number one, it's based on a book for adults so if you catch them early, you know, you might not need the adult book as often. So, I would say yes, at first I was um I was very impressed with the type of concern and the type of um consideration that was taken for this program in the beginning when it was first implemented so yes.*

2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and the teaching of the seven habits at your child’s school, do you feel that the students applied the seven habits at home?

*Um, I think they are more likely to try. I know we tried. Um, we weren't always successful, I mean, because once the kids get to a certain age it's not cool anymore and I am not sure exactly how to help with that because you know fourth and fifth grade usually it's just it's a tough age um but yeah we would try and we were even, we even still try, you know are you being proactive, are you doing, putting first things first, are you looking to see what the best option is so that both people can be satisfied and that one person doesn't have to lose kind of thing. Um, so yeah we still try and even then we really did, we really did try.*

3. Did you feel more involved at the school?

*Yes, yes we did.*

4. Did you attend more student conferences?

*Well we always attended them anyway but um yeah no we were more likely to attend something because of that, because it made the school, it made it seem like they cared.*

5. Did you feel more satisfied with the school in general?

*I think, yeah, I did. I think it was implemented pretty much when my son was in second or third grade. It was fairly soon after I think he even started there. Um, maybe but yeah no we, I was I was generally very satisfied with the school my children attended.*

6. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students?

*I think it helped one, I think it helps them focus more on looking, when it’s hard to do even as an adult, but looking more past just elementary school and helps them to recognize that the choices they make now can affect what they are able to do when they are older whether its adults or just in middle school. Um, so I appreciated that plus it brought more concern for others other than just themselves. It made them look outside of just their needs and maybe what can I do to help somebody else or how can we both get what we want. Um, and then just the general wanting to be a leader and wanting to do the right thing and be looked up to and whatever. So, yeah, I was very impressed with the program.*

7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for the elementary school?

*Well, one obviously I think it gives it recognition which helps because when you have a school who you know when the lines changed and your geography of the school changes, um, you know the leader in me was implemented before that happened but I do think it gets more recognition for the school and then therefore more possible help or at least yes to the help that they ask for. Um, plus it gives the school a good reputation and who doesn’t want that. And third I think it makes it feel more like a community, that you are all on the same page, that you all want the same things, that it’s not just lip service.*

8. You mentioned that you still try to use the habits. Now it has been many years since your kids have been at the elementary school with it being a leader in me school. Do you feel like they still use the habits, that it has been something that has followed them, or do you think it is something they just used in elementary school and then kind of let fall by the wayside?

*Well you know I think a lot of it has to do with the child’s makeup. I think you could have two, three, four children from the same family and you are still not going to find the same person, you know. Um, I, my daughter has always been way more likely to follow those kinds of things than my son. Um, even when he was in elementary school he knew everything. I mean, we were unneeded. We just, I am just not sure legally I think that’s the only reason he kept us around because he couldn’t legally do anything on his own but other than that he um,*

*yeah, he knows everything. So, but we try, we still remind him, daily, you know, you need to make the right choice, you need to do first things first, be proactive, keep the end in mind. Is the decision you are making now going to benefit you ten minutes from now. Let's just go ten minutes. Is this decision right now that you are making going to benefit you in ten minutes, let alone a year, two years from now? So, we still try. Is he more likely to implement them, uh, I don't know? But my daughter is.*

9. Is there anything else that you would like to share, or anything else about the implementation of the leader in me program or um what it has done either for the school, the community, or your kids?

*Well I think that when obviously when the leader in me first was implemented it was the focus. Um, as my kids went through the school and eventually left I was not as active there. But I know, just based on you know when I was there or other schools that have also implemented it, I think that it, it does not have the focus that it once did. And I think that if you could bring that back somehow, then I think that it would still be a great thing for the school. I think it has just lost some of its excitement and maybe, yeah, I mean maybe it didn't have the results that they wanted so the effort wasn't put into it anymore. Or I don't know. I do know that when it was first implemented it was, it was, very exciting and I think it was very good for the school and very good for the kids. Even if, you know being a person of faith I think we or I know that I am going to come into contact with that I am not going to see the end result with. That I am going to affect people, but I am not going to know how. Because that's just not my job. My job was to touch their life somehow hopefully in a good way and then somebody else comes along and waters that or you know whatever. And I think the leader in me is that. That even though we don't necessarily see it in my son right now, that doesn't mean that we won't, we won't see the effects of it. And I think that is what we have to remember is that even though some of the school systems in this county have a bad reputation for behavior, especially the elementary schools, um, that doesn't mean that you don't keep trying. That doesn't mean that you don't stay focused on what needs to be done um and just because it has stopped working doesn't mean it never did. So, I wouldn't give up on it and that kind of thing and I definitely don't give up on the kids even though it seems like they are half grown and that kind of thing. But so that's my thing –this age is temporary but the effects of what they have learned or have been shown or have felt from their administration or their teachers is lasting.*

Appendix H: Parent Interview 2

## Parent Interview 2

1. Did your level of satisfaction with the school change when the “Leader in Me” was implemented? Please explain.

*Yes, I would say that it went up because I really was thrilled with the program after hearing and learning what it was about. I was excited to see the energy and enthusiasm that it brought, and it definitely increased uh my love for the school and the staff, implementing.*

2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and the teaching of the seven habits at your child’s school, do you feel that your kids applied the seven habits at home?

