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# A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE LEADER IN ME

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A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE LEADER IN ME

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# ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE LEADER IN ME

Krystina N. White

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." – John Quincy Adams

The purpose of this explanatory, sequential design, mixed methodology case study was to examine the implementation process of The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. In the study, the researcher examined the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me and examined the challenges that leaders faced throughout the implementation process within a suburban elementary school.

The Leader in Me is an evidence-based, social-emotional, learning process that (a) was developed in partnership with educators, and (b) empowers students with the leadership and life skills that they need to thrive in the 21st century. The specific skills that The Leader in Me focuses on are student self-confidence, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, communication, creativity, self-direction, leadership, problem solving, and social etiquette.

There is a missing piece in American education policy. The connection between students' academic learning and social-emotional learning is complicated; however, it is necessary to recognize it. Respect, responsibility, honesty, trust, positive relationships, justice, integrity, and good citizenship are necessary elements for classrooms and schools

to function and for the adults in the school to serve as educators and role models for students.

The participants in the study include an administrator and teachers who were involved with the implementation process of The Leader in Me at one suburban elementary school.

In this case study, the researcher used mixed methods data collection techniques to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection instruments used in this study included one-on-one interviews, artifact analysis, and a survey. The findings of this study gave the researcher information about (a) the process of implementing The Leader in Me, (b) the actions that were taken to do so, and (c) the challenges that were faced. The researcher also gained knowledge about the culture that existed at the school so that the program could be implemented and maintained.

**DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family; thank you for being models of hard work throughout my life. This work is also dedicated to all of the devoted educational professionals who advocate and work so hard for their students every day. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank the individuals at the school that was at the center of this study; without all of you, this work would not have been possible.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In this explanatory, sequential, mixed methods case study, the researcher examined the implementation process of The Leader in Me, along with the experiences of a building administrator and faculty members within a suburban elementary school. The Leader in Me is an evidence-based, social and emotional learning (SEL) process that (a) was developed in partnership with educators, and that (b) empowers students with the leadership and life skills that they need to thrive in the 21st century (The Leader in Me, 2020h). The specific skills on which The Leader in Me is focused are student self-confidence, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, communication, creativity, self-direction, leadership, problem solving, and social etiquette. The Leader in Me uses and integrates several leadership, SEL, quality, and educational models and processes. The leadership principles and lessons from The Leader in Me are taught and communicated to the students by incorporating them into school coursework, traditions, systems, and culture (The Leader in Me, 2020e).

The Leader in Me was developed using Covey's (1989) *The Seven (7) Habits of Highly Effective People*. The Leader in Me is focused on Covey's (2008) *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*, which is a child-friendly adaptation of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey was a leadership expert, author, educator, and businessman. Covey studied decades of principles of personal, interpersonal, and organizational effectiveness (e.g., fairness, integrity, teamwork, honesty, human dignity, service, quality, potential, patience, nurturance, encouragement, responsibility, vision, collaboration, and renewal). Covey's (1989) *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is considered one of the most

influential, best-selling, building and management books ever written; it comes in 52 different languages and over 25 million copies have been sold. Covey studied these principles and synthesized them into a framework that became *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in which Covey (1989) laid out seven core principles for achieving leadership and success in life (Spors, 2014). The seven habits are as follow:

- Habit 1: Be proactive,

- Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind,

- Habit 3: Put first things first,

- Habit 4: Think win-win,

- Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood,

- Habit 6: Synergize, and

- Habit 7: Sharpen the saw (Covey, 1989).

The Leader in Me began at A. B. Combs Elementary School in 1999 under the leadership of the building principal, Muriel Summers. Dr. Summers and the teachers at A. B. Combs Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina, wanted to teach their students life skills alongside academic skills. The professionals at A. B. Combs believed that social-emotional skills along with leadership, responsibility, accountability, problem solving, and adaptability were just as crucial as academics such as mathematics and reading. A. B. Combs Elementary School was struggling in 1999, however, the school experienced a significant turnaround within a few years once the leaders implemented The Leader in Me principles. The school reported improved academic performance, increased enrollment, increased parent and teacher involvement, and higher levels of student self-confidence. Once the leaders at A. B. Combs Elementary School began achieving their successes, other schools across the country noticed and attempted to

duplicate the leadership model from A. B. Combs Elementary School. The demand from school leaders who were intrigued by the success at A. B. Combs Elementary School encouraged Franklin Covey, a leadership company, to help organize Dr. Summers' process in creating The Leader in Me so that other schools could implement the same leadership model and attain similar successful improvement results within their schools (The Leader in Me, 2020c).

Franklin Covey is a management training and assessment company that was founded in Utah in 1997 and that services organizations and individuals. According to Franklin Covey (2019), the company leads the world in helping organizations achieve results that require long-term changes in human behavior through providing content, tools, methodology, and training using research principles and practices.

Table 1 outlines the habits described in Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the principles of each habit, and child-friendly language so that the habits are applicable to students. The key components of The Leader in Me are the habits from Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The seven habits are established principles of personal, interpersonal, and organizational effectiveness that include responsibility, vision, integrity, teamwork, collaboration, and renewal. In a safe and supportive school environment, the seven habits teach students necessary social-emotional skills and interpersonal skills (The Leader in Me, 2020g).

Table 1

*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

| Habits | Principles | Application using age-appropriate language for students |
|---|---|---|
| Habit 1:<br>Be proactive | Initiative<br>Responsibility<br>Choice<br>Accountability | You're in charge: "I am a responsible person. I take initiative to make things happen. I choose my own actions, attitudes, and moods. I do not blame other people for my mistakes. I focus on things I can influence." |
| Habit 2:<br>Begin with the end in mind | Vision<br>Planning<br>Purpose | Have a plan: "I plan ahead. I know how to set and achieve 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 purpose." |
| Habit 3:<br>Put first things first | Prioritization<br>Organization<br>Discipline | Work first, then play: "I spend my time on things that are most important. This means I say no to things that are less important. I set priorities, make a schedule, and follow my plan. I am disciplined and organized." |
| Habit 4:<br>Think win-win | Consideration<br>Courage<br>Mutual benefit<br>Fairness | Everyone can win: "I balance courage for getting what I want with consideration for what others want. I build good relationships with others by being kind, saying I'm sorry when needed, and keeping commitments. When conflicts arise, I look for options that work for both sides." |
| Habit 5:<br>Seek first to understand, then to be understood | Respect<br>Mutual understanding<br>Empathy | Listen before you talk: "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." |

| Habits | Principles | Application using age-appropriate language for students |
|---|---|---|
| Habit 6: Synergize | Creativity Cooperation Diversity Humanity | Together is better: "I value other people's strengths and learn from them. I get along well with others, even people who are different from me. I work well in groups. I keep out other people's ideas to solve problems." |
| Habit 7: Sharpen the saw | Renewal Health and wellness Continuous improvement Balance | Balance feels best: "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 find meaningful ways to help others. I am balanced." |

*Note*. From *The 7 habits of highly effective people,* by S. Covey, 1989, Franklin Covey. Copyright Franklin Covey Co., 2020. Copyright permission granted to the researcher by Franklin Covey Co.

The ultimate goal of implementing The Leader in Me is school improvement. Schools that go through The Leader in Me process strive for outstanding achievement and, through The Leader in Me process, that outstanding achievement is called Lighthouse Certification. The Lighthouse Certification is a highly established standard that Franklin Covey has set. Application for Lighthouse Certification typically occurs 3-5 years after the school begins The Leader in Me process, and every Leader in Me school is able to gain Lighthouse Certification. Lighthouse Certification is evidence that schools have produced exceptional results through The Leader in Me process. Lighthouse Certification means that the school has implemented the program with fidelity and that they have documented positive results within the school with student outcomes (The Leader in Me, 2020i).

More than 2,500 schools across 35 countries have adopted The Leader in Me with more than 300 of them reaching Lighthouse Certification. There are approximately 10 Leader in Me schools in this suburban area; three of the schools have achieved Lighthouse Certification. The school on which this study is focused is one of the Lighthouse Certified schools in this suburban area (The Leader in Me, 2020b).

In this case study, the researcher examined the actions that the administrators, faculty, and staff took to implement the program. The researcher also examined the challenges of implementing the program, the school culture that supported the implementation, and the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification.

## Problem Statement

The research problem of this study is that research about implementing programs is needed within school settings. Little research was found regarding the implementation process of The Leader in Me program within schools. Social-emotional instruction also needs to exist in schools. Therefore, in this case study, the researcher has examined implementing a SEL program within an elementary school. There is a missing piece in American educational programs today. A complex connection of academic learning with students' social-emotional and character development is overlooked. Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg (2004) stated,

> The major conclusion drawn following the extensive examination of the topic reported in this book is that there is a growing body of scientifically based research supporting the strong impact that enhanced social and emotional behaviors can have on success in school and ultimately in life. (p. 19)

Zins et al. (2004) also noted,

The need to address the social-emotional challenges that interfere with students'

connecting to and performance in school is critical. Issues such as discipline,

disaffection, lack of commitment, alienation, and dropping out frequently limit

success in school or even lead to failure. (p. 4)

In a plethora of research, many authors have discussed the skills that students

need to succeed in life, and have discussed the environments and circumstances that must

be present in schools for the skills to be developed. Comer and O'Neil (1997)

summarized the idea that individuals need so much more than academics, declaring,

To be successful, one needs a threshold level of cognitive ability. But many other

things are just as important: creativity, personal discipline, the ability to relate to

other people. I call this 'effective intelligence' – all the things that come into play

in problem solving. (pp. 6-10)

Respect, responsibility, honesty, trust, positive relationships, justice, integrity, and

good citizenship are necessary components for classrooms and schools to function.

Adults within the school setting serve as educators and role models for students and they

should demonstrate these skills (Elias, 2009). There is more to school than academics,

and that must be addressed within education across the world to educate and raise

successful citizens within society. There is an overabundance of information on why

programs such as The Leader in Me are needed; however, little research has been

conducted on the implementation processes and methods used to sustain and continue

these programs. The researcher's goal in this study was less about learning why The

Leader in Me should be implemented, and more about learning how The Leader in Me

was implemented successfully, how it is being sustained, and how it continues to prosper.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine the implementation process of The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. The researcher examined the implementation process and the challenges that leaders faced throughout the implementation process. The researcher also examined the school culture that existed at the school at the center of this case study and what it takes to sustain The Leader in Me within the school. The researcher wanted to learn about the "how" aspect of the program. The researcher's purpose was to learn about how The Leader in Me was implemented and how it is sustained.

## Theoretical Framework

Senge's (1990) vision of the learning organization provides the theoretical framework for this study. The framework for this research links the implementation of a SEL program and Senge's learning organizational disciplines. Senge (n.d.) stated, "You cannot force commitment, what you can do . . . you nudge a little here, inspire a little there, and provide a role model. Your primary influence is the environment you create." Senge believed that a leader's actions could be a model for an organization and could create a culture of change. Senge is the author of many educational texts that were written in the 1990s and 2000s, and that are about educational organizations and change. Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, is the basis of this study's theoretical framework.

According to Senge (1990),

When we give up this illusion—we can then build "learning organizations,"

organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results

they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (p. 8)

Senge's Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations are shared vision, systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, and team learning.

The first discipline within the learning organization is shared vision, which is focused on developing a genuine shared vision for the future that is agreed on by the group. To build a shared vision within a learning organization, the vision should be established through interaction with the team of employees collaborating and compromising. As opposed to faculty or staff complying or completing tasks because they are told to do so, a shared vision creates an environment in which people complete tasks because they want to complete them.

Systems thinking is the second discipline of learning organizations; this discipline is used to explain that learning organizations are interdependent and continuously changing. Systems thinking exhibits the observational process of the whole system as opposed to focusing on individual issues. This is about seeing the big picture as opposed to separate situations. Once leaders examine interrelationships and patterns of change, they can determine connections, causes, and effects.

The third discipline is mental model, which are comprised of generalizations, assumptions, images, and surroundings. According to Senge (1990), mental models are conceptual frameworks that are comprised of assumptions about the organization. Leaders should have expertise and understanding of the generalizations, assumptions, and mental models of the group to move forward with building upon a learning organization.

It is necessary for faculty, staff, and employees within an organization to identify and understand the organization's values. Knowing where an organization currently is will help the organization with moving forward in the future.

The fourth discipline is team learning. Team learning expresses the idea that group effectiveness outweighs individual positions. Team learning is necessary for a group to function. Team learning is important because the organization of individuals must come together as a collaborative group to accomplish goals. A positive team culture within an organization creates an environment in which people will most likely feel comfortable to work together as a team.

The last of Senge's (1990) disciplines is personal mastery, which occurs when an individual has a clear vision of the goal combined with a correct perception of reality. Personal mastery is a set of specific beliefs that enable a person to learn, create a personal vision, and view the world accurately. Senge (1990) stated, "Learning organizations are possible because, deep down, we are all learners" (p. 8).

Figure 1 is an organized, descriptive visual representation that outlines Senge's (1990) theory about learning organizations. When a leader attempts to implement a new program or initiative, Senge's framework may help the leader implement the initiative effectively. The bones of the organization must be strong if the organization is to thrive, grow, and become stronger. In this study, the researcher used Senge's Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations as the theoretical framework. Senge's learning organizations framework, which is linked to effective implementation of a SEL program, has been the foundation of this research study.

**Five Disciplines for a Learning Organization**

Figure 1

*Senge's Five Disciplines for a Learning Organization*



Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 1990
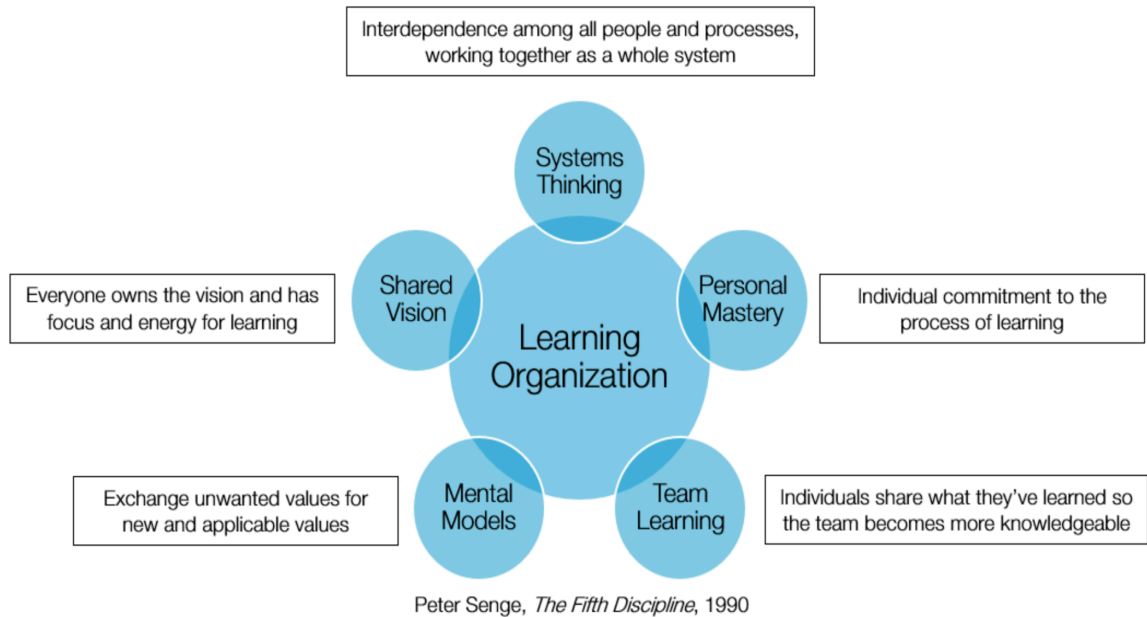
*Note.* From The Role of Feedback in the Learning Organization by M. Sica-Lieber, based on P. Senge, 1990, *The Fifth Discipline*, Doubleday. Copyright permission granted to the researcher by Penguin Random House LLC and by Duuoo.io.

Table 2 illustrates how the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) SEL process aligns to The Leader in Me. Although the CASEL competencies and The Leader in Me habits have different names, the underlying outcomes are closely related. As individuals develop The Leader in Me habits, they also develop CASEL competencies. Developing these necessary life skills will assist students in becoming lifelong learners and leaders.

Table 2

*Developing Core Social-Emotional Learning Competencies Through a Leadership Lens*

| The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies | The Leader in Me habits |
|---|---|
| Self-management | Self-discipline |
| "The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations—effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself; the ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals." | Habit 1 – Be proactive<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Develop responsibility for their actions, emotions, attitudes, choices, and behaviors.<br>• Understand and apply the concept "Choose Your Own Weather" (choose your feelings and responses).<br>• Focus thinking and behaviors on things they can control vs. things they can't control. |
| Responsible decision making | Initiative |
| "The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms; the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others." | Habit 3 – Put first things first<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Identify their most and least important priorities at school and at home.<br>• Do weekly planning based on their priorities to ensure important things are done first.<br>• Understand how planning and prioritizing helps to create balance and meaning. |
| Relationship skills | Relationship building |
| "The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups; the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed." | Habit 4 – Think win-win<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Understand the meaning of growth and fixed mindsets and related behaviors.<br>• Build high-trust relationships that enable mutually beneficial problem solving.<br>• Appreciate differences and respect others. |

| The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies | The Leader in Me habits |
|---|---|
| Social-awareness<br><br>"The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures; the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports." | Communication<br><br>Habit 5 – Seek first to understand, then to be understood<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Practice empathic listening by using the eyes, ears, and heart to understand others.<br>• Build high trust with others by communicating honestly.<br>• Use "I" messages to effectively express thoughts and feelings.<br><br>Collaboration<br><br>Habit 6 – Synergize<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Celebrate differences as strengths and optimize those strengths to accomplish group goals.<br>• Work well in teams by listening, brainstorming ideas, and learning from each teach member.<br>• Overcome behaviors that get in the way of teamwork and creative collaboration. |
| Self-awareness<br><br>"The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior; the ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a 'growth mindset." | Vision<br><br>Habit 2 – Begin with the end in mind<br><br>Students are able to<br>• Think ahead about consequences of actions and choices before acting.<br>• Understand how goal setting applies at school and in one's personal life.<br>• Set clear expectations for themselves and others. |

*Note.* From Social-Emotional Learning, in *The Leader in Me*, by Franklin Covey, 2020. Copyright Franklin

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## Significance and Importance of the Study

This study is significant because it adds to the existing literature on successful program implementation techniques and strategies within a suburban elementary school. Studying the implementation process of The Leader in Me is relevant in the field of educational leadership because the steps taken and the school culture that was created within the educational environment is the basis of success for the program. In addition, studying the implementation process, culture, and change was used to explore the idea of instilling leadership skills within students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The researcher explored (a) the steps and actions that were taken to implement The Leader in Me within a suburban elementary school, (b) the challenges throughout the implementation process within a suburban elementary school, (c) the culture that existed at the school during the implementation process, and (d) the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification.

There is a gap in the literature regarding the implementation of The Leader in Me program. An abundance of research exists on character education and on SEL; however, little research could be found, other than through The Leader in Me website, on the studies that have been done on the program regarding the implementation process, the results of the program, and the challenges of implementing this particular program.

Research on this topic could be beneficial to teachers, educational leaders, building administrators, and school districts. To study and research the extent that this program can be implemented is useful because the research will help districts decide whether they want to invest time, resources, and funds into it. The school that was studied is one of only three schools to gain a Lighthouse Certification in the suburban area.

Examining the process regarding the way that this school reached that level will be beneficial for other school leaders who are interested in implementing this program.

Research on effective implementation of programs is vital to all administrators. Learning about what an effective implementation process looks like, what implementation techniques were successful, and which were not, will guide future leaders in implementation endeavors. In addition, learning about the environment and school culture where this study took place, will be helpful because it will provide information about the conditions and culture that assisted in the implementation process.

## Research Questions

1. What actions did educational leaders take to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

2. What are the challenges to implementing The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

3. What are the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me program to be successfully implemented?

4. What are the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification?

## Design and Methods: Research Design and Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), "Research designs are procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies" (p. 58). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) explained, "The four major types of mixed methods designs are the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design, and the Exploratory Design" (p. 59). Creswell (2015) explained that there are three basic designs underlying mixed methods studies, which are convergent design, explanatory

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sequential design, and exploratory sequential design. Creswell further explained that, during explanatory sequential design, quantitative data and qualitative data are collected sequentially in two phases, as opposed to collecting qualitative and quantitative data at the same time. Creswell (2015) stated, "An explanatory sequential mixed methods design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then gathering qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results" (p. 545). In this study, a quantitative survey was distributed to and collected from 90 faculty members within the school. After the survey data was collected, the researcher collected artifacts and conducted qualitative interviews. Creswell (2015) described the rationale for explanatory sequential design approach by stating, "The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general quantitative picture" (p. 545). Creswell explained that merging both quantitative and qualitative data allows for seeing the research problem from multiple angles and perspectives. The quantitative results show general trends and relationships, while qualitative results illustrate in-depth personal perspectives. The survey results showed the researcher general ideas about leadership and culture within the school building. The qualitative interviews that were held, and the artifacts that were collected, allowed specific insight into the implementation of the program within the school. The intent of explanatory sequential design is to explain quantitative results with qualitative data; a priority is put on the quantitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative data is collected first in the sequence of data collection and qualitative data is used to refine the results of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2015). A case study is an in-depth investigation

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of a single person, event, community, or group where data is gathered from a variety of sources and methods (McLeod, 2019).

