

**Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of the Leader in Me Program on School Climate,
Academic Achievement, Leadership Knowledge and Skills, Character Development,
and Social Emotional Development in K-6 Buildings**

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Abstract

Leadership skills development provides a foundation for elementary and secondary students to become productive members of society. While leadership programs have become common in high school and college curricula, there has been limited research related to leadership development in elementary schools. Bennis (1989), van Linden and Fertman (1998), Bonstingl (2006), and Kretman (2009) theorized that leadership qualities can be taught as early as kindergarten. This study investigated elementary school teacher perceptions about the impact of the *Leader in Me* (LiM) (Covey, 2008) program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social emotional development. The LiM is a leadership program used in K-12 schools that was designed to help students follow a leadership guide. The LiM program integrates leadership development with social emotional learning through teaching students self-confidence, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, communication, creativity, self-direction, leadership, problem solving, and social etiquette. Four demographic questions and 15 semi-structured interview questions were posed to answer five research questions. Ten teachers who were employed at a rural Kansas school district two years prior to and two years after implementation of the LiM program participated in the study. A qualitative phenomenological research design was used in the current study. Study participants were consistent in their definitions of the variables included in the study and their perceptions of how the LiM program impacted each of the study variables. Participants reported that after implementation of the LiM program, there was increased emphasis on teaching Covey's (1989) seven habits, greater visibility of the school mission statement, increased involvement of parents and

community members in setting school goals, and a consistent and integrated process for teaching and assessing student acquisition of specific leadership knowledge and skills across the curriculum that resulted in a more positive school climate. Students were more engaged in academic achievement through setting academic goals and measuring progress toward goals. There was increased school-wide consistency in expectations for student behavior and character development. Students applied Covey's (1989) seven habits to assist in social-emotional regulation, peer interactions, and stress management. Future studies on the results of the implementation of the LiM program are needed in elementary and rural settings.

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and friends. My family has provided endless encouragement to go back to school after a long time away. My husband, Rich, has always believed in me even when I did not. Thank you for continually pushing me and encouraging me to be better than I was yesterday. I love you beyond words, and I am so very thankful God gave me you. To my son Blake and my daughters, Madison, Makayla, and Morgan, thank you for your encouraging words and for always checking in to see where I was on this journey. Always believe in yourselves. I love you all, always and forever. To my mom and dad, you have always thought I could do anything I set my mind to. Thank you for believing in me. And to my sister, you have always had my back, and you have always been there for me. Thank you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Bennis (1989) stated, “Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple, and it is also that difficult” (p. 1). Leadership qualities can be learned. Students should be provided opportunities and activities to develop leadership knowledge and skills as early as kindergarten (Kretman, 2009). According to Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth (2000), being a part of a youth program can have the most positive influence in predicting five of the seven thriving outcomes for success as an adult. “The seven thriving indicators are (a) school success, (b) leadership, (c) helping others, (d) maintenance of physical health, (e) delay of gratification, (f) valuing diversity, and (g) overcoming adversity. These indicators are thought to be important aspects of adolescent well-being” (p. 28). According to Murphy (2011), “Leadership tasks most likely correspond with important developmental tasks for students in each age range” (p. 9). As an example, Murphy suggested that early adolescence involves children being able to achieve emotional independence from one’s parents, while younger children may be learning basic school skills and getting along with others. Many researchers concur with Murphy’s (2011) emphasis on the correlation between the age of a child and the developmental tasks to be acquired. Murphy (2011) acknowledged that early development of leadership skills provides a look into what kind of leader one may become as an adult. Bonstingl (2006) indicated that students beginning as young as kindergarten can learn to be leaders. According to van Linden and Fertman (1998), many adolescents already exhibit some form of leadership and do not even realize they have leadership skills. “First, *all* adolescents have leadership potential, and second, many

leadership opportunities are already within reach for these young people” (van Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. xvii).

Leadership programs and curricula such as Student Council, Future Farmers of America, and Key Club are offered in grades 7-12 with an emphasis on leadership training programs in grades 9-12. With many struggles such as poverty, bullying, social-emotional behaviors, and the lack of parental involvement in education that negatively affect student achievement, educators are looking for programs that will help build leaders within the walls of K-12 education. With training and the right tools, all children can learn to be effective leaders during their lifetimes (Bonstingl, 2006). Teachers benefit from guidance in developing projects and activities that encourage students to develop leadership skills within the classroom (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014).

Leadership development is recognized throughout the world as a process that can facilitate improvement in individuals or organizations. According to Merriam-Webster (2018), leadership is, “the office or position of a leader, capacity to lead, and the act or an instance of leading” (p. 707). According to van Linden and Fertman (1998), leaders are “people who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs; they influence others in an ethical and socially responsible way” (p. 17). Northouse (2016) stated, “Many people believe leadership is a way to improve their personal, social, and professional lives” (p. 1). According to Northouse, universities are responding by adding leadership institutes or classes that have a leadership focus within different disciplines. Several researchers have advocated that leadership training should not just be provided at the university level. Van

Linden and Fertman (1998), Parker (1983), and Northouse (2016) advocated that individuals can learn a set of skills and attitudes that are practiced at all stages of development in leadership. These authors maintained children should arrive at adolescence with an awareness of their leadership knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Without this awareness, students may be overlooked for a leadership role if they do not show leadership qualities during their elementary and secondary education (Northouse, 2016; Parker, 1983; van Linden & Fertman, 1998). Having leadership skills by adolescence could help young people understand their role and potential as a leader.