*My youngest daughter, much more so. I think my middle daughter was maybe a little bit earlier than the time y’all got the certification or whatever, I think y’all were just starting it with her but my youngest daughter, yes, I saw that she started really especially first things first. She would come home, drop her stuff, maybe have a quick snack, but then right away go to the table to start her some work so she knew she needed to get that out of the way before she had play time. So that’s probably one of the biggest areas that I noticed. I didn’t so much um notice the other areas like talking about them or things changing but that was so great I loved that one, yeah,*

3. Did you feel more involved at the school because of leader in me?

*Well, yeah I loved learning about it, the class that another parent and I took, I loved um hearing about it and thought that it was great information. Very helpful and I loved how the school was trying to pull in parents to be a part of it, and like the ceremony that they had was action packed and super exciting and how they had guest speakers and I was asked to speak a little bit about it and I loved that and it was just a real time of um celebration and encouragement for the students. I liked watching the students become leaders with awards programs and just giving them confidence in stepping up.*

4. Did you attend more student conferences?

*Maybe a couple more. I really can’t remember how many more I would have come to but maybe a few more.*

5. Did you feel more satisfied with the school in general?

*Yes.*

6. Do you think that the students through the leader in me were learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?  
*Yes. Definitely. I was trying to think back to the uh win-win one. And how it involved compromise and how you could work out a solution so you could both be um able to succeed and I just remember going down the road one time with my neighbors daughter who also went to the school and um she did not like the decision her mom made with her little brother because I don't know if there was a fight going on or what but I remember her using the lingo and saying mom this is not a win-win situation for us. You know you are being completely unfair in taking his side and we need to work this out in a better way or something like that. And, so I thought wow the kids are hearing and learning and understanding what this means.*
7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for students?  
*Um, probably one I think off right off the bat is developing their self-confidence to be able to step up even at young ages and say I can do something I can because the principal was so good about giving them roles, jobs at awards ceremonies or wherever in the lunchroom or wherever she did that I think always instills confidence when they take those positions early on so that would be the biggest one I noticed right away. Um, let's see what was the question again? (Interviewer repeated question). Okay greatest benefits. Um I guess other than self-confidence, self-esteem, feeling like they are contributing, they are helping out, that's always a good thing for kids to feel like they are a part of something. Um and then like I said with my youngest daughter what I noticed was her learning the habits that will benefit her for the rest of her life if she continues with that getting her priorities straight doing first things first.*
8. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the “Leader in Me” for the school itself?  
*I think it brought a lot of unity in the school where everybody was rallying together to pull it off first of all to get the certification, so I think that was a huge thing where they were all working toward the common goal. And the principal and all the staff played a big role in that really, really impressing on the kids you know and making it fun for them to be a part of that so that was really neat to witness and I remember the day that the ceremony was taking place and what a big deal it was and she was radioing people and saying they've landed or whatever and so it was a time of great excitement and so I think that was a real spirit of unity and celebration which kids love to be a part of that for the school. Um, other than that I am sure, just I would think that it would help teachers in*

*classrooms because everybody is on the same page with the language and then so I would think that each individual teacher in their classroom was teaching and this would be carried out thought their years at the school and then it would continue on from there. But, basically they are all being taught the same thing and teachers working together um I didn't witness too much else firsthand other than those things. For the benefits of the school, just like I said the unity and*

9. You mentioned the habits they might use for life. Have you noticed your kids using any of the habits or anything they learned through the leader in me since they have gotten out of elementary school?

*Um, I probably have to be refreshed on the leader in me habits, but um my youngest, the one who went through it the most, she is very disciplined and organized and like I said puts first things first and she is a good compromiser and I remember that one so I am definitely sure that with the years she had the teaching it is still carrying over even though we may not still use the language any more I believe they had an impact on her.*

10. Is there anything else you want to share about the leader me or the implementation or anything else that I haven't asked you?