This study is a case study in which a mixed methods explanatory sequential design was used to combine both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative results displayed general trends about leadership and school culture through a survey. The qualitative results illustrated detailed personal perspectives through artifacts and interviews. The researcher analyzed numerical data to demonstrate quantifiable outcomes of the survey. Qualitative data was collected through one-on-one interviews and artifacts. The case study combined faculty survey data, teacher interviews, an administrator interview, and document analysis data.

A survey was distributed to faculty in which the participants were asked about the topics of relationships and teachers' perspectives of school leadership. Interviews were conducted in one-on-one settings. The documents that were analyzed included meeting minutes from Shared Decision Making Team meetings and action team meetings. The documents that were analyzed also included photographs of leadership events, photographs of the physical environment of the building, including murals and paintings, applications for building-level student leadership roles, agendas for leadership events, pages from student leadership notebooks, School Implementation Plan graphic organizers, and The Leader in Me training and planning materials.

Through the findings of this study, the researcher interpreted and analyzed the data that described the implementation process of The Leader in Me program at an elementary school since the beginning of its process. The researcher examined the implementation process of The Leader in Me. The program was implemented according

to the values and priorities of the school district and the school. The findings of this study describe the implementation process, teacher perceptions, implementation challenges, and Lighthouse Certification sustainability.

In this case study, the researcher used a survey, artifact analysis, and qualitative interviews for data collection. Quantitative data was analyzed through the survey. The WE Teach™ survey was distributed to this school. The researcher used the WE Teach™ survey data to gain information about teacher perceptions about relationships and leadership within the school. Qualitative data was analyzed through interviews and artifacts. The case study's mixed methods data collection methods provided the researcher with a variety of information.

## Participants

According to The Leader in Me Map (The Leader in Me, 2020b), there are currently three Lighthouse Certified schools in the suburban area. The researcher studied one Lighthouse Certified school in a suburban elementary school setting. The participants in the study included a building administrator and school faculty members who were interviewed and surveyed. Ninety faculty members participated in the survey. One building administrator and three teachers were interviewed. The individuals who were interviewed were members of the Shared Decision Making Team and Lighthouse Team. The interview participants were deeply involved with the implementation process of The Leader in Me at this school.

## Instruments

A research instrument is a tool that the researcher uses to collect data. The instruments used in this study included a survey, one-on-one interviews, and artifact

analysis. The researcher's data collection methods for this study included individual interviews, a survey, and a collection of documents and artifacts (e.g., photographs, agendas, memorandums, and meeting minutes). The data collection tools that were used were an iPhone, laptop computer, and camera. After the St. John's University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study (see Appendix A), an administrator and three teachers were approached to participate in the study in person and via email. Once consent was received, qualitative data were collected through interviews and through artifact documentation. Quantitative data were collected through a survey prior to this study beginning; however, permission to use the previously collected data was granted to the researcher. The researcher did not design or distribute the survey; the data preexisted and was relevant to the study.

Creswell (2015) explained that reliability means that scores from an instrument are stable and consistent and that validity is the development of sound evidence to demonstrate that the test interpretation matches its proposed use (p. 158).

The researcher analyzed previously collected WE Teach™ survey data to gather information about school climate and culture. For more than a decade, WE Teach™ surveys have provided stakeholder feedback to schools and school districts in the areas of learner engagement, relationships, relevance, rigor, learning environment, leadership and community expectations (Successful Practices Network, 2019).

**Procedures or Interventions**

Researchers need to explore the processes used by elementary school professionals throughout the implementation of The Leader in Me. Creating a positive school climate supports leaders while they implement change, which in turn, instills

necessary skills in the students, which creates successful individuals. The Leader in Me is implemented within schools with the intent to teach students the values that will help them become highly effective people and productive citizens. Schools are charged with teaching morals and values to students. SEL is a necessary component of schools today. Effective SEL programs develop students' social-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, self-management, and self-awareness.

## Definition of Terms

*Implementation* – The process of executing a plan is called implementation.

*Leadership* – According to the Wallace Foundation (2013), leadership is the action of leading a group or organization; shaping a vision of success for all students; creating a climate hospitable to education; cultivating leadership in others; improving instruction; and managing people, data, and processes.

*Professional development* – Providing teachers with access to education and training opportunities to improve and increase their capabilities in the workplace is termed professional development.

*School culture* – Unspoken norms of an organization, the way things are done in the school (the personality of the school); the underlying norms and values that shape patterns of behavior, attitudes, and expectations between stakeholders in the school (AES, 2020); and the norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time (Peterson & Deal, 1998) are called school culture.

*School climate* – The feel of the school; the school's attitude; and the behaviors and points of view exhibited and experienced by students, teachers, and other stakeholders (AES, 2020) are called the school climate.

*Shared vision* – The capacity to hold a shared picture of the future that one seeks to create is termed a shared vision (Senge, 1990).

*Trust* – According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), the belief in the truth and ability of someone or something is called trust, and "trust is the connective tissue that holds improving schools together" (p. 45).

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

To support the purpose of this case study, and to provide further information on the topic, the researcher analyzed the literature from current, peer-reviewed articles about studies that had been conducted on the topic. The purpose of this study was (a) to examine the actions that leaders had taken to implement The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school, (b) to investigate the challenges that leaders faced during the implementation process, (c) to examine the school culture that supported the implementation, and (d) to become familiar with the process and challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification. Throughout this chapter, the researcher presents information about (a) The Leader in Me, (b) the culture and climate of a school building, (c) trust, and (d) relative educational theories, all of which will connect the ideas of this study and share previous pertinent research that has already been completed.

## Review of the Literature

In this literature review, the researcher focuses on topics pertinent to the study and to the framework guiding this study. Topics that connect to this study are professional development, SEL, social learning theory, change, trust, school culture, school climate, The Leader in Me, and leadership. In this study, the researcher examined the necessary ingredients to successful implementation of a SEL program within an elementary school, and in this literature review, discusses topics to support those components.

### Social and Emotional Learning

SEL is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and

maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). Schools are not a place where solely academic instruction takes place. Schools cannot function if students lack the qualities and characteristics of respect, responsibility, honesty, trust, positive relationships, justice, integrity, and good citizenship. Schools cannot sustain and achieve their academic missions without teaching both academics and character, according to Elias (2009).

Figure 2 illustrates CASEL's (2017) five core SEL competencies. The five competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The researcher included Figure 2 to illustrate the important aspects of SEL and the way in which SEL could be implemented in a school setting. CASEL (2020) explained that teachable skills are essential for educating students, and that they are fundamental tools for citizens. Necessary skills include knowing and managing one's emotions, listening and communicating carefully and accurately, recognizing strengths in oneself and others, and showing ethical and social responsibility. It is also important to gain the skills of greeting, approaching, and conversing with diverse others. Necessary skills also include taking others' perspectives, perceiving others' feelings accurately, respecting others, setting adaptive goals, solving problems and making decisions effectively, and cooperating. Leading and being an effective team member; negotiating and managing conflicts peacefully; building constructive, mutual, ethical relationships; and seeking and giving help are also fundamental skills for individuals (CASEL, 2020).

**Social and Emotional Learning Competencies**

Figure 2

*Core Social and Emotional Learning Competencies*



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

**SELF-AWARENESS**

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

**SOCIAL AWARENESS**

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

**RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING**

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**

The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organizational skills

**RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork

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Through research at schools throughout the United States, CASEL has established that schools that had strong academic programs and were strong in building students' social and emotional strengths and character could be characterized as having five main characteristics. The key characteristics are (a) a school climate that articulates specific themes, character elements, and values; (b) explicit instruction in social-emotional skills and explicit instruction in health-promotion and problem prevention skills; (c) systems to

enhance coping skills and social support for transitions, crises, and resolving conflicts; and (d) widespread, systematic opportunities for positive, contributory service (CASEL, 2020). Academic abilities such as mathematics, science, social studies, and literacy are essential skills; however, individuals who are incapable of working well with others, acting as a team member, and displaying ethical characteristics, will not be successful in life. Ingraining social-emotional skills and habits at a young age will help individuals flourish into children, adults, and citizens who are more productive.

Historically, schools have focused on academics for students. However, a holistic child approach in education has become necessary. Unprecedented levels of stress, behavior write-ups, and negative mental, physical, and behavioral health exist in children today. Depression and anxiety in children have increased over time. The data, that the National Survey of Children's Health (as cited in Bitsko, Holbrook, Ghandour, Blumberg, Visser, Perou, & Walkup, 2018) reported, showed that, in children Ages 6-17, anxiety or depression diagnoses had increased from 5.4% in 2003 to 8% in 2007, and then to 8.4% from 2011-2012. According to an analysis that NBC News TODAY (as cited in Lubell & Snow, 2019) conducted, nine states mandate mental health curriculums by law and approximately 20 states include mental health in their health and education standards. It is necessary that schools and educational institutions across the country address all components of education from character education, to academics, to mental health.

Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, and Durlak (2017) explained that, when effectively implemented, evidence-based, SEL programs lead to measurable and potentially long-lasting improvements in many areas of children's lives. SEL programs

can enhance children's confidence, increase engagement in school, improve academic performance, and decrease conduct problems, while they also increase positive behaviors (Greenberg et al., 2017).

Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, and Weissberg (2017) analyzed results from 82 different interventions that involved more than 97,000 students in Grades Kindergarten through 12 (K-12). Effects of the interventions were assessed at least 6 months after the programs ended and up to 18 years after the programs ended. Taylor et al. showed that school SEL interventions benefit students' academic performance for months and years to come. Eight studies showed that, in follow up assessments 3.5 years after the last intervention, academic performance of students who had been exposed to a SEL program was about 13 percentile points higher than students who were not exposed to a SEL program. In addition, SEL continued to increase student well-being in forms of social-emotional competencies, prosocial behavior, and prosocial attitudes. SEL students also showed decreases in negativity (e.g., conduct problems, emotional stress, and drug use). Studies continuously show that SEL has positive impacts on the lives of people who experience it.

**Social Learning Theory**

Social cognitive theory is a learning theory that is founded on the idea that individuals learn by observing others. Bandura (1977) introduced the idea that learning is a lifelong process and that people learn by following the model of others. Bandura (as cited in Cherry, 2019) proposed in the learning theory that observation and modeling are the primary role in the learning process. Learning occurs through the live models of parents, teachers, and peers. Learning also occurs through the symbolic models of

nonfiction and fictional characters; thus, children see, learn from, and emulate the behaviors of these models. Enactive learning is a result of learning by doing—through the actions that individuals take. Individuals learn from the consequences of actions taken. Vicarious learning is derived learning from the indirect sources of hearing or seeing a behavior. Educators can shape the actions of individuals by encouraging healthy habits and acting as positive role models (Cherry, 2019).

Brown (2020) explained the difference between social cognitive theory and social learning theory. Brown described social cognitive theory as a learning theory that explains how people acquire new behaviors by observing a model. Brown expressed that personal and cognitive factors, the behavior itself, and the environment and reinforcements, influence the reproduction of the learned behavior. Brown described social learning theory as a cognitive behavioral theory of learning in which the author proposed that individuals acquire new behaviors by observing the behavior along with its consequences. Brown (2020) explained the difference between social cognitive theory and social learning theory, stating,

Social cognitive theory is the expanded form of Albert Bandura's social learning theory which states that learning can occur by observing a behavior and that the manifestation of that behavior in the learner is controlled between personal (cognitive) factors, the behavior itself, and by the environment (reinforcement). Meanwhile, social learning theory is a learning theory that proposes that learning occurs in a social context by means of observation of the behavior and the consequences that follow it.

Understanding social learning theory and social cognitive theory is necessary to understand the learning process of all individuals.

Schools are no longer institutions where academics are the single focus. Now, more than ever, social and emotional skills must be taught and modeled in the school setting. Children's beliefs and judgments as social beings determine whether their actions will change. Motivation is shaped by students' self-efficacy, which is the individual's belief in their ability to accomplish the actions needed to learn. Bandura's social learning theory has three core concepts: (a) people learn behaviors by observation, (b) internal mental states are a necessary part of the learning process, and (c) just because something has been learned, does not mean that it will absolutely result in a change of behavior (Cherry, 2019).

Observational learning is the theory that people can learn through observation, which is a significant part of the socialization process. Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1961, as cited in Cherry, 2020) established that children learn and imitate behaviors that they have seen in other individuals (see also McLeod, 2014). Bandura's famous Bobo Doll experiment demonstrated that children learn by observation of others. During Bandura's experiment, children observed adults treating a doll in an aggressive manner. When the children had an opportunity to interact with the doll, the children imitated the adults and acted aggressively toward the doll; the children imitated what they had observed the adults do. The three basic models of observational learning are a live model, a verbal instructional model, and a symbolic model. The live model involves an actual live individual demonstrating or acting out behavior; the verbal model involves verbal descriptions and explanations of behavior; and the symbolic model involves real or

fictional characters in books, films, television, or online media that display behaviors (Cherry, 2019).

A high level of teacher efficacy is crucial when interacting with students. Teacher efficacy is the level of confidence a teacher has in their ability to guide students to success. Bandura (1997) named this term in human behavior *collective efficacy*. Bandura (1997) defined the term *collective efficacy* as "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (p. 477). Bandura (1977, as cited in Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018) observed that a group's confidence in its abilities seemed to be associated with greater success. The confidence that a person places on his or her team affects the team's overall performance. Bandura (1993, as cited in Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018) expressed that when educators in schools believe in their ability to influence student outcomes, students achieve significantly higher levels of academics. Hattie (2016, as cited in Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018) determined that collective efficacy is at the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement. Hattie (2016, 2017, & 2018) researched more than 250 influences on student achievement, and collective teacher efficacy continues to be the Number 1 influence on student achievement.

Bandura (1977) also suggested that mental states are important to learning and that one's own mental state and motivation play a role in determining whether a behavior is learned. Solely observing someone else's action is not always enough to support and solidify learning. Bandura (1977, as cited in Cherry, 2019) noted that intrinsic reinforcement and internal rewards (e.g., pride, satisfaction, and a sense of

accomplishment) might be just as important for learning as external environmental reinforcement.

Bandura (1977) noted that not all observed behaviors are effectively learned; that is, just because someone observes something does not mean they have internalized it and have learned it. It is imperative to acknowledge that attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation are components that are involved in the observation learning and modeling process. Some key factors to consider are that to learn a concept one must pay attention, and that to learn a novel concept, full attention must be given. The ability to retain information is also a necessary aspect of learning. Being able to store information, and then retrieve that information as needed is important to observational learning. When individuals give their attention to learning and retaining the information, they must next use reproduction to perform in actuality the behavior that was observed. Reproducing whatever was observed repeatedly is the practice of the behavior, which leads to improvement. Lastly, the individual must be motivated to continue the learned behavior or task that has been modeled. Punishment and positive reinforcement play a part in motivation because, for if an individual is rewarded for exhibiting a behavior, they are more likely to repeat that behavior. In addition, if an individual observes another individual being rewarded or punished for exhibiting a behavior, that indirect experience might be just as effective as experiencing the reward or punishment directly (Cherry, 2019).

Bandura (1977) further explored behavioral theories whose proponents suggest that behaviors are learned through conditioning. Behaviorists suggest that all learning is a result of a direct experience with the environment. Bandura (1977, as cited in Cherry

2020) explained, "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do." Cognitive theories suggest that psychological influences affect learning (e.g., attention and memory). Bandura (1977, as cited in Cherry, 2019) proposed in cognitive theory that conditioning, reinforcement, and punishment cannot account for all types of learning and that learning is a social process that could also occur simply by observing others.

Regarding studying the implementation of programs, social cognitive theory can be addressed in two ways: (a) as it pertains to the implementation process and (b) as it relates to the actual social-emotional program that was implemented in the school at the center of this study. When implementing a program a leader must lead by example, the leader must teach others by doing and by modeling. If school leaders and teachers expect their students to learn the components of SEL, they must model, explicitly teach, and have the belief that they are capable of achieving mastery in not only implementing the initiative, but also demonstrating it and living it. Leaders must have collective efficacy for the school and organization to develop and improve.

**Trust**

The wellbeing of society depends on the success of schools. A key element in creating an environment where students can thrive is creating an environment where staff and faculty can also thrive; this means creating an environment of trust. According to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015), there is a growing body of research that indicates that one of the most crucial aspects of creating a successful learning environment includes principals earning the trust of their teachers and in addition, developing a culture of trust between teachers and students (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Building a

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school culture of trust is an intentional act that benefits principals, teachers, and students (Modoono, 2017).

When a building leader creates a trusting environment and communicates to constituents that they are trusted and believed in, individuals look forward to coming to work, and from this foundation of trust, engaging learning opportunities for students develop. It is essential that leaders create a trusting environment to create change. When implementing a new program in a school, leaders must have the trust of their colleagues. It is essential that leaders build trust within the school community that they serve. Covey (2019) stated that the first job of any leader is to inspire trust, which comes from character and competence. Character includes one's integrity, motive, and intent with people while competence includes one's capabilities, skills, results, and track record. Both character and competence are vital for a successful trusting culture. The best leaders are leaders who focus on creating trust as an explicit objective. Covey said that building trust must be like any other goal; it must be focused on, measured, and improved.

Covey (2019) stated that there are 13 behaviors of high-trust leaders worldwide, which include: talk straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty, deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability, listen first, keep commitments, and extend trust (Covey, 2019). The 13 behaviors must be balanced by each other and one cannot over power another. Trust affects the quality of every relationship, every communication, every work project, every business venture, and every effort that one engages in (Covey, 2019).

Covey (2019) makes an analogy stating that when trust is low, whether it is within a company or in a relationship, it places a hidden tax on every transaction; every

communication, every interaction, every strategy, and every decision, which in turn brings speed down and costs up. On the contrary, individuals and organizations that have earned and operated with high trust experience the opposite of a tax; they experience a dividend, which multiplies their performance. This means that individuals and organizations benefit from environments of high trust and that there is a detriment to the organization that has low trust.

Covey (2019) and Smith (2002) described a study that Watson Wyatt Worldwide conducted in 2002 about the importance of trust. The attitudes of about 13,000 workers were studied and it was determined that about 39% of employees trust senior leaders at United States companies which was a drop from 2000 (Smith, 2002). In the business world, low employee trust levels are directly correlated to finances. In the educational world, low employee trust levels affect the structure, culture, and performance of schools. The survey from 2002 assessed the responses from 12,750 workers in major industries in the United States, which displayed that high trust companies outperform low trust companies by 286%.

Trust is a necessary element in successful companies as well as well-performing schools. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) stated, "School leaders who create bonds of trust help create the conditions that inspire teachers to move to higher levels of effort and achievement" (p. 258). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) conducted a study that included elementary school, middle school, and high schools in both urban and suburban settings. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that the level of trust that teachers held for the principal set a tone for the staff in the building and that faculty trust in the

principal was related to their trust in colleagues, students, parents, and the level of parent trust in the school.

Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is the model for The Leader in Me program that follows Covey's (2008) *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*. Trust is an underlying concept within The Leader in Me program. The researcher of this study established which aspects were important factors throughout the implementation process. In this study, the researcher delved into the ideas of trust, change, school climate, and school culture within a school, and the way in which those aspects help or hinder the implementation process of a SEL program. The researcher assessed the actions taken by leaders to gain the trust of the faculty and to implement this program.

**School Climate**

School climate coincides with and influences student achievement. Relational trust is the confidence that colleagues will do their jobs and will help one another. To have a positive school climate and to make a positive impact on a school, relational trust must be present. Trust leads to positive school culture, which leads to increased student achievement. Eppinga, Salina, Girtz, and Martinez (2018) established that relational trust was essential for schools to improve. In 2009, Sunnyside High School located in Sunnyside, Washington, had a graduation rate of 49%. Chuck Salina took on the principalship during the 2010-2011 school year. In 3 years, the graduation rate rose to 85%. The seven changes that principal Salina implemented to create relational trust within Sunnyside High School were (a) develop a common language, (b) reassess privileges, (c) hold one-on-one conversations, (d) include support staff, (e) create

collaborative inquiry teams, (f) build supportive systems, and (g) give permission to innovate (Eppinga et al. 2018).

Research shows that social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves much of the routine work of schools and is a key resource for reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). A longitudinal study of 400 elementary schools in Chicago over a span of about 10 years linked evidence on schools' changing academic productivity and trust. Trust plays a powerful role in schools, reform, and academics. Relational trust, respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity are components that assist in building trust. Strong levels of trust support a positive work environment, which encourages risk taking, hard work, honesty, and genuine conversations.

Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students. Improving schools requires educational professionals to think harder about how best to organize the work of adults and students so that this connective tissue remains healthy and strong (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Schools and organizations that produce trust are schools that build a positive culture, climate, and environment, which generate achievement and improvement.

**School Culture**

Peterson and Deal's (2009) *The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook* guides educational professionals to reflect on actions, intentions, and understanding to enhance leadership skills while structuring an improved learning environment. According to Peterson and Deal (2009),

Culture exists in the deeper elements of a school: the unwritten rules and assumptions, the combination of rituals and traditions, the array of symbols and

artifacts, the special language and phrasing that staff and students use, the

expectations for change and learning that saturate the school's world. (p. 9)

Peterson and Deal (2009) explained that regarding culture, leaders are responsible

for reading it, assessing it, and reinforcing or transforming it. Peterson and Deal (2009)

state, "Climate emphasizes the feeling and contemporary tone of the school, the feeling

of the relationships, and the morale of the place" (p. 9). Educational sociologist Willard

Waller (1932, as cited in Peterson & Deal, 2009) insisted, "that every school has a culture

of its own, with a set of rituals and folkways and a moral code that shapes behavior and

relationships" (p. 8). Peterson and Deal (2009) expressed the difference between school

culture and school climate.