Kretman (2009) stated, “Core leadership principles and practices, such as critical and creative thinking, visioning, decision making, problem-solving, collaboration, conflict resolution, communication, leading change and risk, and understanding groups, cultures and contexts, and mobilizing resources, can certainly be learned” (p. 1). According to Kretman (2009), “Leadership education can and should take root much earlier than young adulthood. It has the potential to empower students, as early as elementary school, to be active learners and citizens in school and society” (p. 1).

The social emotional well-being of students is important in preparing them to be well rounded and productive citizens (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Discovering early predictors for interventions in kindergarten students to help them grow into healthy adults may be beneficial in understanding what is needed for students to be successful. Jones et al. (2015) found “statistically significant associations between measured social-emotional skills in kindergarten and key young adult outcomes across multiple domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health” (p. 1). The authors reported that looking into non-cognitive characteristics such as behavioral

characteristics, emotion regulation, attention, self-regulation, and social skills would help determine how a child will develop into a productive adult in society (Jones et al., 2015). Researchers have documented that teaching leadership skills during the early childhood years allows children to be more successful in adulthood (Jones et al., 2015).

Van Linden and Fertman (1998) suggested there are stages of leadership development and that adolescents move fluidly between the stages. The authors described this motion as a “creative process characterized by bursts of energy, insight, and activity followed by periods of rest, distraction, and reflection” (p. 63). This movement allows for the adolescent to develop and grow into a productive leader within the classroom. Hancock, Dyk, and Jones (2012) suggested adolescents should be encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities which would allow them to find their potential as a leader. According to Hancock et al. (2012), parents, school adults, and organizations should be involved in these activities and create partnerships with adolescents. It is important to provide adult-to-youth mentoring for younger students to allow them to focus on building leadership skills. Providing young people with opportunities to practice leadership skills in safe environments will help them continue to develop decision making and communication skills and competencies (Hancock et al., 2012). According to Starr (1996) and Allen et al. (1998), teaching leadership skills to elementary students helps them be inquisitive, critical, and creative problem-solvers, as well as practicing stewards of our environment. These students develop self-empowerment, the ability to share responsibilities, and capacity to value diversity. Starr (1996) stated,

A curriculum that organizes teaching systematically around positive leadership skills from the kindergarten level up through high school will help students acquire and practice many of these skills and objectives. The child who is given the opportunity to apply, practice, and enforce these skills in many settings and situations will experience stronger personal growth and development. (p. 69)

In addition to enhancing leadership and life skills, researchers have also documented improvements in discipline referrals and daily attendance (Allen et al., 1998; Starr, 1996).

Background

Covey (1989) established habits for effective leadership in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The leadership principles Covey described in this book served as the foundation for The Leader in Me (LiM) program developed by Covey (2008) to equip elementary and secondary students with the leadership and life skills needed to be successful in the 21st century. A basic premise of the program is that “Every child possesses unique strengths and has the ability to be a leader” (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f, p. 1). The LiM program integrates leadership with social emotional learning through teaching students’ self-confidence, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, communication, creativity, self- direction, leadership, problem solving, and social etiquette (FranklinCovey Education, 2021, p.1).

The LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) is a leadership program used in K-12 schools that was designed to help students follow a leadership guide. The leadership guide uses the LiM process to teach the essential principles of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) to help every student be engaged in a personal leadership development process. The LiM program is unique as it supports a school-wide

experience for staff, students, and parents, as well as creates a common language and climate within the school. The leadership principles and lessons are incorporated into a district's current academic curriculum and the existing school climate (FranklinCovey Education, 2018).

Humphries, Cobia, and Ennis (2015) conducted a study in nine K-5 schools using the LiM program as an intervention for discipline. After administering an online survey to K-5 teachers implementing the LiM program, the authors reported teachers using the LiM program perceived a reduction in student discipline problems. Daily attendance is a goal students are encouraged to meet in the LiM program (Covey et al., 2014). One school averaged 97% daily attendance after the LiM program was implemented with its high-risk population (Covey et al., 2014). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) indicated students need to attend school daily in order to succeed. "Achievement is sensitive to attendance and missing even two weeks can affect test scores and graduation and dropout rates" (p. 3). Balfanz and Byrnes studied chronic absenteeism beginning in kindergarten through 12th grade. They reported higher levels of chronic absenteeism occurred during the high school years. According to Balfanz and Byrnes, "Poor attendance in high school not only impacts initial achievement levels in the ninth grade, but also impacts upper grade performance and post-secondary enrollment" (p. 27). The LiM program encourages daily attendance as an additional leadership component (Covey et al., 2014).