*Um, just that I think it is an amazing program not just for kids but for families too like I loved the class learning about it and I thought that would be so beneficial if more families would take it together so that the parents could be on the same page teaching their kids and reinforcing those habits and it is not just for the kids, for parents, just the adults in general to implement in their lives. Just the disciplines that they were teaching of compromise and think of the other one first before you think of yourself. That is just huge. And there would be a lot less fights and struggles if we all did that so I think it is an awesome program.*

Appendix I: Parent Interview 3



### Parent Interview 3

1. Did your level of satisfaction with the school change after the implementation of the “Leader in Me”? Please explain.

*I think it changed just because we were told we were certified, we were um, I remember we were told that we were the first school in Georgia who had this program so yeah as a parent I am proud to say that my kid has the benefit or the privilege to enjoy this program. So yes.*

2. As a result of implementing the “Leader in Me” and the teaching of the seven habits at your child’s school, do you feel that the students applied the seven habits at home?

*I think so. I think so. At that moment. Not every day, not all the time. Or at least they tried. Like for example, be proactive. Like instead of saying do your homework now I would say I was changing my words, my vocabulary. And they were forced to do it just because I wanted them to do the homework so I used the “proactive” word but I am not sure they really assimilated it. Like digested it, no.*

3. Did you feel more involved at the school?

*At that point yes because I was at the conference, at the events... yes, so that’s yes.*

4. Did you attend more student conferences?

*My kids never needed conferences. My kids never needed it.*

5. Did you feel more satisfied with the school in general?

*I was always happy with the school before. Um, I don’t think it made a difference to me. It made me more proud. It was a privilege to be a part of this program, but uh I always liked the school. I was proud to be a part of the “Leader in Me”, I was happy they had the program, but if the program moved to another school and the elementary school was going to be without it, I would keep my kids there.*

6. Do you think that students are learning the skills necessary to be successful in life?

*That is a very interesting question because it is tough for me to answer this question because both kids have been leaders. Since little. Maybe the school or the program – when was the program established, when my daughter was little? (Researcher said 2009 so if that was 8 years ago – your daughter was in first grade and son was in 3<sup>rd</sup>). So both of my kids have been leaders, they haven’t*

*been kids who you would have to push them from the beginning so it is hard for me to tell if there is a difference before and after. However, I think that leader thing and you know my daughter giving speeches over this, no doubt it has helped. Opportunities, experiences, testimonies, it is a growing experience. So yes, I am happy we have the program because it gives them opportunities, it gives them chances, something different. I think to this point my kids are very responsible, homework is done first, I think I fought with my daughter one time in first grade when she didn't want to do her homework and she had a very dirty paper. And I said you are going to do this homework again. She threw herself on the floor, she cried, I told her, "that's it." She realized that no matter how hard she screamed, how she cried, I wasn't going to change my mind. Since that moment, no problem. I think that my parenting plan, I think it is a team. I mean the word "leader" is huge, I mean it is psychological for the kids. Even if they don't digest it, just hearing it, hearing it, hearing it. I think that's awesome. It gives them structure. And what I like about the program is that it is teaching for life. They might forget "be proactive", or I don't remember the other ones. – that is like you know you are saying to a girl you're ugly, you're ugly, you're ugly. She is going to believe she is ugly. Do this and all of this, I love habits instead. You can tell me my kid is failing math but for me the more important is how respectful and responsible they are. And I do think that it struck them a lot. It is hard to prove though.*

7. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the "Leader in Me" for students?

*You know, when you invite people from other schools, from other towns, to show them your talent, or your skills, that's a great benefit. Because for me, and that's what I talked about, at that moment it builds confidence. They feel important. Shown up as leaders. At least build confidence. Also encourage them to have talents. I remember you were doing separate stuff like giving speeches, I know I remember when you go you have all these kids with nametags and they were actually the leaders, showing the school. So, definitely builds confidence, talent.*

8. What do you believe have been the three greatest benefits of the "Leader in Me" for the elementary school?

*As a parent, the only thing that I can tell from the school is that I was proud that the school had this and this and this, like something different. I don't know how it affects you, the teachers, the work with the principal. At one point, I don't know. I don't know the principal very well. I am pretty sure that everybody worked hard but I always saw the principal. I don't know – for the school. You mean as a parent – what I hear? I don't think it was safer. I only saw the same parents there, when we want to work with the school we work with the school no matter*

*what. I don't know if it is a safer place but a little more with a level that is higher. Like more like "Hum". Not privileged... more respected. I saw the principal in different interviews and stuff so that is definitely good – I don't know if only for her or for the school. It can be a difference. But if the school has leaders and students that are leaders then the school is definitely great. So, I answered this question - if the students are better, then the school is definitely better. But this is connected. I don't think this is separated... because the school is the students.*

9. You mentioned the habits they might use for life. Have you noticed your kids using any of the habits or anything they learned through the leader in me since they have gotten out of elementary school?

*I think that this is hard to answer because my kids have always been leaders. My kids are very responsible, so yes, homework is done first. It is hard to prove, though. I do think the teaching is for life, but not the words, maybe. So, yes, I think maybe they use this for life.*

10. Is there anything else you want to share about the leader me or the implementation or anything else that I haven't asked you?

*No*