Peterson and Deal (2009) explained that the fundamentals for leaders within a

school are (a) to read the culture, (b) to assess the culture, (c) to reinforce the positive

qualities of the existing culture, and (d) to change the negative qualities of the existing

culture. First, leaders must read the school culture to understand from whence the culture

comes (whether it is the district's history or the school's history), and then they must

understand the main components that are present in the culture. Next, leaders must assess

the culture. To assess the current culture, leaders must hold up existing ways against

other possibilities, which include identifying positive and negative aspects of the culture.

Pinpointing positive, supportive norms, values, rituals, and traditions along with aspects

of the culture that might be negative, harmful, or toxic are components of assessing the

current culture. The positive aspects of the culture should be reinforced, and the negative

aspects of the culture should be changed. Once a leader is well versed in the culture, what

the current culture consists of, the positive aspects of the school culture, and the negative

aspects of the culture, the next step is change. Last, leaders must work to transform pieces of the culture that are negative and strengthen the parts of the culture that are positive.

All organizations improve performance by fostering a shared system of norms, values, and traditions; schools fail without a strong positive culture (Peterson & Deal, 2009). A positive culture stems from relationships among people, their efforts to serve students, and a shared responsibility for learning. Heart and spirit supported by culture allows schools to become positive, successful, learning organizations. Strong, positive school cultures are built over time by individuals who work in the school and attend the school and by leaders who encourage and reinforce the school's values and traditions (Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) made it clear that the development of meaningful and productive schools comes from leaders who shape, create, support, and sustain positive cultures. Peterson and Deal (2009) stated, "Leaders must shape and nourish a culture in which every teacher can make a difference and every child can learn and in which there are passion for and commitment to designing and promoting the absolutely best that is possible" (p. 8). Culture is important because culture affects the way in which teachers, students, and administrators feel, think, and act. Peterson and Deal expressed that culture affects a plethora of aspects within a school system. They say that culture affects whether teachers, students, and administrators think improvement is important, how motivated they are to work hard, and how they feel when students do not perform well. Culture affects the way individuals act in hallways, lounges, and at faculty meetings and how they dress for different occasions. School culture influences what individuals talk about in public or in private, the degree of support they give to innovative colleagues, and to whom they go for ideas or help. In addition, culture controls (a) how

educational professionals feel about their students and colleagues who are different, (b) whether they believe all students can learn, (c) whether they assume student capacity is determined by background, and (d) the degree to which student learning is dependent on teaching and the curriculum. Culture affects whether people believe collaboration and teamwork is a good thing, whether state standards are potentially useful, and whether they see their daily work as a calling or a job (Peterson & Deal, 2009, pp. 9-10).

Schools are shaped by underlying symbolic elements. School culture consists of the rituals, traditions, norms, and values that affect school life. School culture influences what individuals pay attention to, how individuals identify with the school, how hard individuals work, and to what degree individuals achieve their goals (Peterson & Deal, 2009). School culture is a key component when implementing a new initiative in a school or district. Murphy (as cited in Meador, 2020) stated, "Seeds of change will never grow in toxic soil. School culture matters." In this study, it was necessary to gather an understanding about what the school culture consisted of throughout implementation. The researcher was seeking to know what aspects of culture were in place that allowed The Leader in Me to be implemented.

**Change**

To create, support, and sustain a positive school culture and environment, sometimes change has to occur. For improvement to occur within an organization, change is necessary. Hill, Mellon, Laker, and Goddard's (2017) Harvard Business Review study examined the actions and impact of 411 leaders of United Kingdom academies. A United Kingdom academy is a publicly funded school or group of schools. Hill et al. examined the actions and influence of leaders attempting to transform their schools. The

longitudinal study spanned over 8 years. The study found that leaders were able to transform schools by challenging how the schools operated, engaging their school's community, and improving teaching. Leaders took nine key steps in a specific order over 3 years. The school performance pyramid includes nine building blocks. Building Block 1 is challenge the system which means to stay for at least 5 years, Building Block 2 is teach everyone; expel less than 3% of students, and Building Block 3 is teach for longer from Ages 5-19. Building Block 4 is challenge the staff by changing 30-50%, Building Block 5 is engage students by keeping 95% in class, and Building Block 6 is challenge the board by managing 30-60% of them. Building Block 7 is engage parents by having 50% at parents' evenings, Building Block 8 is engage staff by maintaining 70% with no absence, and last, Building Block 9 is teach better by having 100% capable staff (Hill et al., 2017).

The United Kingdom academies study found that it was not always possible to put all nine building blocks in place in the first 3 years. The research showed that there was a tipping point in a school's transformation when six of the building blocks were in place and that the last three blocks help to sustain the transformation. Test scores increased by 50% in schools where leaders put all nine building blocks in place within 3 years and test scores increased by 45% in schools where six of the building blocks were implemented (Hill et al., 2017).

To sustain improvement in student achievement, principals must be able to implement reforms successfully as well as handle complex, quickly changing environments. Fullan (2002) described the cultural change principal by saying,

Cultural Change Principals display palpable energy, enthusiasm, and hope. In

addition, five essential components characterize leaders in the knowledge society:

moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve

relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. (pp. 16-21)

Leaders with moral purpose have a social responsibility to others and seek to make a

difference in the lives of others. The cultural change principal understands the change

process. Transforming culture leads to deep and lasting change. The cultural change

principal leader knows that when relationships improve, schools progress and that when

relationships stay the same or get worse, schools can be stagnant. Relationships and

professional learning communities are essential in creating and sharing knowledge within

an organization.

A common vision, matched strategies, and logical initiatives are necessary when

leading an organization, creating a change, and implementing new initiatives. A principal

is a leader who must foster conditions necessary for constant education reform and

change. The researcher of this study examined change, shared vision, team building, and

other components that are necessary to implementing a program within an elementary

school.

**Leadership Theories**

Burns (1978) described transformational leadership: "Such leadership occurs

when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers

raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Bass (1985, as

cited in Manktelow, Brodbeck, & Anand, 2005, p. 22) described transformational

leadership as a model of integrity and fairness, sets clear goals, has high expectations,

encourages others, provides support and recognition, stirs the emotions of people, gets people to look beyond their self-interest, and inspires people to reach for the improbable.

Mind Tools (2017) condensed Bass' ideas from 1985 into four major points that they say helps one become a transformational leader. Mind Tools' (2017) process proclaims that a leader must create an inspiring vision of the future, motivate people to buy into and deliver the vision, manage delivery of the vision, and build ever strong trust based relationships with people (Mind Tools, 2017). Transformational leaders gain profound levels of trust from their followers. This is a key idea when implementing new educational models and communicating a new school vision.

**Shared Vision**

Creating a shared vision for faculty and staff can be a challenge because it typically involves having a large amount of people believing in the same common goal and path to reaching that goal. Creating a shared vision does not mean that a group follows one individual's vision; it includes teamwork, change within an organization, communication, and positivity. By using Google's five-component model for creating a shared vision, educational leaders could gain support from all stakeholders to implement a new program and create change within the school culture. The five components are core values, purpose, mission, strategy, and goals (Schneider, 2018). The Google model came from an experiment that occurred in 2002. Google removed managers from their organization and the study proved that managers were critical. From this study, a list was created of attributes that make individuals more effective. In addition, the five components that managers need to create a shared vision were produced. This is an example of a how a business can create a shared vision; however, the attributes can be

applicable to any organization, including schools. The shared vision of any organization is crucial to its success. The vision must appeal to all stakeholders to be fully supported and then implemented. Fullan (1993) stated that sharing a vision does not mean adopting someone else's vision. Deep ownership and sharing of vision comes through the learning that arises from full engagement in solving problems (Fullan, 1993).

The group as a whole must share a common vision and goal when implementing a change or a new program within a school, and this task can be a challenge; however, using models and strategies such as the Google model, Senge's (1990) model, and Fullan's model have proven to be effective.

**Professional Development**

In today's society, demands of teachers and administrators are continuously changing and increasing. Organizations that undergo change towards a new initiative, shared vision, or new program, typically have to provide some type of training or professional development. According to Ash and Persall (2000), to prepare students to be successful in this society, teachers must be willing to continuously learn, expand in their own abilities, and assume additional leadership roles. Principals must create an environment that supports collaboration among teachers, provides time for teachers' professional development, and recognizes, rewards, and celebrates the concept of teachers as leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000).

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) compiled data from 35 studies from the last three decades that demonstrated a positive link between teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes. Evidence shows that there are seven elements of effective professional development which state that professional

development should: be content focused, incorporate active learning, use adult learning theory, support collaboration, include in job-embedded contexts, use models and modeling of effective practice, provide coaching and expert support, offer opportunities for feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

When an organization or school implements a new program, the information must be clarified and communicated to the individuals. A method that will communicate new knowledge to teachers and team members and a procedure to train individuals on the new topic is through professional development. The purpose of Iyer's (2013) correlation study was to examine the relationship between the implementation of a character education program and the professional development needs for character education. The study was completed to understand better the significance of the relationship for future training in character education (Iyer, 2013). The population for this study came from two school districts in Texas. Both of these schools supported and recognized character education programs. There were 22 middle schools within these school districts. Iyer (2013) chose to target these districts because of their proximity to the researcher. The sample for the study came from certified classroom teachers in Grades 6-8 in schools that had implemented character education programs. There were 341 online surveys distributed. From those that were distributed, 189 middle school classroom teachers completed the survey (Iyer, 2013). Survey participants rated their perception of professional development opportunities on character education and rated the implementation of character education. The instrument that was used consisted of 30 questions, using dichotomous answers, and some 5-point Likert scale questions with point values of 5-1.

The Likert scale ratings consisted of 5 (*strongly agree*), 4 (*agree*), 3 (*neutral*), 2 (*disagree*), and 1 (*strongly disagree*). The survey ended with three open-ended questions with additional comments, recommendations, and/or concerns that were not scored within the survey questions (Iyer, 2013).

The survey results were analyzed to determine the relationship between professional development and teacher training to character education implementation. A one-way ANOVA was conducted for professional development score for respondents' characteristics such as character education coursework, professional development provided for character education, grade level taught, and teaching experience in middle schools. The study revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = .716$) and a significant $p$ value of .000 between character education implementation and professional development (Iyer, 2013). As professional development scores increased, character education implementation scores increased. Iyer (2013) explained that as professional development scores decreased, character education scores decreased (p. 5). An individual with character education coursework, professional development workshops and more years of teaching felt more open to participate in professional development than those who had no character education coursework or professional development, and fewer years of teaching. Iyer showed that teachers who are open to professional development have higher chances of implementing character education in their classrooms (Iyer, 2013).

Part of studying the implementation of The Leader in Me program included interviewing an administrator and teacher leaders who led the application of the program to their faculty, staff, and students. Implementing The Leader in Me, or any new program, includes creating and building support of the program within the school

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building. The process of implementing a new program also includes providing The

Leader in Me professional development for faculty and staff. Learning about and

studying the most effective ways to provide professional development for a new school

initiative relate to the implementation of The Leader in Me and other educational

programs.

**The Leader in Me Goal Setting**

Goal setting in the elementary school classroom helps students take ownership for

their learning. There are four steps to teach goal setting (Aymett & Krahenbuhl, 2016).

Step 1 includes having teachers help students create goals based on one specific and

challenging performance standard. Step 2 includes focusing on goals within small

homogeneous ability groups, which allows teachers to quickly assess students

individually and give immediate feedback. Step 3 includes helping students understand

where they are in the learning process by explaining what skills they have mastered and

then using that data to help them create a new goal for the future. Step 4 includes having

teachers and students create a classroom goal where everyone contributes to one another's

growth. Teaching goal setting helps students to know what they are supposed to learn and

take ownership for their learning (Aymett & Krahenbuhl, 2016).

The Leader in Me Online reported that the one of the goals of student leadership

notebooks include providing students with an individualized tool to keep a personal

profile, their mission statement, record of the seven habits, artwork, personal reflections

and highlights of their talents, progress, and leadership. In addition, student leadership

notebooks empower students to set and track their personal and academic goals, track

data, and take ownership of their learning and leadership (The Leader in Me Online, n.d.).

**The Leader in Me Student-Led Conferences**

There are many benefits of student-led conferences. Students know the most about what they learn, how they learn, and the effort that they put forth in their learning; yet, typically, they are the individuals left out of student conferences. The Leader in Me believes that, "Engaging students in the educational process is an integral piece of student leadership and development" (Yauch, 2015).

The information that students share during their conferences comes from their leadership notebooks. Students report on their progress regarding academic or personal goals, scores, grades, or assignments, based on data they have collected throughout the year (Yauch, 2015). The Leader in Me focuses on students being leaders of their own learning. Student leadership notebooks give students a voice in their own learning. Setting goals, tracking academic and personal progress, and sharing the data are integral parts of student learning and leadership (Wierda, 2015).

**The Leader in Me Research**

The Leader in Me is a schoolwide transformation model that was developed in partnership with educators. The Leader in Me teaches and empowers students with leadership and life skills that they need to succeed. The authors of more than 30 independent academic research studies have evaluated The Leader in Me to date. Leader in Me students make leadership choices daily and many times students demonstrate leadership through self-discipline. Students typically engage in negative interactions with peers because of a lack of self-discipline. Leader in Me students learn personal and

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interpersonal leadership skills and research shows that self-discipline increases while school discipline referrals decline (The Leader in Me, 2020h).

Several Leader in Me studies have been conducted on the topic of behavior. In this section, the researcher will highlight a portion of what the authors in the literature have said about The Leader in Me and behavior data. Cummins (2015) found a 23% decrease in disciplinary issues over the first 5 years of implementing The Leader in Me. Ishola (2016) found a 31% overall decrease in elementary behavior incidents within a year of teaching The Leader in Me program, and found a continued decrease the following 2 years of the study. White (2018) found 42% fewer discipline incidences than expected in a statewide sample of Leader in Me schools using their pre-Leader in Me trajectory, compared to matched controls. Schilling (2018) found a 22.84% improvement in student behavior in a statewide analysis of a Florida Leader in Me school compared to matched controls. These data suggest that The Leader in Me is a beneficial initiative for schools and that, since implementation of the program, behaviors have improved.

Several Leader in Me studies have been conducted on the topic of leadership. In this section, the researcher highlights a portion of what the authors in the literature have said about The Leader in Me in relation to the aspect of leadership. Using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), a validated measure of teens' mental wellness, the National Health Services of Scotland and the Fife Council (2015) found a 28% improvement in teens' mental wellness after completing a seven habits program. Andersen (2011) found a 33% increase in independent social-emotional behaviors and a 41% increase in interdependent social-emotional behaviors for pre-Kindergarten students after 7 weeks of The Leader in Me training. Bryant (2017) stated, "All participants in the

study indicated that they have seen an increase in students taking personal responsibility for their actions in school" (p. 66).

The studies conducted about The Leader in Me and staff social-emotional teaching readiness revealed data about professional development, skills acquired, and collaboration. In this section, the researcher highlights some of that data that were proven in several studies that were conducted. Dethlefs, Green, Molapo, Opsa, and Yang (2017) found a 4.0 rating for a Leader in Me School versus a 3.2 rating for a non-Leader in Me school for the statement, "My professional development is adequately training me to foster student leadership." Dethlefs et al. also found a 48% greater likelihood that a Lighthouse Leader in Me student would record their goals, a 38% greater agreement that a Leader in Me school offered leadership opportunities to all students, a 40% greater likelihood that a Lighthouse Leader in Me student would feel that others notice when they are good at something. In addition, Dethlefs et al. found a 46% greater likelihood that a Lighthouse Leader in Me student would feel they get to help make decisions at their school, and a 43% less likelihood that a Lighthouse Leader in Me student would say they do not like school (Dethlefs et al., 2017). Bryant (2017) stated, "The teachers who participated in this study reported that there is a stronger sense of cohesiveness in the school environment as well as the classroom" (p. 65). Cummins (2015) found, "The strongest correlation appears to be between school leadership and the 7 Habits (r = .623), indicating that when staff members put forth the notion that all students are leaders, students are taught then apply the 7 Habits to their pursuit of leadership" (p. 107). The ROI Institute (2014) found that 84% of teachers acquired new skills and knowledge to be better leaders and 87% of the teachers acquired new skills and knowledge to empower

students. Ross and Laurenzano's (2012) two-school case study assessed the experiences of The Leader in Me for teachers, students, administrators and other key stakeholders. Results showed that teachers used leadership principles when responding to discipline problems and classroom management and that nearly all students readily learned and internalized the seven habits. The data in these studies exhibit that there have been many positive impacts from The Leader in Me. When leaders begin to consider implementing The Leader in Me, that individual and/or organization should know the impacts of it and be familiar with the implementation process of the program.

**Successful Administrators**

The Wallace Foundation (2013) identified five key practices of effective principals. Spiro (2013) dove into the research that the Wallace Foundation (2013) had conducted. Regarding the key practices of effective principals, Spiro (2013) stated, "Learning should be at the center of a school leader's job, with good principals shaping the course of the school from inside the classroom and outside the office," (p. 27). The five key practices of effective principals include shaping a vision for success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Spiro, 2013). Education World surveyed 43 principals about what they considered the necessary traits of successful school leaders. Among the top 10 traits on the list included vision, trustworthiness, credibility, daily visibility, and a sense of humor (Hopkins, 2000). The literature is consistent regarding what makes a building-level administrator successful. This researcher attempted to link the actions of a principal, to

the vision and culture that was in place, to Senge's (1990) organizational framework, to evaluate the full picture of how The Leader in Me was successfully implemented.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that is the basis of this study is Senge's (1990) Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations. The five disciplines of learning organizations, according to Senge, are systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. Senge's framework is the basis of this study because it supports what is required to implement successfully a program in any organization, including a school.

Senge (1990) makes it clear that the connections between personal learning and organization learning are necessary within the learning organization. Personal mastery means clarifying the things that really matter and Senge says that a learning organization's commitment and capacity for learning cannot be greater than that of its members. Senge (1990) stated, "Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively" (p. 10).

According to Senge (1990), "Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 11). Building a shared vision is the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future that the organization seeks to create. For an organization to be successful or to reach any state of greatness, common goals, values, and the organization must share missions. When the vision is genuinely shared, people can learn and excel because they want to do so, instead of because they are told to do so (Senge, 1990). If the

group as whole believes in the vision and the direction of the organization, all are more likely to work willingly toward the vision and goals that have been set in place. Team learning is equivalent to the Greek *dialogos* (the source for our English dialogue), which means literally "through words," and is translated in English to "conversation." Team learning starts with exactly this: free flowing discovery that is not attainable individually, but can be reached when individuals come together through conversation and collaboration (Senge, 1990).

Systems thinking is the fifth discipline because it is used to integrate the other disciplines. Systems thinking is used to fuse the other disciplines into one coherent body of theory and practice. Each discipline can stand individually; however, they cannot be fused together and succeed without the discipline of systems thinking. Through systems thinking, theorists show that small, well-focused actions can produce significant improvements (Senge, 1990). According to Senge (1990),

> But systems thinking also needs the disciplines of building shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery to realize its potential. Building shared vision fosters a commitment to the long term. Mental models focus on the openness needed to unearth shortcomings in our present ways of seeing the world. Team learning develops the skills of groups of people to look for the larger picture that lies beyond individual perspectives. And personal mastery fosters the personal motivation to continually learn how our actions affect our world. (p. 13)

Implementation is defined as the process of putting a decision or plan into effect; it is also known as execution (Lexico, n.d.). This is a sample definition of an idea that is much more expansive. Numerous elements are essential when implementing a new

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initiative, and countless aspects come into play throughout the process of implementation. Effective program implementation starts with building awareness, commitment, and ownership. It is important to build foundational support by establishing awareness and developing a shared vision within a school community and team. A shared vision is necessary for effective change; all members should be aware of and committed to the process. Implementation of a program depends on a collaborative effort from all stakeholders: staff, teachers, students, administration, and families. A strong clear foundation to start includes creating a team, foundational learning, and a shared vision.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the actions that the leaders have taken to implement The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. The researcher investigated the challenges that the leaders faced during the implementation process, examined the school culture that supported the implementation, and learned about the process in sustaining Lighthouse Certification. To support the purpose of this case study, and to provide further information and clarity on the topic being researched, the researcher analyzed the literature from theorists and from researchers who conducted studies on the topic.

The researcher has presented information from previous studies conducted and peer-reviewed literature about The Leader in Me, professional development, school culture and climate, trust, and relative educational theories. These topics are connected to Senge's (1990) learning organization framework of a shared vision, systems thinking, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery. The literature that was evaluated,

along with Senge's philosophy, are connected to assist the researcher in explaining how the whole system is united to reach success within a school organization.

**CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods case study was to examine the implementation process of the SEL program, The Leader in Me. In the study, the researcher examined the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me and challenges that leaders faced throughout the implementation process within a suburban elementary school. The researcher also examined the culture and climate that existed at the school and the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification. This chapter includes information about the research regarding methods, data collection, instruments, participants, the study's setting, and limitations of the study. Data collection was completed through one-on-one interviews, artifact collection, and a survey.