According to Covey (1989), the seven habits are the qualities exhibited by highly successful people: be proactive, begin with an end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw. In addition to emphasizing the seven habits, there is a three-pillar focus within the LiM

program framework: climate, leadership, and academics (FranklinCovey Education, 2018). A core principle of the LiM program is that every child is a leader regardless of academic ability or social economic status.

Several researchers have investigated the impact of the LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program on variables found within elementary schools. The results of a study conducted by Dethlefs, Green, Molapo, Opsa, and Yang (2017) indicated that the more a school is advanced into the LiM program, the more growth is seen in student self-regulation and cooperation within the classroom as a leader. Cummins (2015) conducted research on reading achievement in elementary schools that had implemented the LiM program and reported improvement after implementation of the program. According to Cummins, there was a 20% increase in first grade reading, a 73% increase in second grade reading, and an overall 130% increase in reading in third grade after implementation of the LiM program.

The character development emphasis within the LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program encourages students to problem solve and work through issues themselves using seven habit language from the LiM program. The LiM program provides an environment for students to learn and supports positive student social emotional leadership skills development. Dethlefs et al. (2017) found that students believed they were better behaved when taught the skills from the LiM program and that they were provided with opportunities to take ownership of their learning. Ishola (2016) reported a 31% overall decrease in negative school behavior incidents within a year of LiM program implementation with a continued decrease while the study was conducted. Cummins (2015) noted that of the 115 faculty and staff surveyed at four Louisiana urban Pre-K to

grade five schools, 89.84% agreed that they worked toward a common vision that all students are leaders.

Beginning in the 1970's, the majority of research in elementary schools has focused on early intervention for negative school behaviors and preparation of students to be academically successful. Limited research has focused on leadership development during the elementary school years (Rodd, 2012). While studies have been conducted on the LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program outcomes, the majority of research has been conducted in suburban and urban school districts. No studies have been conducted in small rural school districts. Few studies have examined teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, student development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, or social emotional development.

The current study focused on examining rural elementary school teacher perceptions about the LiM programs' effectiveness in a small Midwestern rural school district. At the time of the current study, no studies had examined K-6 teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, student development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, or social-emotional development. The current study focused on a K-6 elementary school within a rural Midwestern school district (USD#123). The LiM program was first implemented in the district in the fall of 2016. The superintendent of USD#123 learned of the program through a regional LiM convention. According to the USD#123 superintendent, the LiM program aligns with Kansas State Department of

Education (KSDE) standards and the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) (Superintendent USD #123, personal communication, September 4, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

According to the superintendent of USD #123, prior to the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic school year, personnel from USD #123 believed they needed an intervention that would increase adequate yearly progress in order to meet new expectations from the KSDE and KESA (USD #123 Superintendent, personal communication, September 4, 2019). Following a systems approach, the accreditation requirements in KESA focus on environmental, psychological, physiological, social, and economic elements within K-12 education (KSDE, 2020). For Kansas schools to be accredited, they must follow KESA guidelines regarding the five R's: relationships, relevance, responsive climate, rigor, and results. Included within these guidelines are social emotional learning, kindergarten readiness, individual plans of study, high school graduation, and secondary success (KSDE, 2020). According to FranklinCovey Education (2018), teachers can determine the impact of the LiM program on behavior, learning, and social emotional behaviors. At the time of the current study, no research was found that focused on rural elementary school teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of the LiM program.

Purpose of the Study

Five purposes guided the current study. The first purpose was to determine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on school climate. The second purpose was to examine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on academic achievement. The third purpose was to investigate the perceptions of

elementary teachers about the LiM program impact on student leadership knowledge and skills. The fourth purpose was to examine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student character development. The final purpose of the current study was to explore elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student social emotional development.

Significance of the Study

The current study expanded the research that focuses on leadership development using the LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program for elementary-aged students. Results from the current study may be of interest to personnel from school districts who are considering implementing a student leadership development program in elementary school settings. Parents of elementary school children may also be interested in teacher perceptions about the impact a leadership development program can have on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social emotional development. Results from the current research study provided information about teacher perceptions of a leadership program integrated across the curriculum. This knowledge could be advantageous for educators of students within individual elementary or secondary school buildings or within an entire school district. Teachers could also benefit from the results of the current study as they create projects and activities that allow students to develop leadership skills within the classroom.

Delimitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), delimitations are “self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). The current study was conducted in one small rural Midwestern school district. Elementary

school teachers who were continuously employed in the district before 2016, during implementation that was initiated in 2016, and after implementation of the LiM program responded to semi-structured interview questions in the current study.

Assumptions

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), assumptions are “postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (p. 135). It was assumed the LiM program was implemented in a manner consistent with program expectations for curriculum implementation. A second assumption was that teachers understood the interview questions. Finally, teacher responses to interview questions were assumed to be accurate and honest.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided the current study:

RQ1. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on school climate?

RQ2. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on academic achievement?

RQ3. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on development of leadership knowledge and skills in students?

RQ4. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on character development in students?