**Rationale for Research Approach**

The researcher conducted an explanatory, sequential, mixed methods case study in which qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explained, "A mixed methods case study design is a type of mixed methods study in which the quantitative and qualitative data collection, results, and integration are used to provide in-depth evidence for a case(s) or develop bases for comparative analysis" (p. 116). By using mixed methods techniques, the researcher reaped the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative designs. These techniques allowed for a richer and deeper data analysis. According to Creswell (2015), the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone. Creswell (2015) explained, "Mixed methods designs are procedures for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in

a single study or in a multiphase series of studies" (p. 22). Quantitative data were collected through a survey in the first phase of data collection. The researcher did not design or distribute the survey; however, the survey data existed and were appropriate to analyze for this study. The data were refined and elaborated on through qualitative exploration in the second phase of data collection through artifact analysis and interviews.

According to Creswell (2015), the key characteristics of mixed methods studies are collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. Creswell explained that mixed methods research uses rigorous methods, and integrates the quantitative and qualitative data through merging, connecting, building, and embedding. Researchers use a specific mixed methods design to frame the study within theory and philosophy, to consider priority and sequence, and to provide a diagram of the procedures (Creswell, 2015). Qualitative research typically takes place in the natural world, draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study, is focused on context, is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured, and is fundamentally interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

**Research Questions**

The researcher answered the following research questions through this study:

1. What actions did educational leaders take to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

2. What are the challenges to implementing The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

3. What are the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me program to be successfully implemented?

4. What are the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification?

**Research Setting**

The setting of this explanatory, sequential, mixed methods case study was a suburban elementary school that serves approximately 760 students in Grades K-4. This elementary school has attained Lighthouse Certification, which is an achievement that schools reach when they have implemented The Leader in Me, been reviewed by Franklin Covey, and have met the requirements for Lighthouse Certification. A Leader in Me school can reach Lighthouse Certification by implementing The Leader in Me process with fidelity and excellence. Lighthouse Certification is evidence that the school has produced outstanding results in school and student outcomes (The Leader in Me, 2020i). At the time of this study, there were three Lighthouse Certified schools in the suburban area. The school that was studied for this research is one of the few Lighthouse Certified schools in the suburban area (The Leader in Me, 2020b).

Table 3 outlines the school's student demographic information and includes faculty information. This information provides more clarity and detail about the setting of this study.

Table 3

*Approximate School Profile Information – Students and Faculty*

| Label | Information |
| --- | --- |
| Student enrollment | Approximately 760 students in Grades Kindergarten-4 |

| Label | Information |
|---|---|
| Student demographic information | American Indian or Alaska Native: 1%<br>Black or African American: 19%<br>Hispanic or Latino: 20%<br>Asian or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 3%<br>White: 53%<br>Multiracial: 5% |
| Students with disabilities | 22% |
| English as a new language (ENL) | 4% |
| Economically disadvantaged | 47% |
| Homeless | 2% |
| Student gender information | Male: 54%<br>Female: 46% |
| Faculty | 100 |
| Faculty gender information | Male: 7%<br>Female: 93% |

*Note.* From the school district 2018-2019 data from the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Education Department's (2019) Student Information Repository System.

## Description of Participants

Ninety faculty members at this school completed a survey measuring rigor, relevance, relationships, and leadership. The demographic information that was collected on the survey participants includes years employed in schools, gender, grade level, years employed in this school, current position, and highest level of education. In the area of years working in schools, 7% were brand new, first-year teachers and 18% had been in schools for 2-5 years. Most of the participants (73%) were experienced teachers who had been working in schools for more than 5 years. The female participants were 86% of the

teachers, while male participants were 7% of the teachers. All of the faculty members at this school work with students in Grades K-4. In the area of years employed at this school, 22% were new, first-year teachers at this school, and 31% had been working there for 2-5 years. The participants who were employed at this school for more than 5 years were 46% of participants, which means that at least 46% of the people surveyed had been employed at the school from the start of The Leader in Me implementation process. The remaining 53% of the faculty who had been hired within the last 5 years were not present at the beginning of the implementation of the program; however, every participant had received The Leader in Me training throughout each school year. Classroom teachers made up 54% of the participants, while instructional support staff comprised 42%. Every participant had at least a bachelor's degree; 12% had a bachelor's degree, 19% had a master's degree, 68% had a master's degree plus extra credits, and 1% held a doctoral degree. Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 outline the survey participant information.

Figure 3

*Survey Participant Highest Level of Education*
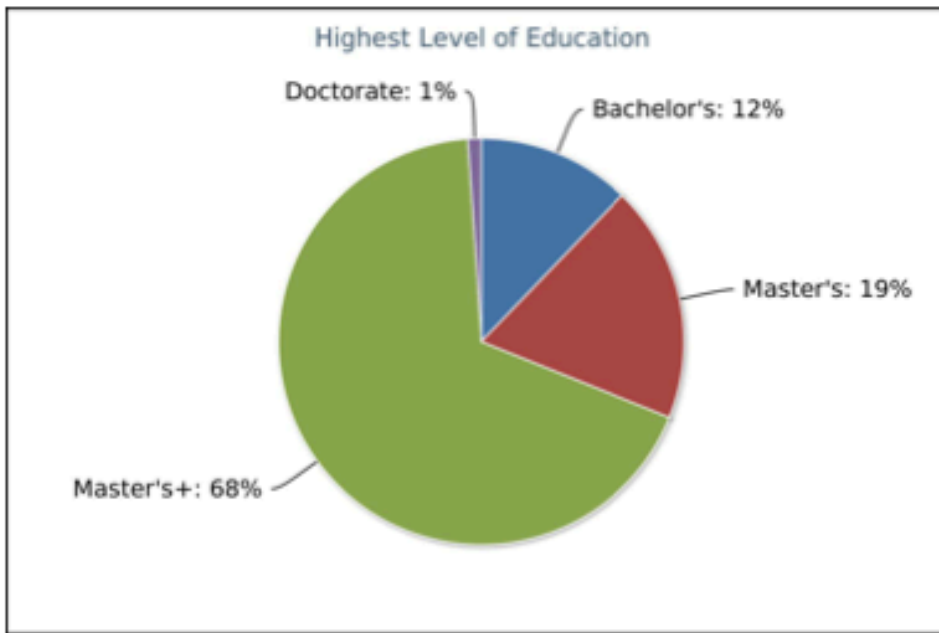


*Note.* Survey participants were asked their highest level of education. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019.

Figure 4

*Survey Participant Years Working at this School*
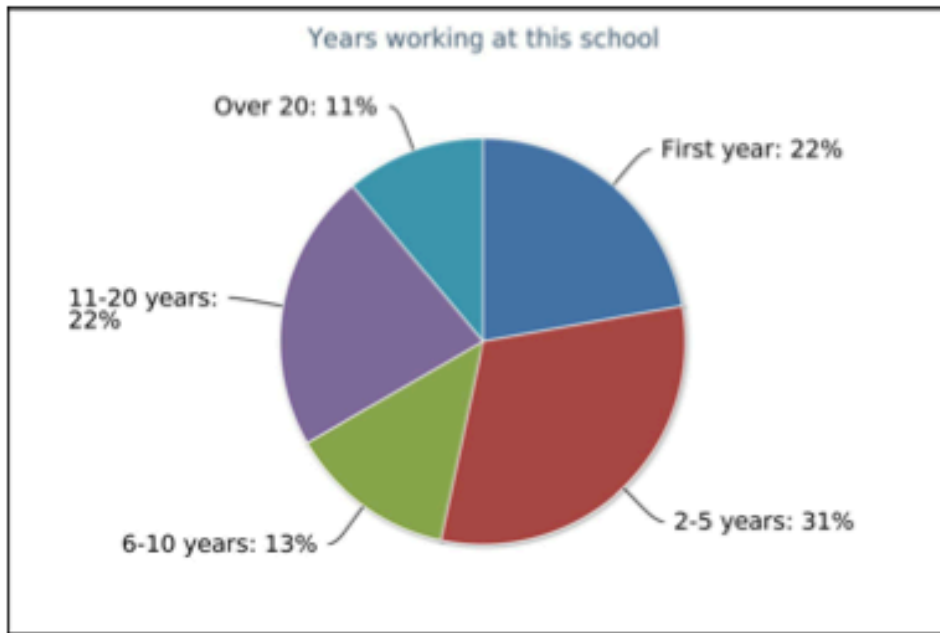


*Note.* Survey participants were asked amount of years working at this school. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019.

Figure 5

*Survey Participant Current Position*
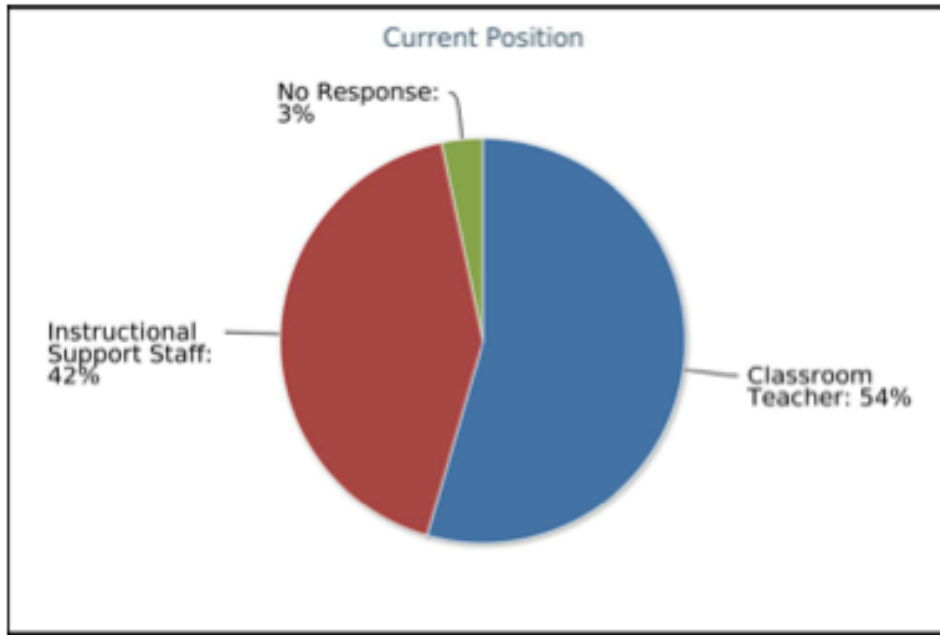


*Note.* Survey participants were asked for their current position. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019.

Figure 6

*Survey Participant Gender*
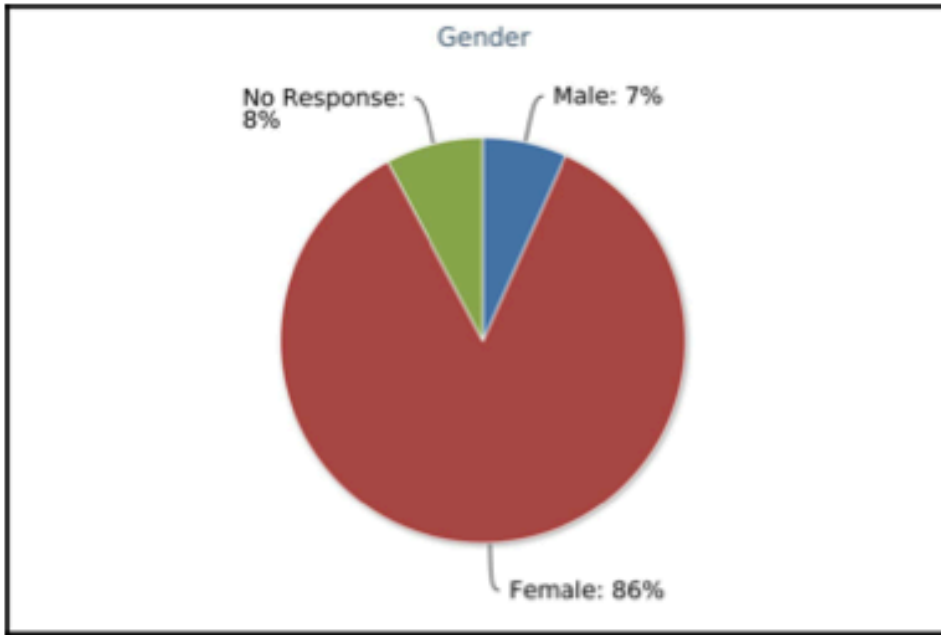


*Note.* Survey participants were asked their gender. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019.

Ninety participants were surveyed to assess topics such as rigor, relevance, leadership, and relationships within this school. The data from this survey, specifically the leadership and relationship sections, assisted the researcher in answering Research Question 3, the research question about the components of the school culture that existed at the time of The Leader in Me program implementation. Evaluating the faculty perceptions on relationships and leadership gave the researcher insight regarding what the school culture was that helped The Leader in Me program be successfully implemented. The survey also elicited responses from participants about school goals, administration communication with staff, teacher collaboration time, and administrators implementing change. These topics directly affect the process of implementing a new initiative within a school. The questions in the area of leadership, change, and communication gave the

researcher insight on the implementation process of the program. The full survey was comprised of 60 questions. The researcher evaluated the entire survey and determined which questions were relevant to this study. The questions that pertained to this study were focused on culture through relationships and leadership; there were 25 of these questions in total. The 25-question survey provided data for Research Question 1 and Research Question 3 regarding actions of administrators and school culture.

Four educational professionals, including a building principal and three teachers, were interviewed about their experiences with implementing The Leader in Me (see Table 4). All four participants were members of the building's Shared Decision Making Team throughout the years of implementation. The four individuals were interviewed in one-on-one settings. The researcher interviewed the participants in a series of sessions each of which lasted approximately 45 minutes. Participant 1 is the principal of the school and has been in education for approximately 30 years. Participant 2 is a second grade teacher that has been in education for approximately 20 years. Participant 3 is a third grade teacher that has been in education for approximately 15 years. Participant 4 is a fourth grade teacher that has been in education for approximately 20 years. All of the participants were involved in the implementation process of The Leader in Me at this suburban elementary school. After analyzing the data, the researcher discovered three overarching themes: professional development, communication, and distributed leadership.

Table 4

*Interview Participant Descriptions*

| Name | Role | Approximate years in education |
|------|------|--------------------------------|
| Participant 1 | Principal | 30 |
| Participant 2 | 2nd grade teacher | 20 |
| Participant 3 | 3rd grade teacher | 15 |
| Participant 4 | 4th grade teacher | 20 |

*Note.* Interview participants were asked their position and years in education.

## Research Sample and Data Sources

The study's sample came from one Lighthouse Certified School. The data that were previously collected from 90 faculty members through a survey were analyzed. One one-on-one interview was conducted with the building principal who led The Leader in Me implementation process at this school. Three one-on-one interviews were conducted with the teachers who were involved in the implementation process. Four one-on-one interviews were conducted. Interview participants were recruited according to who was involved and present during the implementation process of The Leader in Me since the discussion began about the program in 2012. The discussion began in 2012, and full implementation began during the 2015-2016 school year. The four interview participants were present throughout the duration of the process. The researcher considered that the individuals who had participated in the implementation process would have the most accurate information about the program's implementation, culture of the school, and leadership.

Sampling procedures included collecting the survey data at a Lighthouse Certified suburban elementary school, interviewing the building administrator, and interviewing teachers. The characteristics of the survey sample are faculty members of one suburban elementary school. The rights of the participants were protected through the St. John's University IRB process and by not naming any individual participant name or school name. The participant identification information and school identification information has been and will continue to be kept confidential.

**Data Collection Methods**

The data collection methods included one-on-one interviews with an administrator and teachers, a survey, and collection of artifacts. Documents and artifacts were collected and analyzed. The data collection tools that the researcher used were an iPhone, a laptop computer, and a camera. After the IRB approval, the administrators and teachers were approached to participate in the study via email. Follow-up, in-person conversations with each individual also occurred prior to the interview. Once consent was received from the participants via email response, qualitative data were collected through one-on-one interviews. The researcher collected interview data in person after the IRB approval, using the researcher's interview protocols.

The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with a building administrator. This case study is about the Lighthouse Certified School that this principal leads. This principal implemented The Leader in Me initiative; therefore, it was imperative to gather data from this school building leader. This principal was part of the Shared Decision Making Team, which is the group of individuals who discovered The Leader in Me and brought it to this school and district. The principal believed in The Leader in Me, has

traveled to Utah multiple times for trainings, is currently a building-level trainer, and currently continues to lead the staff in this building. The researcher believed that the information and education that this leader could bring to this study was essential. The researcher invited the building principal to participate in the interview by asking them in person.

The researcher offered to interview the participants in a room that was most convenient to them. The interviews were conducted in person at the school building after school hours. One interview was conducted in the participant's office and the other interviews were conducted in the participants' classrooms. These locations were quiet and private and the participants decided where the interviews occurred according to their preference. The researcher believes that the participants were most comfortable in these locations. Each one-on-one interview was approximately 45 minutes. The researcher introduced the context, explained further the study, discussed confidentiality, reminded the participants about audio recording of the interview, and thanked the participants for their time and for the information that they would provide. The audio of the interview sessions was recorded with the permission of the participants. The researcher had prior consent for both the participation of the individuals and the recording of the audio content. Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings for data analysis purposes.

The researcher developed interview questions from the research questions. The interview participants were chosen because of their involvement within The Leader in Me implementation process. The participants from the Shared Decision Making Team were

chosen to participate. This choice assisted the researcher in gathering a variety of information regarding the implementation process of The Leader in Me initiative.

The researcher collected and analyzed a plethora of artifacts in the form of memorandums, photographs, meeting minutes, agendas, school newsletters, professional development materials, and more as a data collection method to answer each of the research questions. Throughout the process of implementing The Leader in Me, the school's Lighthouse Team collected evidence in the form of photographs and memorandums. The Leader in Me evaluators assessed this evidence when they reviewed the school for Lighthouse Certification. To be granted Lighthouse Certification, the online portfolio of evidence had to reach 100% because, as documents are added and organized on the website, the percentage increases until it is complete. To gain information about the implementation process, the researcher collected documents that the Lighthouse Team and school personnel (e.g., teachers and administrators) had saved.

Collecting evidence of The Leader in Me occurring at the building was part of the implementation process; therefore, a multitude of documentation which supported the implementation existed for the researcher to collect. The artifact evidence was in the form of photographs, memorandums, training materials, agendas, meeting minutes, student work, and more. Once the researcher collected the documents, they were organized into the categories of goal setting, leadership events, Lighthouse teams, physical environment, professional development, and student leadership. The researcher determined these six categories according to the themes that emerged throughout the initial artifact evaluation process. After the organization of the artifacts, the researcher studied and evaluated each one more thoroughly.

**Data Analysis Methods**

The methods and tools used for the analysis of data included digitally transcribed interviews, artifacts, and the survey–all of which were analyzed. This survey included 25 questions on the topics of relationships and leadership within the school. The researcher used thematic content analysis to analyze interview data. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data (Caulfield, 2019). The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), the researcher identifies patterns that exist and emerge from the data that are important and/or interesting, and then these themes are used to address the research or to say something about the issue.

The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to conduct a thematic analysis. The list of Braun and Clarke's six phases, and Figure 7, outline the six-step framework for thematic analysis. The list is an overview of the steps, and Figure 7 is the specific descriptive outline of the six-step framework.

- Step 1: Become familiar with the data.

- Step 2: Coding / Generate initial codes.

- Step 3: Search for themes.

- Step 4: Review themes.

- Step 5: Define and name themes.

- Step 6: Write the report.

(The researcher created this list as an adaptation of Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Figure 7

*Six Phases of Thematic Analysis*

## BOX 10.4　SIX PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

*Familiarization*: Data analysis is facilitated by an in-depth knowledge of, and engagement with, the data set. Familiarization – reading and rereading transcripts, listening to audio-recordings, making notes of any initial analytic observations – helps the researcher to move the analysis beyond a focus on the most obvious meanings.

*Coding*: A systematic process of identifying and labelling relevant features of the data (in relation to the research question). Coding is the first step in the process of identifying patterns in the data because it groups together similar data segments.

*'Searching' for themes*: The 'search' for themes is not simply one of 'discovery'; the themes are not *in* the data waiting to be uncovered by an intrepid researcher. Rather, the researcher clusters together codes to *create* a plausible mapping of key patterns in the data.

*Reviewing themes*: The researcher pauses the process of theme generation to check whether the candidate themes exhibit a good 'fit' with the coded data and with the entire data set, and each has a clear, distinct 'essence' – or central organizing concept. Reviewing may lead to no or few changes, or to discarding the candidate themes and restarting the previous phase.

*Defining and naming themes*: Writing theme definitions (effectively a brief summary of each theme) and selecting a theme name ensure the conceptual clarity of each theme and provide a road map for the final write-up.

*Writing the report*: The researcher weaves together their analytic narrative and vivid, compelling data extracts. Themes provide the organizing framework for the analysis, but analytic conclusions are drawn across themes.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006)

*Note*. From V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, as cited in *Thematic analysis. Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, by V. Clarke, V. Braun, and N. Hayfield, 2015, Sage. Copyright permission is covered under Sage's pre-approved permissions policy.

　　　The researcher closely examined the data to identify common themes. Thematic content analysis assisted the researcher in becoming more familiar with the data as it was thoroughly reviewed, read, and transcribed. The researcher arranged with a transcription service to transcribe the interviews electronically. In addition, the researcher separately

and manually transcribed the interviews by re-listening to the interviews and typing simultaneously. The researcher also typed notes as the interview occurred. The researcher compared the transcribed interviews to each other, listened to them numerous times, and checked and re-checked them for accuracy. The data were manually coded according to the different categories and ideas within the study using the theoretical framework, the literature, and The Leader in Me program habits, topics, and values. Once the data were coded, the codes were combined and organized, and then major themes were generated. The themes were thoroughly reviewed to ensure that they accurately represented the data and that they were useful. The interview transcripts were analyzed by examining and identifying key phrases, codes, and themes, which provided answers to the research questions. The data were organized and condensed into major themes, and then were written.

## Trustworthiness of the Design

The researcher triangulated multiple sources of data to enhance the study's generalizability. The four components of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (DeVault, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017) originally established these four components. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of the study could be verified or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2020). The researcher enhanced confirmability within this study by checking and re-checking the data. Lincoln and Guba (1989, as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017) expressed that confirmability is proven when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all accomplished. Triangulation enhances the accuracy of a study. According to Creswell (2015), triangulation is "the

process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of

data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (p. 259). Marshall and

Rossman (2016) explained, "Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of

data to bear on a single point" (p. 262). Marshall and Rossman also explained that

triangulation is a strategy that is used to enhance a study's generalizability. This

researcher triangulated data that were collected through interviews, artifacts, and a survey

to obtain the most well-defined and clearest picture so that the study could be most useful

for generalization in other settings.

Validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or

credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation

(Creswell, 2015). Member checks and triangulation help to establish credibility and

contribute to the trustworthiness of a study (DeVault, 2019). A credibility criterion

involves determining that the results of the research are credible or believable from the

perspective of the participants in the research (Trochim, 2020). Credibility (validity)

measures that were taken to enhance this study include using mixed methods

methodology in collecting and analyzing data. The researcher explored the common

evidence between the different sources of data through triangulating the data. The

researcher used multiple methods of collecting data, which include one-on-one

interviews, a survey, and document analysis.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), dependability is showing how the

researcher plans to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the

study and changes in the design caused by an increasingly refined understanding of the

setting. Dependability is based upon the assumption of reproduction or repeatability

(Trochim, 2020). Dependability (reliability) measures that were taken to enhance this study include using an audio recorder to transcribe interviews, and keeping detailed records of all data. The interview audio was recorded with the consent of all participants. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2020). There is transferability, generalizability, and external validity within this study. The results of this study are relevant beyond this case study in other settings. The results of this study will benefit the field of education because the findings can be transferred to other similar settings.

Ethics were maintained throughout the study. To maintain ethics throughout this study, the researcher used ethical practices throughout the research process, used respectful data collection procedures, and followed the University's IRB process. All participants granted consent to the researcher. Permission to use the WE Teach™ survey data was granted to the researcher and submitted through the IRB. Consent to conduct research was granted as well (see Appendix B). In addition, the researcher completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) web-based training course, "Protecting Human Research Participants" (see Appendix C).

<div align="center">

**Limitations**

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One limitation of this study was that it is a case study and was completed in one single setting. Another limitation of this study was researcher bias. The researcher of this study collected data by interviewing faculty members with whom the researcher works. To avoid research bias, the researcher recognized at the outset that bias does exist. The researcher took several measures to avoid bias as much as possible. Actions that the researcher took to avoid bias included keeping in mind that the researcher should not and

did not give feedback to the participants during interviews either verbally or through body language. The researcher kept detailed records to avoid making mistakes and to ensure that the data were as accurate as possible. The researcher was honest throughout the study and reported all findings. Being known in the setting of the study does limit the study; however, it also has a positive aspect. The researcher is a member of the school community setting where the research was conducted; therefore, the individuals participating in the study know the researcher. Given the current positive relationship between the researcher and the participants, the researcher anticipated that there would be honest and open conversation during the interviews. The researcher believed that the likelihood that invited participants would accept the invitation to participate would be high because the individuals also have a stake in the topic that was researched.

Other school leaders will be able to use the results of this study because there will be transferability, generalizability, and external validity within this study. The results of this study are applicable to situations and settings beyond this case study. The results of this study will benefit the field of education because the findings can be transferred to other similar settings.

**Summary**

The Leader in Me is a whole school transformation model and process that was developed in partnership with educators who empower students with the leadership and life skills that they need to thrive in the 21st century. The Leader in Me helps students learn how to become self-reliant, take initiative, plan, set and track goals, do their homework, prioritize their time, manage their emotions, be considerate of others, express their viewpoint persuasively, resolve conflicts, find creative solutions, value differences,

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and live a balanced life. The process helps students develop the skills and self-confidence they need to lead their lives (The Leader in Me, 2020d).

The Leader in Me is a whole school improvement model that uses teaching practices to promote SEL for students. The Leader in Me takes an organizational approach that engages all members of the school community, including professional learning that focuses on helping teachers collaboratively create a school culture in which students and adults practice SEL through a leadership lens as part of their everyday school experience (CASEL, 2020).

In this case study, the researcher used a mixed methods research approach to address the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me. The study also addressed the challenges that existed while implementing The Leader in Me, the components of the culture that enabled the program to be successful, and the challenges that the school faces in maintaining its current Lighthouse Certification.

Greenberg et al. (2017) showed that, when effectively implemented, evidence-based, SEL programs lead to measurable and potentially long-lasting improvements in many areas of children's lives. SEL programs can enhance children's confidence, increase engagement in school, improve academic performance, and decrease conduct problems, while increasing positive behaviors (Greenberg et al., 2017).

Senge's (1990) five disciplines of a learning organization is the theoretical framework for this study. Mixed methods qualitative and quantitative data were collected through one-on-one interviews, a survey, and artifact collection from a Leader in Me Lighthouse Certified School, which provided the data that were analyzed for this case study.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

## Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory, sequential, mixed methods case study was to examine the implementation process of The Leader in Me. The participants included faculty and administration from one Lighthouse Certified, suburban elementary school. Creswell (2015) described the basis of explanatory sequential design: "The quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general quantitative picture" (p. 545). Creswell (2015) clarified that merging both quantitative and qualitative data allows the researcher to see the research problem from multiple angles and perspectives. The quantitative results show general trends and relationships, while qualitative results illustrate in-depth personal perspectives.

The survey data gave the researcher general information about the climate, culture, and leadership within the school building. The artifacts and the interviews gave the researcher in-depth data and information about the implementation process of The Leader in Me program at this elementary school. The intent of explanatory sequential design is to explain quantitative results with qualitative data. Qualitative data, through interview conversations and artifact analysis, were collected to answer Research Questions 2 and 4. Both qualitative data and quantitative data (through the survey, artifacts, and interviews) were collected to answer Questions 1 and 3. The data that were collected included survey data, artifact analysis, and interviews to answer the following research questions:

1. What actions did educational leaders take to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

2. What are the challenges to implementing The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?

3. What are the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me program to be successfully implemented?

4. What are the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification?

The results of this study will add to existing research on The Leader in Me program and on the topic of implementation of programs in elementary schools. With the results of this study, the researcher will explore the school culture, change, and the idea of teaching and inspiring leadership qualities within students, faculty, staff, and administration.

The Leader in Me is an evidence-based, comprehensive, school improvement model that was developed in partnership with educators and that empowers students with the leadership and life skills that they need to thrive in the 21st century (The Leader in Me, 2020h). The Leader in Me provides a model and process that addresses the whole child at the elementary level. Every child is recognized as a leader. The Leader in Me is a SEL process that equips students with necessary skills to build relationships and take ownership of their education (The Leader in Me, 2020a).

In this study, the researcher explored the implementation process of The Leader in Me. Participant 1 explained,

> The Leader in Me is a student empowerment program. It teaches students how to speak and advocate for themselves on a variety of levels. It provides students with

tools to feel in control of their lives. Most typical students, who experience

difficulty in the classroom, do so because they often feel frustrated and powerless

to have any influence in their lives or their schoolwork. The Leader in Me

provides students with this control and empowerment.

Ninety faculty members at this school completed a WE Teach™ survey; the

survey measured rigor, relevance, relationships, and leadership. Data from the survey

were analyzed to gather information regarding leadership and culture within the building.

To expand on the survey data, interviews were conducted and artifacts were collected.

Twenty-five survey questions were analyzed. The survey questions provided data for

Research Questions 1 and 3, for the survey questions were focused on the actions of

administrators, leadership, and school culture. The survey data were collected initially,

and then the researcher created interview protocols.

Four one-on-one interviews served as a method of qualitative data collection.

Each interviewee was interviewed for about 45 minutes; the researcher held two sessions

with Participant 1. The interviews were conducted to gather data about the initial

discovery of The Leader in Me program, the committee that decided to bring it to this

school, the initial steps that were taken to implement it, and the entire process of

implementation from 2012 to 2020. There were 35 interview questions in the

administrator interview and 20 interview questions in the faculty interviews. The

interviews allowed the researcher to identify common themes and patterns, which

assisted in answering the four research questions.

Artifacts in the form of photographs, meeting minutes, newsletters, training

materials, videos, memorandums, pamphlets, and agendas were collected and analyzed.

The 500 initial artifacts that were collected were organized into categories, and then the researcher analyzed them. Then the researcher was able to decide which were the most important and information-packed documents that should be used. All 500 artifacts were organized into the following categories: goal setting, Lighthouse teams, Leader in Me videos, physical environment, professional development, student leadership, and leadership events. After initial analysis, the researcher focused on 315 artifacts. Subsequently, the researcher again evaluated the artifacts and decided to focus on 28 goal setting artifacts, 25 leadership event artifacts, 10 Lighthouse Team artifacts, 32 physical environment artifacts, 10 professional development artifacts, and 20 student leadership artifacts for 125 artifacts, which was sufficient for the study. Analyzing the artifacts allowed the researcher to identify emerging themes, patterns, consistent trends, and necessary parts of the implementation process to answer the four research questions.

The emerging themes that came from thematic analysis of the artifacts were goal setting, leadership events, Lighthouse teams, physical environment, professional development, and student leadership. The artifacts gave the researcher insight regarding what was happening in the school throughout the implementation. The overall themes that were established through the artifacts, interviews, and survey were communication, professional development, and distributed leadership (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Emergent Themes and Subthemes*

| Theme | Subtheme | Subtheme | Subtheme | Data source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communication | Teamwork and collaboration | Vision | Values | Interviews Artifact Analysis |

| Theme | Subtheme | Subtheme | Subtheme | Data source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Survey |
| Professional development | Time | Money | Resources | Interviews Artifact Analysis Survey |
| Distributed leadership | Administrator leadership | Teacher leaders | Student leadership | Interviews Artifact Analysis Survey |

*Note.* Emergent themes were established through data analysis.

**Findings and Interpretation: Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 was, "What actions did educational leaders take to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?" Research Question 1 explored the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me. There were 22 administrator interview questions and 12 faculty interview questions that aligned with Research Question 1. These interview questions were focused on addressing the topic of implementation. Five survey questions aligned with actions of administrators and leadership. These five questions linked to Research Question 1. The survey questions that addressed implementation were on the topics of implementing change, communication, and goal setting. The artifacts provided data that were connected to the actions of administrators and leadership regarding the implementation of The Leader in Me at this school. The key actions that administrative leaders and teacher leaders took to implement the program included communicating, creating action teams to accomplish goals, beautifying the physical environment of the school, and learning and living Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* alongside the students within the school.

The emerging themes that were discovered through analyzing the data included communication, professional development, and distributed leadership.

Effective communication is necessary to implement any new initiative within an organization. Communication as a reoccurring theme was found through analyzing the data. Communication occurred between all individuals involved with the implementation process: administration, faculty, staff, parents, the community, and students. Teamwork was necessary throughout the implementation process. The vision and values of the program had to be successfully communicated with everyone involved to implement The Leader in Me effectively.

The data that were collected supported the idea that effective communication was necessary to implement The Leader in Me successfully. When asked whether the school administration clearly communicated the goals of the school to its staff, according to the survey data, 93% of the participants responded that they agreed, while 3% responded that they disagreed, and 2% were undecided. Communication between administration, faculty, staff, students, and parents was evident in the data that were collected. The Shared Decision Making Team started The Leader in Me in this school. According to Participant 1,

> The Shared Decision Team is a team of people that volunteer to meet eight times a year and focus on student interventions and family engagement. It seemed like the natural team to support The Leader in Me. They plan events like Paint Nights, leadership evenings, and other family activities.

When responding to the statement that teachers have adequate opportunity to contribute to schoolwide decisions, according to staff survey data, 67% of the participants

agreed, 11% disagreed, and 22% were undecided. The Shared Decision Making Team discovered The Leader in Me program and brought it to the school. From there, the Lighthouse teams and action teams within the building were created and these teams worked together to accomplish all of the steps that had to be taken to implement the program successfully. Participant 1 expressed,

> We used our Shared Decision Team as a basic Lighthouse Team for most decisions. It had representation from administrators, teachers, parents, and the community. We used surveys and votes to get student input, and eventually were able to create a Student Lighthouse Team.

According to several interview participants, the preliminary discussions that occurred about the program were about creating a common language using The Leader in Me language, reading the books, training, and inviting the coaches to come to the school.

> To communicate The Leader in Me with parents and students, the Leader in Me website and other materials from The Leader in Me were used. Regarding communication with parents about the program, Participant 1 explained,

> We invited parents to PTA [parent teacher association] meetings and administration and teachers talked about it, we eventually had students come and do the teaching. We invited parents to evening events, created videos, invited them in during field days for a parent leadership activity.

Participant 1 also stated that, for students, "First we taught each habit and then integrated it into all that we do. Morning announcements, visual representations in hallways. Explicit read-alouds and lessons on the seven habits. Re-naming activities into leadership activities. Creating a Student Lighthouse."

In addition, from the responses in the data, to communicate with faculty, staff, and administrators, communication between this school and other schools going through The Leader in Me implementation occurred. There was also ongoing communication between this school and The Leader in Me coaches. The Shared Decision Making Team went to visit another Lighthouse School in the area. Both artifact analysis data and interview data confirmed that site visits occurred, and the data gave the researcher details about those visits. The team had the opportunity to see and experience a Lighthouse School. Participant 3 expressed that, to start, the team discussed and researched the program. Participant 3 further explained, "But until we experienced it and visited Lighthouse Schools; I feel like that was kind of like a catalyst that really inspired us to push for it and really, you know, dive in and try to implement it." Participant 3 also expressed,

> It was a lot of school visits. It was a lot of speaking to teachers in other
> Lighthouse Schools or other schools that are were already in the process and
> getting that information from them. And there's a lot of asking questions, a lot of
> emails, site visits—that was a big part of the initial implementation.

All four of the interview participants expressed that communicating with other schools that were already in the process was helpful in implementing The Leader in Me at this school. They expressed that the school visits, during which they could see Leader in Me Lighthouse Schools in action, were valuable experiences in the implementation process.

Communication also came through flyers, letters, the school website, and invitations for events. Artifacts were analyzed that were broken down into categories (e.g., goal setting, leadership events, Lighthouse teams, physical environment,

professional development, and student leadership). The artifacts that were analyzed were documents that were specifically used for communication about the implementation process and about events and teams that were related to The Leader in Me. The invitations, brochures, and flyers that supported the theme of communication were analyzed. In addition, many photos of the events were taken. The Shared Decision Making Team meeting minutes that were analyzed addressed every aspect of implementing the program from site visits, to creating action teams, to parent communication, to leadership events at the school, to professional development.

The amount of artifacts that the researcher collected and analyzed was vast. Six artifact categories emerged. The artifacts assisted the researcher in understanding what was done for the implementation process and when it was done. For example, examining meeting minutes from April 2014 showed the researcher that, at that time, the principal was "Working to get an appointment with the people from The Leader in Me." In addition, the minutes read,

> A field trip to the Lighthouse school, who practices the program, was approved
> for the Shared Decision Making Team. It will be helpful for us to see the program
> in action. The Leader in Me program will unify the school.

To give the reader an example of the artifact information that was examined, the researcher will explain communication with students and with parents through the meeting minutes that were collected from 2016. When the meeting minutes were analyzed, they gave insight to the researcher about the communication that occurred within the school. In the area of developing student input, action steps included (a) create a survey to ask students what they want to see within the school, (b) survey students

about what schoolwide leadership roles they would like to have within the school, and (c) shift language from "classroom jobs" to "leadership roles." The action steps for parent involvement included students presenting at PTA meetings about the seven habits. The minutes from 2016 also noted that the next goals were to create a Parent Lighthouse Team and a Student Lighthouse Team.

To give the reader an example of the artifact information that was examined, the researcher explains goal setting with students through meeting minutes that were collected from 2016. In the area of leadership notebooks and The Leader in Me, meeting minutes were analyzed from 2016-2017. The minutes outlined September, October, November, December, and January actions that the school would complete. Some of the examples are (a) binders and dividers would be distributed, (b) students would create covers for the binders, (c) the class would create a mission statement, (d) students would complete leadership role applications, (e) the "my learning" section would be included with student data graphs, and (f) the new year going into 2017 would be a time for students to set new academic and personal goals. The researcher analyzed the specific notes and information from the documents that were collected, and then they were coded and organized into themes that helped the researcher to answer the question about the actions taken for implementation.

The Leader in Me is a program that gives students an opportunity to communicate and showcase their talents and leadership skills with their peers, their families, and school personnel. Documents from student leadership notebooks were analyzed throughout the data analysis. Student leadership notebooks fell into the goal setting artifacts category because there the students track their personal and academic goals. The students set the

goals, and typically track them through a visual such as a bar graph. In addition to goal

tracking, students also store documents in this binder (e.g., the school mission statement;

student work; the seven habits tree; all about themselves; their learning; goals;

contributions; celebrations; and leadership referrals and other awards). The students

present the student leadership notebooks to family members during student-led

conferences. Student-led conferences are an opportunity for the students to communicate

and discuss with their families their goals, achievements, and work at school.

In the leadership events artifacts category, the documents that were analyzed

exhibited communication. Flyers went home with students to invite their families to

events such as Family Leadership Night and Paint Night. Flyers, brochures, and

informational documents were also used to share Leadership Day information with the

community and to invite the community, board members, and other administrators within

the district to Leadership Day. In the category of Lighthouse Team artifacts, applications

were analyzed which contained information to communicate roles and expectations for

the Student Lighthouse Team. In addition, informational memorandums went to teachers

regarding the start of the Student Lighthouse Team. Several documents also showed the

communication between the Lighthouse Team and faculty members such as a Lighthouse

review to do list and a Lighthouse timeline for the school implementation plan.

In the professional development artifacts category, the documents that aligned

with communication were (a) staff training memorandums, (b) annual faculty meeting

notes, (c) training materials and books, and (d) the school newsletters that go out weekly.

The memorandums, newsletters, and faculty notes were documents that went out to all

faculty members to communicate The Leader in Me program goals, leadership quotes,

and upcoming leadership events such as Paint Night, Leadership Day, and Unity Day. The training materials and books were distributed to faculty to communicate the ideas, values, and goals of the program; these materials were used during professional development.

Student leadership artifacts displayed communication through classroom mission statements, student leadership applications, the school matrixes of building-level, and classroom expectations. There are class leadership roles and building leadership roles. To be hired for a leadership role, students must learn about the roles and then apply for the role. Teachers teach students about the roles, students teach and train other students in the different leadership roles, and they learn about them through the applications. Ongoing communication with all involved stakeholders about all aspects of the program is necessary for the program to be successful.

Professional development and training was a reoccurring theme throughout the data collection process. Professional development—and the time, funding, and resources to complete the professional development—all were a crucial part of implementing The Leader in Me. After discussing the program and doing preliminary research about the program, the Shared Decision Making Team members knew that they needed the training. Participant 1 stated,

> After attempting to do a grassroots type of implementation, the district applied for a Federal Transformation Grant. My social worker at the time had been put in charge of writing the grant. Before she left to write it, she asked me what I would love to see come out of this grant. I told her to get me The Leader in Me. It is very

expensive. She spoke with the superintendent, and decided to have her put it in for all of the schools in the district. The district received the grant.

Getting the funding for the program was necessary to implement the program. Participant 2 explained, "If we didn't write the grant and we didn't get the money, I don't think the district would have approved it." The funding that was received for The Leader in Me through the grant paid for the professional development, for the coaches to come in, and for the training materials. Participant 1 explained,

At first, we had trainers coming to us to implement the trainings. When the district realized it was too expensive and we could not sustain it, Covey created an opportunity for district personnel to be trained and become certified in the seven habits. I went to Utah to be trained at Covey.

Being trained in Utah allowed Participant 1 to turnkey the trainings at the school, and to continue the next trainings to internalize the program and to understand truly what The Leader in Me is about. This educational leader not only arranged for and made it possible for the professional development to occur, but then, as time passed, actually became an individual who provided the professional development to the faculty and staff members.

The training and professional development was a reoccurring theme throughout every interview. Participant 2 said, "It was a matter of how can we implement this and we needed the training, so I think the training was the big piece. Without the training I don't think it could have gone much further." Participant 4 explained that, in 2014, the Shared Decision Making Team was having conversations about The Leader in Me. At that time, Participant 4 explained that the school was working on getting an appointment with The Leader in Me, and that they were also working to plan a field trip to a Lighthouse

certified school. Participant 4 explained, "That field trip was amazing which kind of stirred a fire in everybody and everyone was excited."