RQ5. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on social-emotional development in students?

Definition of Terms

For this study, key terms have been identified and defined as they relate to the topic.

Character. Berkowitz (2002) defined character as, an individual's set of psychological characteristics that affect that person's ability and inclination to function morally. According to Berkowitz, character is comprised of those characteristics that lead a person to do the right thing or not to do the right thing. (p. 48)

Character education. Lickona (1997) contended, Character education is the deliberate effort to teach virtue. Virtues are objectively good human qualities. They are good for the individual (they help a person lead a fulfilling life), and they are good for the whole human community (they enable us to live together harmoniously and productivity). (p. 65)

Digital leadership portfolios. Covey et al. (2014) indicated students should store and track all their information regarding their goals and academic progress information in a digital leadership portfolio. The portfolio is used to assist students to develop future goals, determine leadership participation, and showcase best works.

School climate. Education World (2020) stated that school climate is a group phenomenon that reflects the school community's norms, goals and values. School climate emerges based on ways in which students, parents, and school staff experience school life (Education World, 2020). While school culture and school climate have been defined individually, the two terms are often used interchangeably (Edmonds, 1979; Marzano, 2003; School Culture, n.d.).

Self-regulated learner. According to Zimmerman (2002),

Self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills. Learning is viewed as an activity that students do for themselves in a proactive way rather than as a covert event that happens to them in reaction to teaching. Self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals. (p. 65)

Social-emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, n.d.) defined SEL as “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” (p. 1).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and background regarding the importance of developing leadership in elementary school students. This chapter also described the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and definition of terms. In Chapter 2, research related to leadership, development of leadership knowledge and skills, school climate, academic achievement, character development, social-emotional development in K-6 students, and the LiM program are presented. Chapter 3 explains the methods used to conduct the current study. This chapter includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher’s role, and limitations. Chapter 4 presents the results of the

study. Chapter 5 provides a study summary, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Schools are presented with many obstacles as they navigate learning for students. According to Covey et al. (2014), the 1990's was the back-to-basics decade. Teachers focused on the three R's, reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, this focus changed after the school shooting in 1999 in Colorado. There was a desperate call from parents and communities to include additional skills in the elementary and secondary curricula. Shimal and Sharma (2012) suggested that the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) four pillars of learning should be added to the elementary and secondary curricula.

If education is to succeed in its onerous task, it must be organized around the four fundamental types of learning which throughout a person's life, will in a way be the pillars of knowledge: Learning to Know - skills for lifelong learning, Learning to Do - personal competence, Learning to Live together - skills for avoiding and resolving conflicts, and Learning to Be - skills for developing the whole person (p. 1).

This recommendation resulted in the development of curricula that included a broader array of knowledge and skills. According to Covey et al. (2014), in addition to the three R's, these 21st century skills included critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, collaboration, leadership, and global awareness. In most states, schools must document student growth and school improvement from year to year in areas that include academic achievement and the 21st century skills. The LiM is a whole school improvement program that is gaining attention in many states. The purpose of this study was to

evaluate perceptions of elementary school teachers in a rural Midwest school district about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social emotional development. This chapter includes a review of the literature on the following topics: leadership, school climate, academic achievement, development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, social-emotional development in K-6 students, and the LiM program.

Leadership

Leadership has been studied and restudied for centuries. Some leadership scholars (Bass, 2008; Bryman, 1992; Jago, 1982; Kirkpatrick & Lock, 1991) theorized that leaders are born not made. However, Bennis (1989) theorized that leadership can be learned. According to Bennis,

The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born-that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born. (p. 69)

Di Giulio (2014) stated, "There may be a small percentage of leaders who may be born with individual traits which contribute to leadership, but leadership itself can be learned, especially by committed individuals who display an interest" (p. 4). Kretman (2009) suggested good leaders share a vision, give people a voice, solve problems, and empower others. According to Kretman these are learned leadership behaviors, not characteristics a person is born with.

Northouse (2016) defined leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). According to Northouse, there are central components that involve and identify the central phenomenon of leadership. The basic tenets of leadership include: leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs in groups, and leadership involves common goals. Common goals provide leaders as well as followers a direction.

Covey (1989) emphasized character rather than success as a core principle of leadership. According to Covey, character is formed by adhering to personal values and principles that provide wisdom within leadership. “There is no effectiveness without discipline, and there is no discipline without character” (Covey, 1989, p. 3). Covey (1989) stressed that character within leadership is primarily a function of who you are. Character is the foundation for every action a person engages in. According to Covey, to build a leader you must first build character. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) is the cornerstone of the LiM program initially developed by Covey in 2008). A goal of the LiM program is to build character within the school and community (FranklinCovey Education, 2018).