Time was needed for the faculty to attend trainings. The data showed that the trainings occurred on the superintendent's conference days, some full days during school days, and during common planning time, which is district time provided to teachers each day before students arrive. The information about training time was explained to the researcher during the interviews and was confirmed with newsletter and memorandum artifacts. Participant 1 explained, "During conference days, common planning, faculty meetings, we discussed various aspects or trained. We used The Leader in Me website, trainings, and other materials they provided. We followed the action team format and started by creating a beautiful environment." When responding to the statement that time is available to collaborate with other teachers, according to the faculty survey, 69% of staff responded that they agree, while 18% disagreed, and 13% were undecided. Time was a crucial element in The Leader in Me implementation process.

The Leader in Me professional development was necessary and detailed. When asked about the training that was involved in the implementation process, Participant 1 explained, "The trainings for Franklin Covey are very specific. They are broken up into different categories and presented in a specific order. Creating Culture, Launching Leadership, Lighthouse Team Training 1 and 2, Aligning Academics, and Empowering Instruction." The training and professional development was ongoing. Participant 1 described the steps to implement The Leader in Me:

The Leader in Me, once you partner with the company, has clear guidelines, practices, and staff development. We were able to have ongoing training with the

coaches. It became the focus of our school. All staff and students had to learn the *7 Habits of Highly Successful People*. Each class read Covey's [2008] *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*. We began to change our language and use the terms and teach the lessons. We began to implement schoolwide leadership roles and to post the habits in our halls. We began to beautify the school with murals and quotes to create a ubiquitous atmosphere.

Participant 3 explained the breakdown of the trainings, saying that trainings were conducted at other schools and that the Shared Decision Making Team members had the opportunity to see those different schools in the various stages of the implementation process. The full faculty did get some days of full day trainings and training during common planning, but the participants in this study were part of the Shared Decision Making Team and Lighthouse Team. Those individuals had the opportunity to have more full-day trainings, and Participant 3 explained that they were responsible for implementing the program and introducing different aspects of the program to the faculty. They started with simple aspects such as using The Leader in Me language, using the habits, and reading the books.

Effective, strong leadership is necessary when taking on the task of implementing a program within a school. Leadership was an overarching theme when evaluating the data about the implementation process, specifically, distributed leadership. Harris (2014) stated,

> Distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the practice of leadership rather than specific leadership roles or responsibilities. It equates with shared, collective, and extended leadership practice that builds the capacity for change

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and improvement. Distributed leadership means mobilizing leadership expertise at all levels in the school to generate more opportunities for change and to build the capacity for improvement.

Harris (2014) went on to explain that leadership that was limited to only individuals in positions of authority ignored the leadership capacity and ability of others.

The subthemes that emerged from the data, which had been taken from the case study conducted on The Leader in Me, were administrative leadership, teacher leaders, and student leadership, for leadership was distributed throughout the school building. The Shared Decision Making Team, action teams, and the Lighthouse teams were key teams that assisted with the implementation process; administrators, teachers, parents, and students were part of these teams. Everyone found their leadership qualities throughout the process and worked as a team. Administrators committed to making decisions to guide the faculty and staff. Teacher leaders played a vital role with implementing The Leader in Me, from teachers leading and chairing action teams, to presenting turnkey training for their colleagues, to teaching the program to the students. The goal of the program was to create leaders in our students and amongst the faculty.

Participant 1 directed the researcher to The Leader in Me (2017) Lighthouse Rubric 3.1, which became an artifact that the researcher used in the data analysis process. The rubric became a guide for the school and for the Lighthouse Team as the school worked toward Lighthouse Certification. The rubric is a 38-page document that outlines The Leader in Me Process, The Leader in Me Certification, The Leader in Me Framework, and Core Paradigms. In addition, numerous pages outline the actual rubric. The rubric illustrates the different categories within the program and the levels of

achievement, including no evidence, basic, developing, mature, and sustaining. The goal

was to get to mature and sustaining for every one of the 27 areas. The Leader in Me

Framework is a page from the rubric document that displays the areas of the rubric that

must be addressed to implement The Leader in Me.

Figure 8 outlines The Leader in Me process and The Leader in Me Certification.

The information provided in Figure 8 is a portion of the information provided in The

Leader in Me (2017) Lighthouse Rubric, which is the rubric that this school used to guide

its process to Lighthouse Certification. This page in the document outlines a summary

about what Lighthouse Certification is and about the four main steps to gain Lighthouse

Certification.

Figure 8

*The Leader in Me Process and Certification*



## *The Leader in Me* Process

*The Leader in Me* is a whole-school transformation process that empowers students with leadership and life skills to thrive in the 21st century. The process starts with a powerful paradigm: every child has unique strengths and talents that they can use to lead. This paradigm allows the staff and community to encourage the development of the whole child.

*The Leader in Me* teaches leadership principles; creates a leadership culture; and aligns academic systems into existing programs, curricula, and traditions. *The Leader in Me* serves as a foundational operating system for the school, improving relationships, transforming culture, and intrinsically motivating staff and students.

## *The Leader in Me* Certification

Lighthouse Certification is a highly regarded standard that is attainable by every *Leader in Me* School. FranklinCovey Education has established the Lighthouse Rubric to establish high standards for process fidelity and, ultimately, school outcomes.

Lighthouse Certification comes as a result of implementing *The Leader in Me* with fidelity. Schools use this Lighthouse Rubric to measure outcomes in three areas: teaching leadership principles, creating a leadership culture, and aligning academic systems. Schools also measure their success as it relates to their unique school. Lighthouse Schools serve as exemplars to their community and other schools.

**The Lighthouse Certification Process**

1. To become a Lighthouse School, a *Leader in Me* School works with a coach through *The Leader in Me* Process Map, documenting progress in *The Leader in Me* Online Evidence Binder.

2. After 3–5 years in the process, a school can request a coach to do a Lighthouse Readiness Check to evaluate its potential for a formal Lighthouse Review. A formal Lighthouse Review requires a site visit.

3. The Lighthouse Review Team evaluates the online Evidence Binder. Following the review, the team conducts a site visit. During the visit the team observes classes; tours the school; reviews evidence; and interviews students, parents, and staff to assess the school's performance against the Lighthouse Rubric. The Lighthouse Certification standard is reflected in the "Mature" column of the Lighthouse Rubric.

4. Formal Lighthouse Certification is granted by *The Leader in Me* Team. Lighthouse Certification is granted for a period of two years, after which schools recertify by conducting an online self-assessment. After four years, the recertification process involves another site recertification visit. This pattern of alternating between online and site recertification visits continues every two years as long as the school is part of *The Leader in Me* Community.

IV        Rubric Version 3.1 | © Franklin Covey Co.

Figure 9 is an outline of The Leader in Me framework. This page outlines the 27

areas that must be addressed throughout The Leader in Me Lighthouse Certification

process. To gain Lighthouse Certification, during the evaluation review process, the

school must reach mature or sustaining on the rubric in each of these 27 areas.

Figure 9

*The Leader in Me Framework*
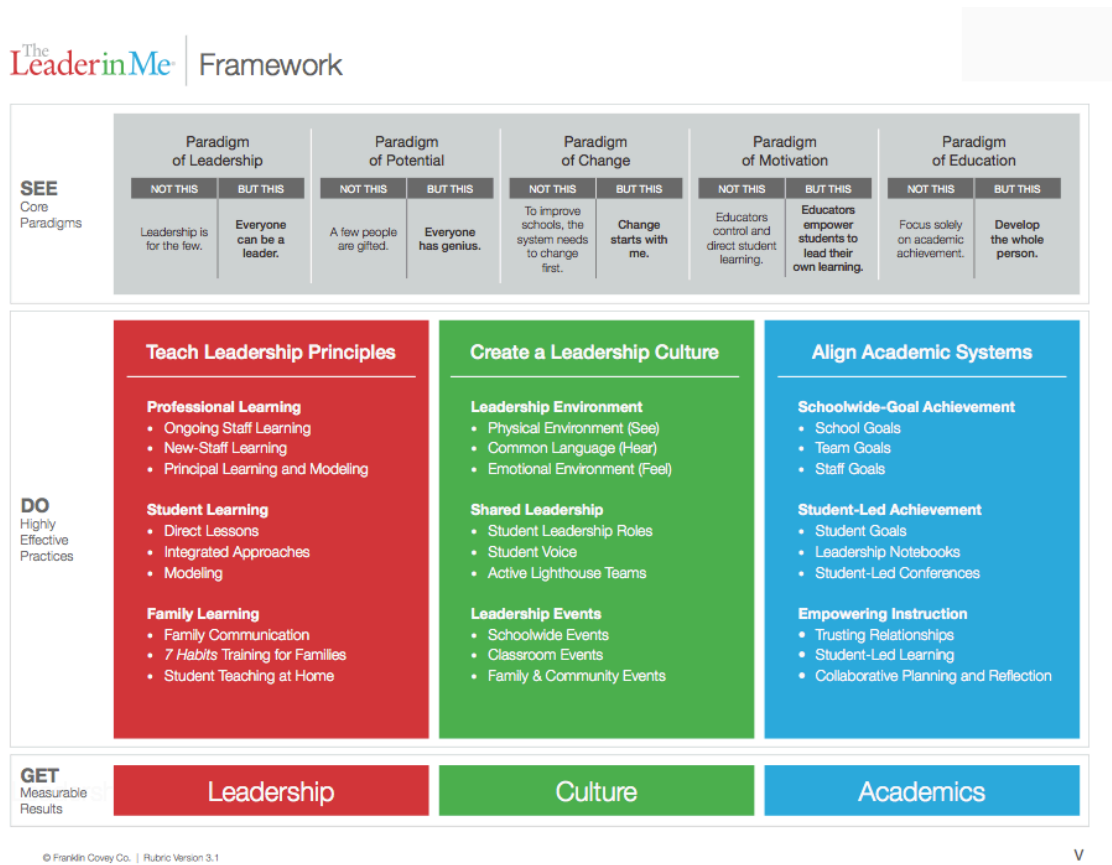
The building principal had to support the program, for without the leadership and

encouragement of the principal, the program would not be successfully implemented.

When responding to the statement, "School administration implements change without undue stress," according to the staff survey, 48% of the participants agreed, while 14% disagreed, and 37% were undecided. In response to the question about why the school was seeking to implement this change and why a new program at this school was being examined, Participant 1 expressed,

> There were several reasons. We had been implementing PBIS [positive behavioral interventions and supports] for several years, and although it was successful, in discussion with teachers and staff we felt we needed to foster the students' intrinsic desire to behave. PBIS is based upon extrinsic motivation. This will only take someone so far. The teachers and I felt we needed to provide something to our students that they could rely upon when there are no extrinsic motivators. We were already a PBIS school since 2007. PBIS recognizes and rewards positive behaviors. We had schoolwide expectations, opportunities for students to earn individually, as a class, and as a school. Our discipline had improved greatly but there was still work to do. Some of the work was more about teachers. About teachers releasing some control and empowering their students. This was reflected in not only classroom management but in instruction as well. It was still a top down environment. Even teachers still needed empowerment to make decisions and have their voices heard. It was still part of the culture. PBIS set the groundwork for Leader in Me. It helped the teachers see students and behavior differently than they had before. The environment became more positive and reward based as opposed to negative and consequence based. We had some common language, but we needed more.

The teacher leaders on the Shared Decision Making Team and the Lighthouse

Team took on the task of attending trainings, visiting schools that were implementing The

Leader in Me, and communicating with their colleagues, with parents, and with students.

The process of implementing the program was an all-around shift that created leaders

with the mindset that everyone is a leader. Participant 3 described the school as having a

mindset and culture of excellence, and always wanting to be at the forefront of new

initiatives. When the staff was asked whether their day-to-day actions were aligned with

the mission of the school, according to the staff survey, 98% of them responded that they

agreed, while 1% disagreed, and 1% was undecided.

The data exhibited that student leadership was essential within the process and the

program. Participant 1 expressed,

Students had opportunities to engage in schoolwide leadership roles, become part

of the morning announcement crew, write the announcements, and share

suggestions with the teachers and school. During our Unity Days, there was

always a seven habits portion, where the students taught a habit or sang a song or

read an essay. They were able to participate in voting on particular pieces of art to

be recreated and then be a part of the recreation, like our Hands Around the

World or our bottle cap Tree of Life.

Many artifacts supported the theme of leadership. The goal setting artifacts that

supported the theme of student leadership were bulletin board displays of schoolwide

goals, student leadership notebooks, bus of the month bulletin board displays, and

mission statements collaboratively written by students. The students led their own

learning by setting their own academic goals and then tracking their process in their

student leadership notebooks. The students also collaboratively set class-wide goals and schoolwide goals that were displayed on bulletin boards. The students worked as a class to set their own mission statements and consistently displayed leadership qualities to meet their goals and follow their mission statements. The Lighthouse Team artifacts that showed leadership were the murals that the Student Lighthouse Team created and the service projects that the Student Lighthouse Team completed. The Lighthouse Team, which was comprised of faculty, led the staff in the building to Lighthouse Certification. The team met frequently to plan, month by month, what they had to work on next.

Figure 10 is a blank school implementation plan graphic organizer. The Lighthouse Team is the team that completes and updates the information for the graphic organizer. When the trainers from The Leader in Me conducted school visits and trainings, the trainers would assist in teaching the Lighthouse Team how to use this graphic organizer. Several completed versions of this graphic organizer were evaluated throughout the artifact analysis.

Figure 10

*School Implementation Plan*



School Implementation Plan

The school implementation plan graphic organizers were artifacts that were analyzed. These documents gave the researcher a month-to-month view of the goals of the school to continue to implement The Leader in Me. The school implementation plan graphic organizer aligns with the rubric that the school was evaluated on to gain Lighthouse Certification.

Action teams were a necessary component of the implementation process. Every faculty member became part of an action team. The action teams distributed tasks that had to be done within the school. The action team organization sheet was analyzed as an artifact. The action teams are part of The Leader in Me framework, and are a way for the faculty to divide and accomplish goals within and around the building. According to the artifact, Leadership Action Teams, that the researcher collected, the leadership action teams included:

1. Professional learning (upload evidence, train new staff, ongoing staff training);

2. Special days (Unity Day set up, Veterans Day ceremony, organize hosts for Unity Day, spirit weeks, Peace Day);

3. Leadership videos (create new LIM/PBIS videos, edit, and update past videos as needed);

4. Leadership notebooks (collect resources for notebooks, brainstorm ideas for what can be included in notebooks);

5. Art (Paint Night materials prep, art show, mount art for art shows, art contests);

6. Quotes (choose quotes, create and apply vinyl quotes around building);

7. Drawing and painting (choose images and words for around the building, sketch and paint images and words in chosen location);

8. Leadership Day (brainstorm and create plan for Leadership Day, create student roles for the day and distribute the applications, coordinate the day's schedule, oversee and check in with other people work on Leadership Day components);

9. Sharpen the saw (work to boost morale amongst staff in the building, create opportunities for staff members to sharpen the saw during school hours, create opportunities for outside of school activities for interested staff);

10. █████ and █████ (update/maintain applications as needed, update/maintain bulletin boards, collect student nominations from teachers, PTA communication for recognition);

11. Student leadership roles (update/maintain applications as needed, update/maintain schoolwide leadership roles bulletin boards, clarify roles and responsibilities of each student leadership role, create new schoolwide leadership roles as necessary);

12. Student Lighthouse (create and distribute student Lighthouse applications, interview and choose student Lighthouse members, facilitate student Lighthouse meetings);

13. Academic goals and data tracking (set monthly schoolwide academic goal, track data and report if goals are met or not each month, update and maintain schoolwide academic goal bulletin boards, monitor and brainstorm strategies in individual and class data collection for academic goals, surveys);

14. Behavior goals and tracking (set monthly schoolwide behavior goal, track data and report if goals are met or not each month, decide on and announce monthly school reward based on student surveys, update/maintain schoolwide behavior goal bulletin boards, surveys);

15. Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) and edible garden;

16. Book room;

17. Field trips;

18. Cultural arts; and

19. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

The tasks that had to be completed for The Leader in Me to be implemented successfully were vast. Each team took on a portion of tasks so that everything could be accomplished. In order to sustain The Leader in Me, the work that that action teams do, is ongoing.

Figure 11 outlines a timeline that the researcher created from the data that were gathered from interviews and artifacts. The timeline labels the dates throughout the implementation process of The Leader in Me and the steps that occurred during that time. The researcher created Figure 11 from the data that were collected throughout the research. The interview data and artifact analysis data gave the researcher the information to create this timeline. The discussions that occurred with the participants outlined the steps that were taken to implement The Leader in Me and the dates that specific necessary steps occurred. The artifacts that were analyzed were memorandums, Shared Decision Making Team minutes, Leadership Day invitations and pamphlets, and school

implementation plan graphic organizers. These artifacts provided a plethora of information about the steps that were taken to implement the program and when those steps were taken. Overall, the actions that the educational leaders at this suburban elementary school took to implement The Leader in Me were: (a) to gain funding, (b) to set up site visits, (c) to create action teams, (d) to provide faculty members with professional development, resources/materials, and training from The Leader in Me trainers, and (e) to work with the school as a team to create a shared vision. The researcher created this timeline; this timeline is specific to the school at the center of this study and is based on the data that was collected for this case study.

Figure 11

*Implementation of the Leader in Me Timeline*

**Implementation of The Leader in Me Timeline**

**2012-2013**
DISCUSSION
The Shared Decision Making Team began discussing The Leader in Me.

RESEARCH
The discussion continued and research on The Leader in Me began.
**2013-2014**

**May 2014**
SITE VISIT
The Shared Decision Making Team visited a Lighthouse School.

FIND FUNDING
The School Climate Transformation Grant was written and gained by the school district.
**Spring 2015**

FULL IN
The school began the full process of implementing The Leader in Me.
**2015-2016**

IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUED
-Student Leadership Roles
-Leadership Events
-Student Leadership Notebooks
-Lighthouse Teams
-Professional Development
-School beautification
-Action Teams
**2016-2017**

**April 2017**
LEADERSHIP DAY
The school hosted their first Leadership Day.

IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUED
-Student Leadership Roles
-Leadership Events
-Student Leadership Notebooks
-Lighthouse Teams
-Professional Development
-School beautification
-Action Teams
**2017-2018**

**Spring 2018**
LIGHTHOUSE CERTIFICATION
The Leader in Me trainers visited the school for their formal Lighthouse Review. Lighthouse Certification was granted shortly after.

SUSTAINABILITY
The school continued to train new staff, provide boosters for all staff, beautify the physical environment, engage in Leadership Events, Student Leadership Roles, and Lighthouse Teams.
**2019-2020**

SUSTAINABILITY
Currently, there is ongoing sustainability of The Leader in Me. New staff is continuously trained by the building's faculty in a "turn key" style. Action Teams and Lighthouse Teams are up and running.
**2020-2021**

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**Findings and Interpretation: Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 was "What are the challenges to implementing The Leader

in Me into a suburban elementary school?" With Research Question 2, the researcher

explored the challenges of implementing The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary

school. A total of four administrator interview questions and three faculty interview

questions were asked that addressed the topic of implementation challenges. According to

the data that were collected, the primary challenges with implementing the program were

allocating time to implement all of the aspects of the program as well as gaining funding

for the program. The emerging themes that came from the data for Research Question 2

included professional development, time, funding, and modifications. The amount of

professional development that was required of the program was a great deal, allotting the

time to train each individual was a challenge; therefore, modifying some aspects of the

program and of the implementation became necessary.

With any new program in a school, challenges can be time, money, and a lack of

resources. The Leader in Me demands a great deal of time from the administrators,

faculty, and staff. A challenge that this school faced while implementing The Leader in

Me was time because of union and schedule constraints and because of this, the work

often fell on the administrators and a few willing teachers. It was difficult to have the full

faculty trained together. Getting substitutes for many staff members for full days was a

challenge.

The staff development is effective, but Participant 1 described it as "intense" and

elaborated, explaining that the expectation was that the whole school would be trained

together, which was difficult to accomplish because of time, schedules, and lack of

substitutes. To acquire and pay for substitutes while teachers attended training was a challenge. Participant 1 was Franklin Covey trained along with another administrator within the district. To become Franklin Covey trainers, the two administrators visited Utah for 1 week for 2 consecutive years. This did not necessarily fix the professional development problem, but it did help the process become slightly easier to offer professional development to the staff. Once the Franklin Covey training occurred, the principal could act as a coach and train the staff, which made it more manageable. This is an all-in program, as Participant 1 described it; meaning that, if the principal did not support it, it would not happen and it would not work. The training and professional development for staff is a hands on experience and should be done in 4-6 hour blocks. Not having substitutes and not having full days to train was a challenge.

Following all of the requirements that were necessary through The Leader in Me was a challenge. Therefore, after following the program and struggling to follow all of the specific requirements of The Leader in Me, the school had to make some modifications. Following The Leader in Me requirements exactly were not always reasonable or doable in the environment in ▮▮▮▮▮ State and with the school district's union. An example of adapting things to meet the needs of this school is their Leadership Day. As Participant 1 explained,

> This is a day where we are supposed to invite the community into our school and have our students show their leadership. We did this for 2 years. It was like planning a wedding. An enormous amount of planning, work, and expense. It was great for those 2 years. As the program grew and other schools began to do it, it affected our attendance. Many members of the community just did not have the

ability to take that much time of their workday. Also, because of our size and parking, we could not invite the parents. So we decided instead to do grade level days. Each grade level would be required to have a special day, led by students, to demonstrate their leadership skills, and teach the parents about the seven habits.

Participant 4 said, "Nobody here does anything without 110%." Participant 4 expressed that everyone was fully committed which can sometimes lead to things feeling overwhelming.