School Climate

According to Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009), “School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (p. 182). Eccles and Roeser (2011) described elementary school as the beginning piece of the bridge between society and culture. It is important that our schools provide effective

learning environments and a school climate that is conducive to student's performance and academics that will prepare students for success. These authors also indicated our experiences in school are often associated with how we respond to experiences outside of school, such as positive or negative situations. Covey et al. (2014) suggested that the home and school relationship provide a link to the impact of the climate of the school. It influences the atmosphere of the classroom and a student's readiness to learn. Eccles and Roeser (2011) stated, "The quality of teacher – student relationships and students' feelings of classroom belonging predict changes in students' academic motivation, engagement and learning, and social-emotional well-being in school" (p. 229). School climate and environment are important through the early years of education (Cohen et al, 2009). A supportive school environment provides the essentials for students to be successful throughout life. According to Dethlefs et al. (2017), after the implementation of the LiM program, teachers saw an increase in the frequency that students felt safe at school. According to Cohen et al. (2009), most researchers agree there are four major areas that shape school climate: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the external environment.

Academic Achievement

There are many ways to define academic achievement. This term has been defined as, "The extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals, cumulative GPA, and completion of educational benchmarks" (Academic Achievement, 2020, p. 1). The terms academic success and student success are often used interchangeably with academic achievement in the literature. York, Gibson, and Rankin (2015) stated, "Based upon the literature reviewed

we have found the terms ‘student success’ and ‘academic success’ used interchangeably” (p. 4).

Regier (2011) stated that academic success is important because it lays the foundation of positive outcomes that are valued by society. Aturupane, Glewwe, and Wisniewski (2013) agreed with Regier, and indicated that academic performance in education contributes to economic growth in society. Educated citizens help provide a steady economy. According to Risser (2013), students at risk for dropping out and exhibiting delinquent behaviors are a detriment to the economy. According to Risser, it is important to develop and continually refine interventions and prevention programs for school-age children. Zimmerman (2002) suggested that becoming a self-regulated learner allows students to be proactive in their learning and more successful in school. Students who practice self-regulation have more self-satisfaction and motivation in their learning.

FranklinCovey Education (2020b) developed the 4 Disciplines of Execution, an approach that promotes meeting academic growth targets through a goal achievement process. According to the authors, the 4 Disciplines of Execution also helps to improve an educator’s instructional practice. Discipline 1, *focus on the wildly important*, narrows a student’s focus and helps clearly identify what must be done. This discipline assists students to have a precise perspective. Discipline 2, *act on the lead measures*, assists students to track the most impactful things such as goals. Discipline 3, *keep a compelling scoreboard*, provides engagement for all students, helping them to observe where they are and where they want to go. Discipline 4, *create a cadence of accountability*, holds everyone (i.e., students, teachers, parents, and administrators) accountable for their

progress (Covey et al. 2014). Providing students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members with purpose, path, and pace provides an effective, realistic, and balanced approach to education.

Development of Leadership Knowledge and Skills

According to van Linden and Fertman (1998), everyone has leadership potential. Because leadership skills can be learned, it is important to provide leadership skills instruction in the classroom curriculum. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) indicated leadership has evolved into more than just traits and situations. These authors stated that leadership involves acting with maturity and good judgement. It is possible that teaching leadership skills in schools could help promote various aspects of leading in students. Therefore, it is important that students be given the opportunities to best develop their leadership skills.

Van Linden and Fertman (1998) described stages of leadership development and stated that movement between the stages is fluid. Stage one is awareness. This involves knowing if you are or are not a leader. Children do not naturally see themselves as leaders. Stage two is interaction. This is the stage where children begin to test the possibilities and reflect on their interaction with others. Stage three is mastery. This stage entails having energy, resources, and guidance to carry out personal goals as a leader. It is important to encourage K-12 students to pursue new roles when given opportunities. Providing these opportunities should not only come from parents but also schools, religious affiliations, extra-curricular activities such as sports and clubs, and peers. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) stated, "Using education groups to facilitate child

development is one of the most constructive ways to ensure that students increase their leadership skills” (p. 127).

Karagianni and Montgomery (2017) promoted the idea that children and adolescents can take part in leadership roles. The amount of time spent in K-12 education provides an opportunity to teach leadership skills in an organization that provides most students with their formative learning. While programs emphasizing leadership development for adults and college-aged students within universities are widely used, most leadership development programs focus on adult leadership with limited research advancing leadership practices within adolescence or during the elementary school years.

Kuhn and Weinberger (2005), Kretman (2009), and Karagianni and Montgomery (2017) have researched leadership development in adolescents. Kretman (2009) stated, “Adolescence is an important time for leadership growth. Increasing leadership in adolescence can reinforce self-esteem and be a catalyst for flourishing adulthood” (p. 87). According to Kretman (2009), leadership development presents its most difficult dilemmas in adolescents as they strive to become better leaders for the future and prepare for their civic responsibilities to communities (Kretman, 2009). Adolescent leaders are more likely to take up managerial positions as adults, and leadership skills developed early on can have a positive impact on future wages (Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005). Kretman (2009) stated, “Leadership has the potential to empower students, as early as elementary school, to be active learners and citizens in school and society” (p. 1).

Rehm (2014) described how a model developed by Murphy and Johnson showed how developmental factors influence leadership development in adolescents. The

Murphy and Johnson model also emphasized leader identity as well as self-regulation of behaviors. These skills are not only important in early stages of leadership developmental but should also be acquired to be a productive citizen in society.