Participant 3 expressed the first challenge of implementing The Leader in Me was the hurdle of cost. The participant expressed that the trainings offered much information, which could be overwhelming. In addition, sometimes the information changed throughout the years that the school was implementing the program. Participant 1 stated,

One of the most challenging parts of the training process is that Covey changed it several times during our journey. So it was a little confusing for everyone. I think they have sort of finalized the process. They had based what they did on their business model and discovered that some of it simply did not work in schools so they kept modifying it.

Both Participant 2 and Participant 4 discussed the challenges of the student leadership notebooks. Participant 4 expressed that time was a challenge and that she spends little time on them because they are involved. Participant 2 expressed that tracking goals, keeping track of the pages, and teaching students how to track and graph realistically and correctly became a little overwhelming.

Participant 1 and Participant 3 both stated that a challenge was when the program spread to other schools in the district. As other schools within the district began to

implement the program, they also began to have leadership events such as Leadership Day. Many members of the community did not have the ability to attend multiple full day Leadership Days. In addition, because of the parking at the school, this school could not invite parents. The school decided to have grade level, leadership days; during which the students would demonstrate their leadership skills and teach the parents about the seven habits. This was a modification of what The Leader in Me had suggested for Leadership Day, but modifications had to be made because of the different challenges that were specific to this school.

Participant 1 expressed the main challenges:

Although it is necessary, the amount of training to do the program well is a major challenge. If it were the only thing we did or one of five things to do, it would be easier. Unfortunately, we always have 100 things to do. This is an all-in program. If the principal does not support it, it does not happen. It will not work. The training is a hands-on experience. Much of it must be done in 4-6 hour blocks. It does not really work modularly. Without having subs to cover teachers, it cannot get accomplished.

Overall, the implementation challenges were (a) time, (b) funding, and (c) resources which specifically included the extent of the training required and time required to accomplish all of the pieces.

**Findings and Interpretation: Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 was, "What are the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me program to be successfully implemented?" Research Question 3 explored the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me to be

successful. Five administrator interview questions and two faculty interview questions were asked to address the topic of school culture. Twenty survey questions addressed the topic of school culture. The emerging themes from the data collected to answer Research Question 3 were collaboration, teamwork, and distributed leadership. The data collected to answer Research Question 3 showed that the individuals at the school that was studied worked together on teams, trusted one another, and collaborated with one another to accomplish their goals and vision of implementation of The Leader in Me. The data also showed that there was a culture of excellence and a culture of hard work and determination.

Participant 3 described the school as having a culture of excellence. The participant stated,

We were really already in the forefront with PBIS and that helped a lot. I think for sure the Shared Decision Making Team has always been a really strong team of teachers that are very involved with things at school and very enthusiastic and willing to kind of go above and beyond and go do the site visits and you know take on that extra responsibility. I think we've always had a culture of like excellence. We know this is coming down the pike. We're going to be there first, and I think a lot of people on staff here are the same way. I think we have a lot of staff that have children in the district and in the building, I think that was a big motivator for a lot of people and wanting to better the climate, not just for their students, but for their own children and families.

When asked about the climate and culture of the building, Participant 1 stated,

Change is always a challenge, but the program is designed for all stakeholders to participate fully. We needed to create opportunities for everyone and for everyone to feel safe taking risks. We as a staff began to learn to trust each other. I think also, as a staff we had gone through some schoolwide losses together and got to know each other in a different way. This began a level of trust. Also, every single person was asked to share their talents. As people began to share, it was celebrated. It just takes those first few steps, and then as everyone began to see it take root and work, the rest took care of itself.

Participant 2 expressed that the climate was already in a good place and that The Leader in Me helped to make it better. The Leader in Me helped students to make better choices. Participant 2 added that, "It was an easy transition to implement goal setting because we already had PBIS going." Participant 4 explained that, at first, people could see a new program or school initiative as 'another thing' but that the school did not face that challenge because the expectation was that people could do what they could each day to incorporate the language. Participant 4 explained further, "I think everybody here, the staff, takes everything very seriously and I think that you need that." Participant 4 expressed that, "It might have been a challenge in the beginning with taking on that extra responsibility and that is a little scary in terms of time and time management, but the fact that everyone could do it at different levels was a comfort." Participant 4 also stated, "We all saw the value."

Two questions on the survey directly assessed the trust within the building. When responding to the statement, "The school administration effectively creates a climate of trust," 62% of the participants agreed, 12% disagreed, and 26% were undecided. When

responding to the statement, "School administration takes action on staff concerns and suggestions," 68% of the participants agreed, 8% disagreed, and 24% were undecided. From this information and the interview responses, the researcher concluded that trust was present. The themes that were drawn from the data included teamwork, collaboration, and communication. For those three topics to occur, people within the organization must have trust in one another. For individuals to train one another and respond to that training, they must trust one another. For students to engage in the program, they must trust the adults that engage in it and teach it to them. Relational trust is the confidence that colleagues will do their jobs and will help one another. When responding to the statement stating, "My colleagues are a source of encouragement for me," 84% of the participants agreed, 3% disagreed, and 12% were undecided. To have a positive school climate and to make a positive impact on a school, relational trust must be present. From the survey data, there appeared to be positive relationships between students, teachers, and administration.

Twenty survey questions aligned with school culture. Ninety faculty members participated in a survey that focused on leadership, rigor, relevance, and relationships. The researcher evaluated the existing survey and drilled down the questions and the data. The researcher reorganized and sorted the questions to evaluate the relationships and culture aspects of the information collected. Table 6, Figure 12, and Table 7 display survey questions and results related to school building leadership, relationships, and culture.

Table 6

*Survey Questions Pertaining to Culture*

| Number | Question |
|--------|----------|
| Question 1 | Teachers are supported to grow professionally. |
| Question 2 | I want to learn new ways of teaching students. |
| Question 3 | School administration recognizes the achievements of staff. |
| Question 4 | Creative thinking is embraced as essential by administration in this school. |
| Question 5 | I connect the learning in my classroom to the community. |
| Question 6 | Students can apply what I am teaching to their everyday lives. |
| Question 7 | Staff are expected to do interdisciplinary planning and projects. |
| Question 8 | I know what my students are passionate about. |
| Question 9 | The school administration effectively creates a climate of trust. |
| Question 10 | School administration takes action on staff concerns and suggestions. |
| Question 11 | I can freely express my opinions and concerns to the administration. |
| Question 12 | Staff respects students. |
| Question 13 | Staff help each other. |
| Question 14 | This school reaches out to all students to meet their individual needs. |
| Question 15 | Teachers are enthusiastic about what they teach. |
| Question 16 | I am aware of my students' interests outside of school. |
| Question 17 | My colleagues are a source of encouragement for me. |
| Question 18 | I know my students' academic interests and goals. |
| Question 19 | Students talk about academic problems and concerns with me. |

| Number | Question |
|---|---|
| Question 20 | I am a source of encouragement for my students. |
| Question 21 | Teachers have adequate opportunity to contribute to school wide decisions. |
| Question 22 | The school administration clearly communicates the goals of the school to staff. |
| Question 23 | My day-to-day actions are aligned with the mission of this school. |
| Question 24 | Time is available to collaborate with other teachers. |
| Question 25 | School administration implements change without undue stress. |

*Note*. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019, Author. Copyright Successful Practices Network, 2019. The researcher reorganized the questions and created the table from the WE Teach™ survey.

Figure 12

*Stacked Bar Chart Survey Results*
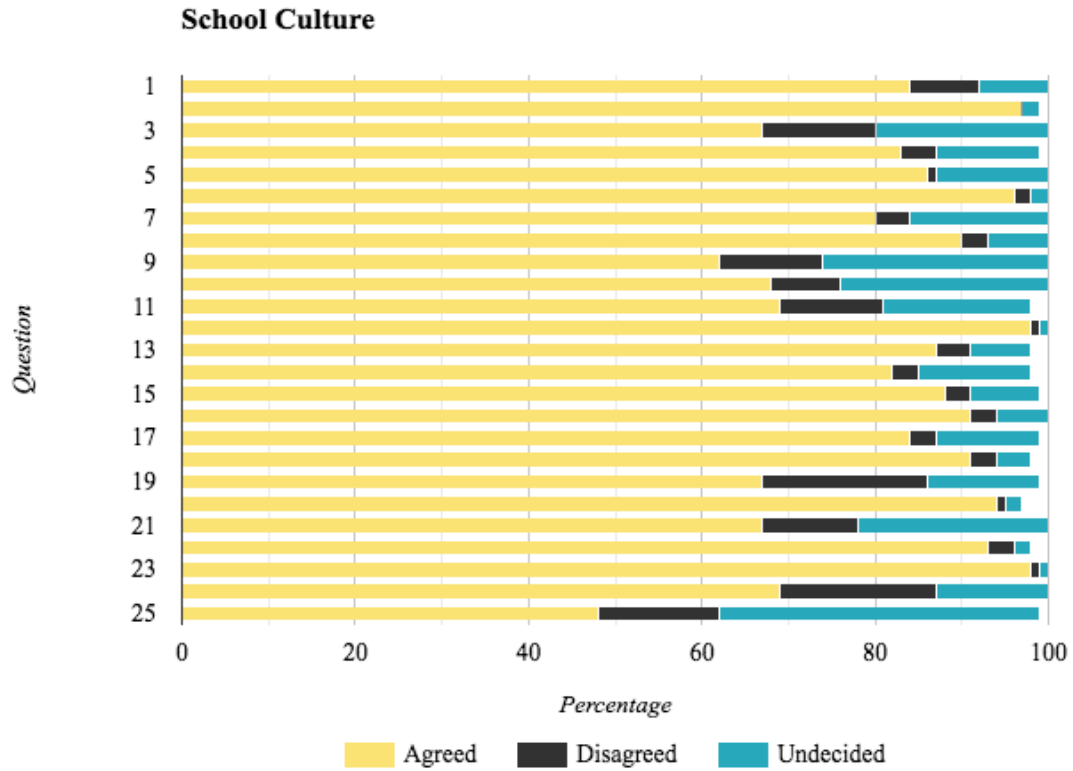


**School Culture**

*Note*. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019,

Author. Copyright Successful Practices Network, 2019. The researcher created the figure based on WE

Teach™ data; question numbers align with Table 6.

Table 7

*WE Teach™ Survey Data Pertaining to Culture*

| Question | Total agree | Total disagree | Undecided | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers are supported to grow professionally. | 84% | 8% | 8% | 19% | 66% | 8% | 0% |
| I want to learn new ways of teaching students. | 97% | 0% | 2% | 39% | 58% | 0% | 0% |

| Question | Total agree | Total disagree | Undecided | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School administration recognizes the achievements of staff. | 67% | 13% | 20% | 14% | 52% | 10% | 3% |
| Creative thinking is embraced as essential by administration in this school. | 83% | 4% | 12% | 29% | 54% | 3% | 1% |
| I connect the learning in my classroom to the community. | 86% | 1% | 13% | 20% | 66% | 1% | 0% |
| Students can apply what I am teaching to their everyday lives. | 96% | 2% | 2% | 52% | 43% | 1% | 1% |
| Staff are expected to do interdisciplinary planning and projects. | 80% | 4% | 16% | 27% | 53% | 3% | 1% |
| I know what my students are passionate about. | 90% | 3% | 7% | 36% | 54% | 2% | 1% |
| The school administration effectively creates a climate of trust. | 62% | 12% | 26% | 19% | 43% | 11% | 1% |
| School administration takes action on staff concerns and suggestions. | 68% | 8% | 24% | 14% | 53% | 7% | 1% |
| I can freely express my opinions and concerns to the administration. | 69% | 12% | 17% | 23% | 46% | 9% | 3% |
| Staff respect students. | 98% | 1% | 1% | 56% | 42% | 0% | 1% |

| Question | Total agree | Total disagree | Undecided | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff help each other. | 87% | 4% | 7% | 43% | 43% | 3% | 1% |
| This school reaches out to all students to meet their individual needs. | 82% | 3% | 13% | 30% | 52% | 3% | 0% |
| Teachers are enthusiastic about what they teach. | 88% | 3% | 8% | 27% | 61% | 2% | 1% |
| I am aware of my students' interests outside of school. | 91% | 3% | 6% | 33% | 58% | 3% | 0% |
| My colleagues are a source of encouragement for me. | 84% | 3% | 12% | 33% | 51% | 3% | 0% |
| I know my students' academic interests and goals. | 91% | 3% | 4% | 37% | 54% | 2% | 1% |
| Students talk about academic problems and concerns with me. | 67% | 19% | 13% | 10% | 57% | 16% | 3% |
| I am a source of encouragement for my students. | 94% | 1% | 2% | 63% | 31% | 0% | 1% |
| Teachers have adequate opportunity to contribute to school wide decisions. | 67% | 11% | 22% | 14% | 52% | 11% | 0% |
| The school administration clearly communicates the goals of the school to staff. | 93% | 3% | 2% | 36% | 58% | 2% | 1% |

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| Question | Total agree | Total disagree | Undecided | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My day–to–day actions are aligned with the mission of this school. | 98% | 1% | 1% | 46% | 52% | 0% | 1% |
| Time is available to collaborate with other teachers. | 69% | 18% | 13% | 19% | 50% | 17% | 1% |
| School administration implements change without undue stress. | 48% | 14% | 37% | 13% | 34% | 14% | 0% |

*Note*. From *WE Teach™ staff survey: Data report and results*, by Successful Practices Network, 2019, Author. Copyright Successful Practices Network, 2019. The researcher reorganized the questions and created the table from the WE Teach™ survey.

The school culture results from the survey gave the researcher an overall idea about the general attitudes, relationships, and beliefs of the school. The one-on-one conversations with participants elaborated on those ideas to give more detailed information about the school, especially as it pertained to The Leader in Me. Overall, the culture that existed at this school was a positive culture of excellence, determination, teamwork, and trust.

**Findings and Interpretation: Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 was, "What are the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification?" Research Question 4 explored the challenges of maintaining Lighthouse Certification. Four administrator interview questions and three faculty interview questions were asked that addressed the topic of challenges of maintaining Lighthouse Certification. The predominant themes that emerged from the interviews regarding maintaining Lighthouse Certification were sustainability and funding.

From the interview data, the process to receive Lighthouse Certification was extensive. Participant 1 described the process:

It was quite a process. It included paperwork for admin, teachers, and students. We had to do walkthroughs, interviews with teachers, parents, and students. I would compare it to something ███████ State does when schools are cited. And you pay for this. To become a Lighthouse School you are held to a rubric and receive a score.

Participant 4 explained that the students in the grade level were taught The Leader in Me from when they were young, so it is still part of their vocabulary and their mindset. Participant 4 expressed that teachers are not teaching it from scratch and that the hard part is done as far as the physical piece and making the building the way it needs to be. Participant 4 expressed that now it is about the upkeep and maintenance of the program. However, it was noted that it is a difficult time now with COVID-19, and the reopening of schools; and it is a challenge because parents cannot enter the building for leadership events and people are unable to meet in large groups.

The Lighthouse Team artifacts that were analyzed to support Research Question 4 were the 2017 Lighthouse Rubric, Student Lighthouse Team documents, Lighthouse Team documents for this past year, and training materials. The professional development artifacts category included building newsletters, which showed that action teams continued to meet and work. Maintaining The Leader in Me and Lighthouse Certification is ongoing. The artifacts that were analyzed gave the researcher information to show that in fact training was ongoing, and action team work and Lighthouse Team work was being done.

Maintaining Lighthouse Certification means renewing the school's status every 2 years. Funding and finances play a large role with the program overall, including the maintenance of the program and for the certification. If funding ends, training ends. Participant 1 explained, "After the grant ended, the funding for training ended. The training only happens if I do it. There are portions of the program that are expensive and difficult to maintain."

To maintain and sustain Lighthouse Certification, the school must continually adjust and monitor where they are by using the rubric. The administrators at the school must work with the Lighthouse Team and review the rubric to determine where the school currently is, and where the school needs to go. As new staff and faculty are hired, training needs to continue for them. This school has an action team that trains new staff; however, because funding has ended, new staff members will not receive the full training from The Leader in Me coaches during full day and half day trainings. Ensuring that the new staff members receive the most effective training possible is part of maintaining the program. Sustaining the environment that has been created and following The Leader in Me rubrics are also part of supporting the continuation of the program. Overall, the challenges in maintaining The Leader in Me Lighthouse Certification are (a) training new staff, (b) maintaining funding, and (c) allotting time to maintain and sustain the tasks that have to be done.

## Summary

This explanatory case study used qualitative data through interviews and artifact analysis and quantitative data through a survey to answer four research questions. The

setting of the study was a suburban elementary school. The school that was studied was a school that implemented The Leader in Me and gained Lighthouse Certification.

Research Question 1 was used to explore the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me. When analyzing the data, the researcher found that there was a great deal of data to answer this question. There was a large amount of data for Research Question 1 because there were numerous actions that administrative leaders and teacher leaders took to implement the program. Those central and crucial actions included (a) gaining funding, (b) training the faculty and staff, (c) creating Lighthouse teams and action teams, (d) organizing the teams to complete tasks that are necessary for full implementation, (e) planning leadership events such as Paint Nights and Leadership Days, (f) creating building and classroom leadership roles for students, (g) students setting building-wide behavioral and academic goals, (h) students setting individual personal and academic goals, (i) students tracking their data regarding their goals, organizing and implementing student leadership notebooks, (j) holding student-led conferences, and (k) beautifying the physical environment of the school. These actions all tied into the ideas of communication, professional development, and distributed leadership. To accomplish the implementation, The Leader in Me framework from the rubric was used as a guide.

Research Question 2 was used to explore the challenges that were faced with implementing The Leader in Me. The leading challenges with implementing the program were resources, which included time and funding. The grant funding that the school received allowed the program to be implemented; however, now that that the grant has

been used, the funding for the program does not exist. Allotting time to learn all of the aspects of the program, and then implement those aspects were challenges.

Research Question 3 was used to explore the climate and culture at the school that allowed The Leader in Me to be implemented. A positive culture of hard-working and devoted professionals existed at this school. As the participants described, the culture was one of excellence with faculty that put 110% into what they do. PBIS was part of the culture, which allowed The Leader in Me to be implemented more easily.

Research Question 4 was used to explore the challenges in maintaining The Leader in Me and Lighthouse Certification. The leading challenges in maintaining The Leader in Me program and the status of Lighthouse Certification included having the access to continuous funding and time as well as training new staff members as individuals join the building faculty. In the discussion in Chapter 5, the researcher reviews the implications of the findings from this chapter, the relationship to prior research, the limitations to this study, and the researcher's recommendations for future practice and for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

## Introduction

This study is an explanatory mixed methods case study in which the researcher studied the implementation process of The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. In this study, the researcher addressed four research questions that pertained to (a) the actions that leaders took to implement The Leader in Me, (b) the challenges with implementing the program, (c) the school culture that existed to implement the program, and (d) the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification. Initially, the survey data were collected, and then interviews were conducted and artifacts were collected and analyzed.

The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation process of The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. In the study, the researcher examined (a) the actions that were taken to implement The Leader in Me, (b) the challenges with implementing The Leader in Me, (c) the aspects of the school culture that allowed for The Leader in Me to be successfully implemented, and (d) the challenges with maintaining Lighthouse Certification.

In Chapter 4, the researcher presented the data from a survey, interviews, and artifacts. In Chapter 5, the researcher presents further discussion and interpretation from the data. The implications of the findings are reported, and the researcher relates the implications to the theoretical framework that was presented in Chapter 2. The relationships to the prior research are addressed to connect the findings to the literature review that was presented in Chapter 2. The limitations to the study, the

recommendations for future practice, and the recommendations for future research are explored and discussed.

## Implications of Findings

In this section, the researcher discusses the implications of the major findings of this study, relating them to the theoretical framework that was presented in Chapter 2. The theoretical framework of this study is from Senge's (1990) vision of the learning organization. Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* is the basis of this study's theoretical framework. The five disciplines include shared vision, systems thinking, mental model, team learning, and personal mastery. Shared vision means that everyone owns the vision and has focus and energy for learning. Systems thinking means all people and processes are interdependent, and working together as a whole system. Having mental models means that unwanted values are exchanged for new and applicable values. Team learning means that individuals share what they have learned so that the team becomes more knowledgeable. Personal mastery means that there is individual commitment to the process of learning. In the following section, the researcher presents the conclusions and interpretation of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

Research Question 1 asked, "What actions did educational leaders take to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?" Research Question 2 asked, "What are the challenges to implementing The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school?" Research Question 3 asked, "What are the components of the school culture that enabled The Leader in Me program to be successfully implemented?"

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Research Question 4 asked, "What are the challenges in maintaining

Lighthouse Certification?"

The data indicated that several key actions were necessary to successful

implementation of The Leader in Me. The key actions that had to occur to implement The

Leader in Me successfully were (a) discover and discuss the program with a team,

(b) visit other schools that had implemented the program to see the program in action,

(c) obtain and provide professional development to all faculty and staff members, and

(d) create and execute Lighthouse teams and action teams within the building to complete

the various tasks required by The Leader in Me program. The action teams then had to

complete various tasks to fulfill the requirements that The Leader in Me expected (e.g.,

planning leadership events, creating and working on student leadership notebooks, setting

academic and behavioral goals within the building, keeping track of academic and

behavioral data, beautifying the school environment, and producing building and

classroom leadership roles for the students within the school).