Figure 1 depicts Murphy and Johnson's (2011) lifespan model for leadership development. In the model, the authors identified contributing components of leadership development, and what is known about both adult and adolescent development of leadership. However, Rehm (2014) indicated that when implementing leadership development in the curriculum, schools often do not include all early developmental factors from the model including parenting styles, gender, genetics, and prior early learning experiences (Rehm, 2014). These elements are not necessarily the focus of secondary school educators (Rehm, 2014).

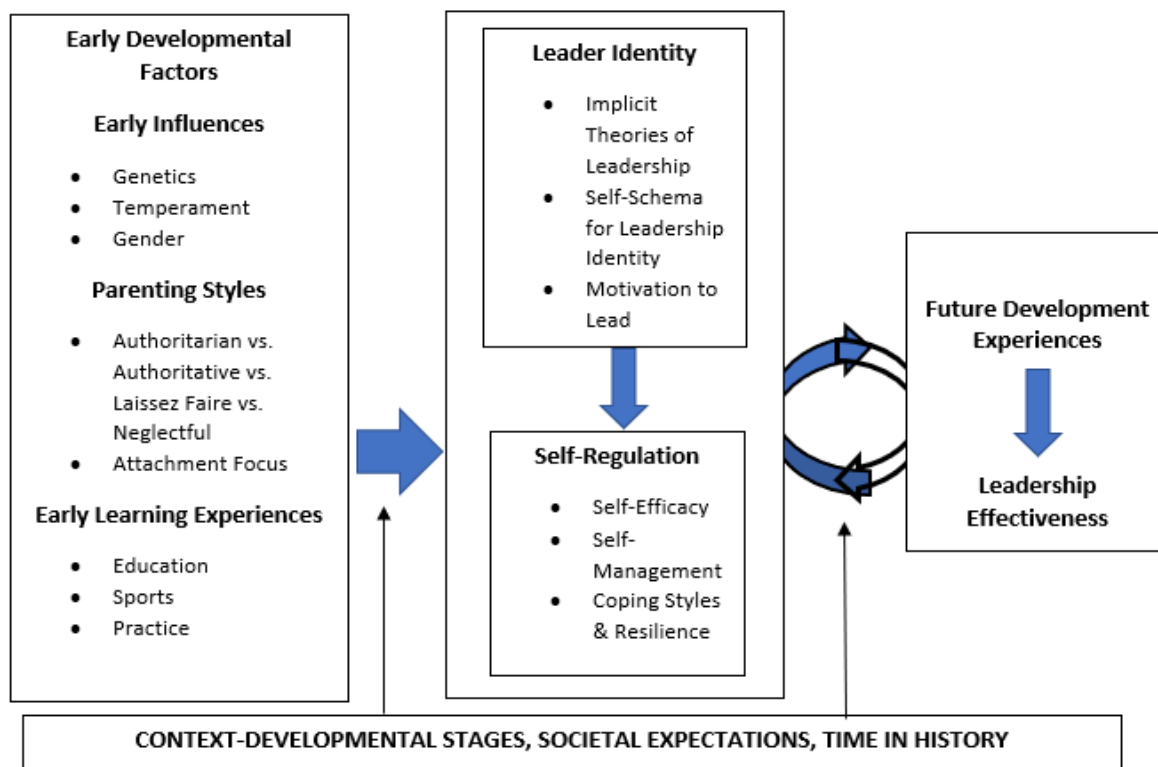


Figure 1. Adapted from “A Lifespan Model for Leadership Development”, by S. A. Murphy and S. K. Johnson, *Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 459-470.
doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.04.004

Rehm (2014) cited Murphy and Johnson’s description of how the competencies of leadership development models may conflict with competencies included in other models:

A list of competencies such as these may provide a comprehensive view of leadership requirements but does little in the way of explaining the process of leadership and may end up merely being a laundry list of the things that every competent person should do. (p. 29)

All leadership development models, regardless of the age group the model focuses on, must reflect some type of curriculum that can be taught for the specific age group (Rehm, 2014). Rehm (2014) described three other models that showed partial examples

for teaching appropriate developmental and environmental factors to adolescents. However, Rehm stated the scope of these models was too great for educators to consider. Rehm advocated the models needed to provide a scope outside of the normal curricula but with the educators in control of the curricula and environmental factors which affect learning and development in individual schools.

Rehm (2014) stated the model for high school leadership development provides a way to implement a wide array of student leadership development principles. The model places emphasis on personal growth and development and includes three foci to make the model more applicable to school educators. Using this model allows educators to initiate the model based on school needs. Figure 2 presents Rehm's model for high school student leadership development.

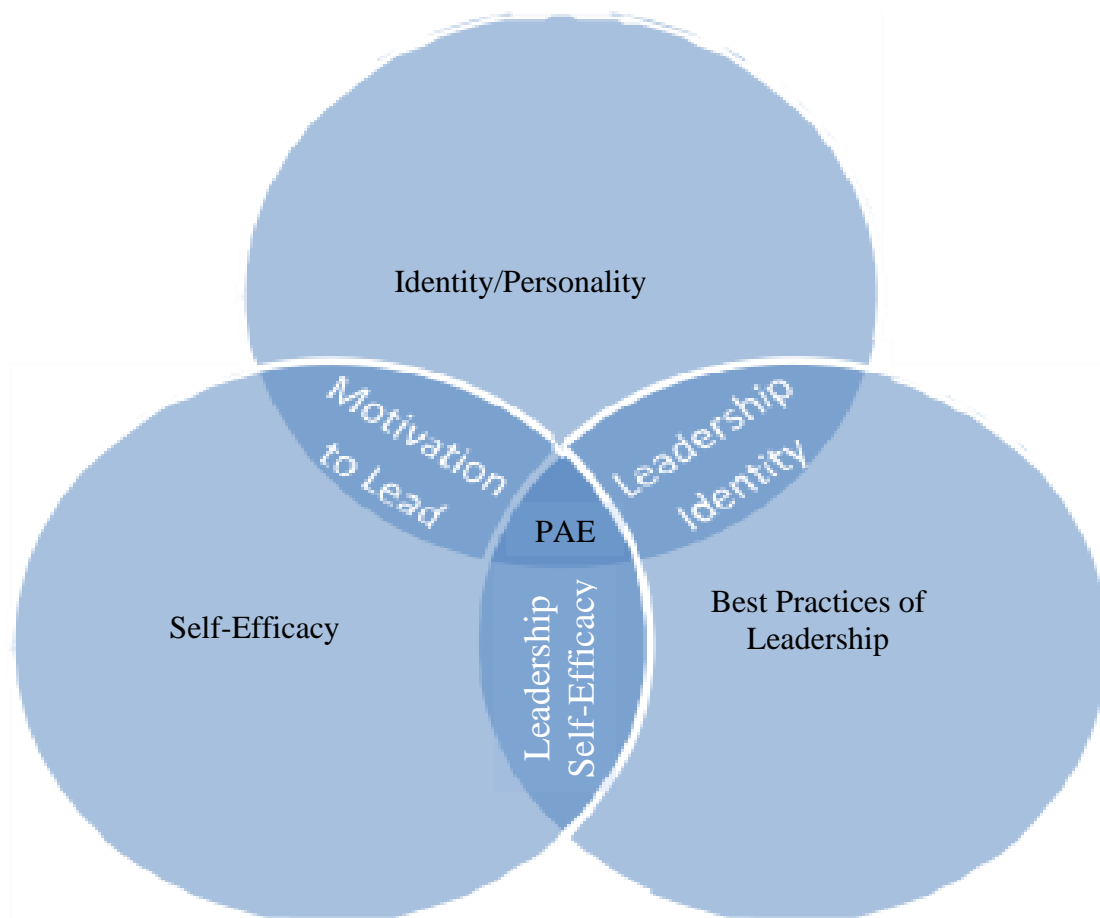


Figure 2. Adapted from “An Evidence-Based Practitioners’ Model for Adolescent Leadership Development,” by C. J. Rehm, 2014, *Journal of Leadership Education*, 13(3), 83-97. doi:10.12806/V13/13/T1

PAE = Personal Application Experiences

According to Rehm (2014) each part of training from the model presented in Figure 2 should be used to engage students in discussion. Rehm (2014) suggested using Kouzes and Posner’s (2005) Student Leadership Practices Inventory to identify a student’s identity and personality. Personal application experiences (PAE) are integrated into the other domains of the model. Rehm (2014) suggested using a Myers Briggs type indicator to allow students to know more about themselves and how they relate to others. In the model, thinking about leadership is accomplished through individual reflection and discussion. The third component of the model is self-efficacy. Students gain exposure

from other young leaders and mentors which can further help develop self efficacy. Once all components of the model are complete, students reflect on their experiences or PAE using all three components within the model. Rehm (2014) advocated this model would help practitioners address leadership development during adolescence. Furthermore, Rehm (2014) stated research needed to focus on differentiating character education from leadership development. He said, “These two vital areas for our youth should be both distinct albeit overlapping” (p. 94).

Many programs and leadership development initiatives focus on middle and high school grades. The shortage of leadership curricula presented for elementary grades is evident in public K-12 districts (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). There are limited options for programs that focus on leadership development for elementary school students. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) suggested there is a need for a renewed student leadership commitment. These authors stated the decline in civic participation may be at the core of leadership decline in young people. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) indicated adult leadership ideas work for adults and can be a platform for students. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) stated leadership development in K-6 settings can involve but is not limited to communication skills, public speaking, creative thinking, problem-solving, leadership skills, peer support, social-emotional development, and self-awareness. A program with these types of skills can provide leadership qualities to children in the classroom Dempster and Lizzio (2007). According to Rehm (2014) leadership development needs to impact student behaviors, perceptions, and traits that may be developed through programs that are related to skills taught in school. However, Dempster and Lizzio (2007) suggested there needs to be more research on student leadership and how students

define leadership. Not only is it important to provide leadership opportunities for students, but also mentoring programs that focus on multi-level conceptualization. According to DuBois and Karcher (2013), mentoring conceptualization involves five levels:

- Activity that involves social interactions with adults and peers.
- Relationships that require ongoing significant interpersonal ties with youth.
- Intentional efforts of agencies and organizations that mentor relationships.
- Policy that promotes governmental and other institution initiatives that support mentoring activities and relationships.
- Societal focus on the public perceptions of mentoring and willingness to engage in or support mentoring activities.