From the research conducted in this study, the researcher concluded that trust,

open communication, and collaboration are important aspects of making effective change

within a school. The researcher determined that everyone in the learning organization

must work as a team. When implementing The Leader in Me, each individual within the

school had to be committed to the task at hand. Individuals had to be part of an action

team, and all of the teams put together created the greater team, which was the school as

a whole. Individuals had to be committed and open to the idea of learning a new program

and to participating in professional development. Implementing a new program or school

initiative is often time consuming, requires effort, and requires that each individual be

vested in the vision. Dedicated individuals became part of a team and had to work together to accomplish goals, and then the teams came together to accomplish their shared vision. There are several moving parts within The Leader in Me program and within the implementation process of the program.

Several individuals at this school became experts in certain areas of The Leader in Me, and Participant 1 was trained by Franklin Covey to become an official trainer. It has become the responsibility of the group members as a whole to share their knowledge with their colleagues and to continue this practice as new faculty and staff members are hired. The professional development is ongoing, and will need to continue as time goes on to sustain the program. The topic of time and having enough time to implement the program emerged as a challenge from the data that were collected in this case study. Change can be a challenge in any organization and often requires a paradigm shift. In the case of The Leader in Me implementation at this school, the researcher concluded that the paradigm shift that had to occur to gain success in full implementation was that the program was not "one more thing" for teachers to do. The researcher determined that the individuals at this school had to see the value in the program and share a vision with one another to apply the program. From the data, the researcher concluded that all of the above occurred to implement The Leader in Me successfully.

**Relationship to Prior Research**

The topics that were discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 prior to conducting research and prior to completing this study were SEL, social learning theory, trust, school climate, school culture, change, leadership theories, shared vision, professional development, goal setting, student-led conferences, and the impact of The

Leader in Me program. The researcher could find little research regarding the implementation process of The Leader in Me program. The researcher hopes that the work done in this case study will add to the research on the topic of implementation of SEL programs, and specifically that it will add to the research on the topic of The Leader in Me implementation.

From the research that was conducted, the researcher concluded and one could imply that trust existed throughout the implementation process. The survey that the staff completed gave insight to the topic of trust. Regarding adults trusting adults within the school, the following data shows that there was some level of trust: When responding to the statement that the school administrators effectively created a climate of trust, 62% of the participants agreed, 12% disagreed, and 26% were undecided. When responding to the statement that the school administrators took action regarding staff concerns and suggestions, 68% of the participants agreed, 8% disagreed, and 24% were undecided. When responding to the statement that the participants could freely express their opinions and concerns to administration, 69% of the participants agreed, 12% disagreed, and 17% were undecided. When responding to the statement that colleagues are a source of encouragement, 84% of the participants agreed, 3% disagreed, and 12% were undecided.

In addition, the interview data showed that trust existed throughout the process. The way that the staff in the building appeared to come together, listen to one another, train one another, and rely on one another implied that the faculty trusted one another. The Shared Decision Making Team and the Lighthouse Team depended on one another to implement the program. Individuals had to rely on other individuals, who had to rely

on groups of people and teams, and the staff in the building overall had to be able to communicate and trust one another throughout the process.

Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is the model for The Leader in Me program that follows Covey (2008) *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*. Trust is a leading aspect within The Leader in Me program. Covey (2019) expressed that the first job of any leader is to encourage trust, which comes from character and competence. Covey (2019) expressed that building trust is essential and that it is like other goals that should be focused on, measured, and improved.

Eppinga et al. (2018) conducted a study on school climate; the results of the study showed that relational trust was important for schools to improve. Eppinga et al. further showed that the seven changes that the principal, Salina, had implemented to create relational trust were (a) develop to a common language, (b) reassess privileges, (c) hold one-on-one conversations, (c) include support staff, (d) create collaborative inquiry teams, (e) build supportive systems, and (f) give permission to innovate. The participants that were interviewed for this case study on The Leader in Me often stated that using The Leader in Me language was crucial within the implementation process.

Research shows that social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves schools and is a main resource for reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Strong levels of trust support a positive work environment, which encourages risk taking, hard work, honesty, and genuine conversations. Schools and organizations that produce trust, are schools that build a positive culture, climate, and environment, which generate achievement and improvement. According to the interview conversations that occurred with the participants of this case study on The Leader in Me, all of these aspects appeared

to exist at the school at the center of this study. The themes that were presented from the interviews were on the topics of communication and leadership. The individuals involved with the implementation process of The Leader in Me had to communicate, depend on one another, and take on leadership roles.

As Peterson and Deal (2009) stated,

Culture exists in the deeper elements of a school: the unwritten rules and assumptions, the combination of rituals and traditions, the array of symbols and artifacts, the special language and phrasing that staff and students use, the expectations for change and learning that saturate the school's world. (p. 9)

Peterson and Deal (2009) also said, "Climate emphasizes the feeling and contemporary tone of the school, the feeling of the relationships, and the morale of the place" (p. 9). The interview participants described the school as having a culture of excellence. The interview participants also expressed the vast level of communication and teamwork that occurred throughout the implementation process. The culture at the school at the center of The Leader in Me case study appeared to be (a) one of leadership, (b) in which administrators lead, (c) in which teachers took the lead on different action teams, (d) in which faculty and staff learned The Leader in Me, and (e) in which, as a whole school, the program produced student leaders.

From the research done for this case study, it can be determined that a shared vision was required for The Leader in Me to be implemented. A shared vision (about what the aspects of implementation were and what the goal of implementation was) was necessary to work toward and reach Lighthouse Certification. Having a shared vision can often be a challenge when working with a large group. However, from the research

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conducted for this study, buy-in to the program was not one of the challenges. The

Shared Decision Making Team's research on the program and the visits they took to other

schools, assisted greatly in helping the vision for the school regarding The Leader in Me

and implementing this SEL and leadership program. A shared vision includes teamwork,

communication, and collaboration, which were three common themes discovered

throughout the research for this study.

The literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed that professional

development is important for teachers. In this study, the researcher confirmed that

statement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) compiled data from 35 studies from the last 30

years that exhibited a positive link between teacher professional development, teaching

practices, and student outcomes. According to Ash and Persall (2000), teachers must

continuously learn, expand in their own abilities, and assume additional leadership roles

to prepare students to be successful. Ash and Persall (2000) continue to explain that

principals must create an environment that supports collaboration among teachers,

provides time for teachers' professional development, and recognizes, rewards, and

celebrates the concept of teachers as leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000). The case study about

The Leader in Me that the researcher conducted agreed with the research that was

examined in Chapter 2. Professional development was a reoccurring theme throughout

the interview data collection and artifact analysis of the data collection and evaluation.

Without the professional development in which the faculty and administrators engaged,

the program would not have been successful, for the faculty would not have been able to

implement the program with fidelity. The faculty needed the professional development to

learn about the program and then apply it and to teach their students about it. Iyer's

(2013) correlational study showed that, as professional development scores increased, character education implementation scores increased. In Iyer's study, the researcher explained that, as professional development scores decreased, character education scores decreased (Iyer, 2013, p. 5). In conclusion, professional development directly affects the effectiveness of implementation.

The impact of The Leader in Me program is a topic on which several studies have been completed. More than 30 studies have been completed at 24 different colleges and universities on the topics of behavior, leadership, staff social-emotional teaching readiness, culture, family, attendance, student engagement, and academics.

The research that has been conducted on The Leader in Me program sparked great interest in the researcher. The researcher gained knowledge about the impact through reading the previous research that had been conducted on the program, but wanted to understand how a leader would go about implementing the program. It appeared that the outcomes were positive, but the researcher asked, "How does a school get there?" The researcher wondered, "How does a school get to reap the benefits of this program?" From the case study that was conducted, the researcher has now gained insight on what the data says about the impacts of the program and how the program is implemented. Nevertheless, the researcher is interested in conducting future research that would concern the impact of the program at the school studied for this research. If leaders begin to consider implementing The Leader in Me, that individual and the organization should know the impacts of the program and be familiar with the implementation process of the program.

The researcher examined several studies that were done on The Leader in Me, which were discussed in Chapter 2. The highlights include aspects of leadership, culture, and academics (see Appendix D). In the previous research, the authors found that The Leader in Me positively affects student behavior, and that students at schools that implement The Leader in Me develop the mindsets, behaviors, and skills of effective lifelong leaders. In the previous research, the authors also noted that schools that implement The Leader in Me create school cultures in which students and staff feel safe and engaged. The Leader in Me schools that have been studied show that they work to empower teachers with meaningful leadership opportunities to engage them in guiding the social, emotional, and academic development of their students. Researchers state that The Leader in Me prepares and supports teachers to create goal-centered, student-led classrooms that empower students to lead their own learning, and that The Leader in Me empowers students with the mindsets, skills, and supportive environment they need to lead their academic achievement. In the previous research, the authors state that positive impacts have resulted from The Leader in Me. In this current study, the researcher explored how one suburban school successfully implemented The Leader in Me.

**Limitations of the Study**

A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) from an extensive data collection (Creswell, 2013). According to McLeod (2019), the strengths of a case study include (a) providing detailed information, (b) providing insight for further research, and (c) permitting investigation of otherwise impractical situations. According to McLeod (2019), the limitations of case studies include (a) lack scientific rigor, (b) providing little basis for generalization, (c) research

bias, (d) difficult to replicate, and (f) often consume much time. According to McLeod, (2019), "Because a case study deals with only one person/event/group we can never be sure if the case study investigated is representative of the wide body of 'similar' instances." Yin (2018) described the limitations to case studies as (a) rigor, (b) lack of following any explicit research method, (d) concern about generalization, (e) concern about the case study potentially taking too long, and (f) a case study's unclear comparative advantage in contrast to other research methods.

The limitations to this study include limited generalization ability. The study's setting is a single setting: an elementary school that implemented The Leader in Me and successfully gained Lighthouse Certification. In addition, a limitation is the small amount of individuals interviewed. The limitations of this study were that it was a single setting case study, that there were four interviews, and researcher bias. To address researcher bias, the researcher (a) recognized that bias does exist, (b) did not give feedback to participants, (c) kept detailed records of data, and (d) was honest and ethical throughout research. The researcher conducted the interviews professionally, honestly, and ethically. In order to address the limitations of the study and the trustworthiness of the design, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were confirmed. The researcher validated findings through triangulation in order to increase the study's generalizability. The researcher triangulated data through interviews, artifacts, and the survey in order to get the clearest picture so that the study could be generalized to other settings. The common evidence between all of the data sources was explored.

**Recommendations for Future Practice**

From the results of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations and suggestions to practitioners and policymakers in the field of education. Obtaining funding is a leading challenge in many schools across America. In August 2019, American lawmakers gathered for the annual National Conference of State Legislators to address several issues, including school funding (Darling-Hammond, 2019). According to Thatcher (2019), at the top of the National Conference of State Legislatures' executive committee's priorities across the Nation for 2019 was education funding reform. In the United States, public schools are funded by federal, state, and local sources; however, nearly half of the funds come from local property taxes (Biddle & Berliner, 2002). Without gaining the funding from the grant, the school at the center of this study would not have had the funding to purchase and implement The Leader in Me. The data collected for this study showed that funding was a consistent challenge throughout the implementation process. The researcher is interested to see how much school funding plays a role in the decision-making process for districts regarding purchasing and teaching SEL programs and curriculum. Without equal opportunity for schools, and fair, thoughtful funding, finances in schools will continue to be a problem. An example of how funding is distributed equitably in other countries is in The Netherlands and Finland. Schools in Finland are funded according to a formula. The formula guarantees equal distribution of resources to each school, regardless of location or wealth of its community (Strauss, 2012). Slavin (1999, as cited in Biddle & Berliner, 2002) explained the differences in funding by nation:

To my knowledge, the U.S. is the only nation to fund elementary and secondary

education based on local wealth. Other developed countries either equalize

funding or provide extra funding for individuals or groups felt to need it. In The

Netherlands, for example, national funding is provided to all schools based on the

number of pupils enrolled, but for every guilder allocated to a middle-class Dutch

child, 1.25 guilders are allocated for a lower-class child and 1.9 guilders for a

minority child, exactly the opposite of the situation in the U.S., where lower-class

and minority children typically receive less than middle-class white children.

(p. 520)

Schools should have funds in their budgets to purchase materials, programs,

and/or curriculums for SEL. The schools that cannot afford to purchase and/or sustain

successful programs within schools should not have to deny those programs. Successful

programs should not be forced to end within schools because the schools do not have the

funding to continue them. From the information collected throughout this study, a

recommendation for policy makers would be to reevaluate and repair the funding system

for American students. According to Redolive (2018), "Leader in Me schools maintain

their Lighthouse Certification for 2 years and continue to foster their growth in

exemplifying a leadership culture. At the end of the 2 years, schools may recertify to

maintain their Lighthouse Certification." The researcher believes that it is important and

necessary to ensure that schools maintain certification through the actions of the school.

However, the researcher fears that because of funding, this school in particular might lose

its Lighthouse Certification because funding has ended. The researcher is curious, now

that this school is at its 2-year mark and should be reviewed soon, (a) whether

continuation will be possible, (b) what the cost will be, and (c) whether the school will be able to pay the evaluators and company. The researcher must research this topic further. The researcher will also research the process in applying for additional grant funds going forward. The researcher does not believe that a school should lose, simply because of funding, its certification for which its staff worked so hard, and the researcher wonders whether that will happen.

Occasionally, it can feel as though there is not enough time in a school day to accomplish everything one wants and needs to do. Making time for everything that must be done—every meeting that must occur, mandates, and curriculum—is a challenge. The researcher recommends that the school staff continue to use common planning time for action teams to meet and for the staff to complete tasks within the building. The Professional Learning Action Team is responsible to train new staff and to provide ongoing staff training. This Professional Learning Action Team will be vital in providing professional development to the faculty and staff. The building Lighthouse Team and The Shared Decision Making Team should continue to address The Leader in Me and work toward sustaining Lighthouse Certification. The Parent Lighthouse Team and Student Lighthouse Team are always evolving because students change grade levels each year; some students go on to the middle school and new students begin Kindergarten. Those teams are impetrative to assist in keeping The Leader in Me going within the school; therefore, the researcher recommends that previous members be contacted and new members be recruited.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher makes the following recommendations for future research to extend the study. This case study took place in one single setting. Research could be extended to other schools that have gained Lighthouse Certification in the suburban area. Research could also be extended to schools that have implemented The Leader in Me and are going through the process in the suburban area. The researcher interviewed one principal and three teachers. All of the interview participants were on The Shared Decision Making Team throughout the years of The Leader in Me implementation at this school. The interview participants were part of the team that rolled out the program. It might have been helpful to gain the perspectives of other teachers, faculty members, and staff members at this school through interviews. In addition, acquiring the perceptions of parents, community members, and students would also be valuable, perhaps interviewing individuals on the Parent Lighthouse Team and/or Student Lighthouse Team. In addition to studying the implementation process of The Leader in Me, furthering the study to investigate the impact of the program at this particular school would be interesting and beneficial to this school. Further examining and understanding the impacts of the program could include evaluating the school's behavior data and academic data since implementation.

**Conclusion**

The findings in this case study reveal the actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me into a suburban elementary school, the challenges in the implementation process, the culture that existed to implement the program successfully, and the challenges in maintaining Lighthouse Certification. Overall, to implement The

Leader in Me, time, money, resources, communication, professional development, leadership, and collaboration are needed.

The specific actions that educational leaders took to implement The Leader in Me at this suburban elementary school were to (a) gain funding, (b) set up site visits, (c) bring trainers into the building for professional development, and (d) set up building-level action teams. The distributed leadership that became the culture and norm of the building through action teams allowed for every individual, including adults and students, to be part of the implementation process. Therefore, the team dynamic of the school, combined with the ongoing training that faculty and staff received, allowed a shared vision to exist. The most challenging aspects of implementation included time and money. Implementation of the program could not begin without those two pieces.

The culture that enabled the implementation of The Leader in Me to be successful was a positive culture of excellence, determination, and trust. Individuals communicated, worked together, learned from one another, and worked toward common goals throughout the years of implementation.

To maintain Lighthouse Certification, sustainability is the key. New staff must be trained, the action teams must continue working, and time and funding must be available resources. Implementing The Leader in Me is an involved process. In this case study, the researcher examined the implementation process at one suburban elementary school. This school believed that The Leader in Me would make a positive impact in the lives of the students, and as a school, they were able to implement The Leader in Me successfully.

**Epilogue**

Implementing The Leader in Me program into an elementary school is a complex process. Time, funding, professional development, and effective communication are leading components and requirements of the implementation process. Prior to this study, the researcher was familiar with and interested in The Leader in Me program. This study taught the researcher a great deal about what it takes to be an effective leader and implement change. This study taught the researcher about effective communication and successful collaboration. This study is founded on The Leader in Me program; however, the broader idea of implementing initiative and creating change within an elementary school was concentrated on and learned about as well. This study can provide beneficial information to any leader that is attempting to implement The Leader in Me program. This study can also provide useful information to any school leader that is attempting to implement a new program or new initiative in their school.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: St. John's University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

![St. John's University logo]

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Jun 23, 2020 9:59 AM EDT

PI: Krystina White
CO-PI: Elizabeth Gil
Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Expedited Review – Initial – **IRB-FY2020-583** *A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE LEADER IN ME*

Dear Krystina White:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE LEADER IN ME*. The approval is effective from June 23, 2020 through June 22, 2021.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.



Sincerely,


Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
IRB Coordinator

# Appendix B: Superintendent of Schools Approval

Re: Krystina White – Doctorate Program Work

**Krystina White** <krystina.white17@my.stjohns.edu>

To: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Thank you! Your support is extremely appreciated!

**From:** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
**Sent:** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
**To:** Krystina White <krystina.white17@my.stjohns.edu>
**Subject:** Re: Krystina White - Doctorate Program Work

* External Email *

Of course Krystina... whatever I can do to assist!

Sent from my iPhone

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Krystina White <krystina.white17@my.stjohns.edu>
wrote:

Hello Dr. ▮▮▮▮

I hope you are doing well! I have been working on my doctoral degree at St. John's University. I am currently working on my dissertation work. I have always been interested in initiating positive change and how that is most effectively accomplished within a school. I am interested in learning more about the implementation process of The Leader in Me. The purpose of my dissertation study will be to examine the implementation process of The Leader in Me at a suburban elementary school. This will be a case study that will examine the challenges that leaders faced throughout the implementation process as well as the culture that existed at the school that helped for the successful implementation. All school building, district, and participation information will be kept confidential.

I have discussed my idea with Mrs. ▮▮▮▮ and she is in support of my plan. I am emailing you in hopes to gain your support/approval as well. If you need more information about my plan, this topic, and/or my work, please let me know and I would be happy to provide that to you. Thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you! Enjoy your weekend!

Krystina White
This email may contain proprietary, confidential and/or privileged material for the sole use of the intended recipient(s). Any review, use, distribution or disclosure by others is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient (or authorized to receive for the recipient), please contact the sender by reply email and delete all copies of this message.

CAUTION - External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

**Appendix C: National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certificate**

# Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **KRYSTINA WHITE** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

**Date of Completion**: 09/10/2018

**Certification Number**: 2920529

NIH ⟩ National Institutes of Health
*Office of Extramural Research*

**Appendix D: The Research Highlights of the Impact of The Leader in Me: What are**

**the Impacts of The Leader in Me?**

# What Are the Impacts of *Leader in Me*?

*Leader in Me* is a whole-school improvement model designed to create change across a wide variety of areas. Consequently, research regarding the *Leader in Me* reveals a wide variety of impact. In this guide, we have organized highlights from these diverse findings using categories of expected *Leader in Me* outcomes within Leadership, Culture, and Academics.

Research outcomes related to *Leader in Me* are broadly organized in three categories: Leadership, Culture, and Academics. The table below identifies the most common outcomes within each category and provides a statement of impact for each outcome. This research guide follows this same organization by category and outcomes to present research highlights.

| LEADERSHIP | CULTURE | ACADEMICS |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Behavior** *Leader in Me* positively impacts our students' behavior. | **Attendance** *Leader in Me* Schools create school cultures where students and staff feel safe and engaged. | **State Test** *Leader in Me* Schools help students and staff build the skills and competencies necessary for student achievement. |
| **Staff Social-Emotional Teaching Readiness** *Leader in Me* develops the personal and professional capacity of teachers and staff, allowing them to confidently teach and model social-emotional leadership skills. | **Supportive School Environment** The environment of *Leader in Me* Schools engages student learning and positively supports the development of student social-emotional leadership skills. | **Teaching Efficacy** *Leader in Me* prepares and supports teachers to create goal-centered, student-led classrooms that empower students to lead their own learning. |
| **Student Leadership** Students at *Leader in Me* Schools are developing the mindsets, behaviors, and skills to be effective lifelong leaders. | **Student Engagement** *Leader in Me* Schools help students feel emotionally safe, socially supported, and academically engaged. | **Student-Led Achievement** *Leader in Me* empowers our students with the mindsets, skills, and supportive environment they need to lead their academic achievement. |
| **Family Involvement** *Leader in Me* provides our students' families with the information, training, and school resources needed to empower them to be supportive partners in the development of their child's social-emotional learning. | **Staff Satisfaction** *Leader in Me* Schools work to empower teachers with meaningful leadership opportunities and engage them in guiding the social, emotional, and academic development of their students. | |

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*Note*. From *Research highlights of the impact of The Leader in Me: What are the impacts of The Leader in Me?* by Franklin Covey, 2020. Copyright Franklin Covey, 2020. Copyright permission granted to the researcher by Franklin Covey Co.

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