Jones et al. (2015) advocated for providing early intervention for inspiring leadership in young children. Rodd (2012) posited there is a growing amount of evidence that early engagement with children and their families will deliver stronger outcomes for whole communities. In the last 50 years, the majority of research has focused on early intervention and preparation of students to be academically successful. Limited research has focused on leadership development during the elementary school years.

Character Development

Vardin (2003) quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1948) statement about character, "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education" (p. 1). Berkowitz (2002) defined character as,

an individual's set of psychological characteristics that affect that person's ability and inclination to function morally. Simply put, character is comprised of those characteristics that lead a person to do the right thing or not to do the right thing. (p. 48)

According to Berkowitz (2002), it is difficult to determine what a person may consider moral or immoral. Berkowitz (2002) applied what is called moral anatomy to character. According to Berkowitz (2002), moral anatomy is the psychological part of an entire moral person. Berkowitz stated, "There are seven parts to the moral anatomy of a person: moral behavior, moral values, moral personality, moral emotion, moral reasoning, moral intent, and foundational characteristics" (p. 48).

Berkowitz (2002) indicated that character can begin to develop at birth.

Berkowitz (2002) examined three areas of character development in childhood: self-control, guilt, and perspective-taking. Self-control during childhood is learned when children learn to control their urges or anger or gratification. Guilt often happens at an early age, depending on a child's emotional response to behavior, such as low self-esteem or self-criticism. Perspective-taking develops from three to twelve years of age, which involves understanding how others may respond to various stimuli, such as ideas or situations.

As explained by Berkowitz (2002), during adolescence, moral reasoning and moral identity develop. Moral reasoning is being able to distinguish right from wrong when making decisions or faced with a moral dilemma. Moral identity is the understanding of self as a person. Berkowitz (2002) stated, "It is likely that the formation of a sense of oneself as a moral agent develops at the same time" (p. 53).

Berkowitz (2002) suggested while family members may play an essential role in character development in children and adolescents, schools, peers, communities, religion, and the environment make a substantial contribution to that development too. According to Berkowitz, to be effective in character education, we must focus on the child, the whole child. This focus must come from all areas: home, school, community, and peers. The child must feel important and not belittled or bullied in any environment.

Berkowitz (2002) considered relationships to be crucial to the character development in a child, including those involving adult-to-child or child-to-child. “Quality character education promotes prosocial relationships and caring school and classroom communities” (p. 59). Berkowitz indicated that children are always watching and imitating what they see or hear. It is important to remember to model behaviors that count in character education.

Character education is anything but new in the world of education. Vardin (2003) stated character education in the United States began in 1642 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony with the first English colonizers who came over on the Mayflower. According to Vardin (2003), “Founding fathers of America believed that good character was needed by its citizens in order to preserve a democracy” (p. 32). It has only been in the last 30 years however, that more research is being conducted on how to improve character education within schools. Character education is intended to develop the whole child, but often gets lost in translation based on who decides what to teach (Vardin, 2003). Berkowitz (2002) suggested there is not necessarily a right or a wrong way to teach character education, but there seems to be an absence of teaching character education in schools. It might be found

in some areas of the curriculum, but not necessarily cross-curricular or even grade level to grade level.

Lickona (1997) stated character education is the process of teaching student's positive behaviors to be successful throughout their lives. Lickona (1997) indicated there are nine components within the classroom that a teacher is responsible for teaching. These components include: "the teacher as caregiver, model, and mentor; creating a caring classroom environment; moral discipline; creating a democratic classroom environment; teaching values through the curriculum; cooperative learning; the conscience of the craft; ethical reflection; and teaching conflict resolution" (Lickona, 1997, p. 63). According to Lickona (1997), while these components are helpful in the classroom, there are controversial issues that need to stay out of the school within character education. When controversial issues are discussed, they should provide opportunities for learners to understand both sides of the issue. This practice will help children and adolescents experience the dynamics of both sides of an issue. According to Lickona, this approach to discussing controversial issues will promote tolerance toward others with different opinions.

Haynes and Thomas (2007) stated character education is needed now more than ever in schools. Changes in lifestyles, family units, society, and violence have become an increasing challenge in many schools. Character education must start at an early age, not just at home, but in schools as well. According to Haynes and Thomas (2007),

Character education is a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share. It is the intentional,

proactive effort by schools, districts and states to instill in their students' important core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others. (p. 155)

Haynes and Thomas (2007) indicated character education may not entirely rid schools of violence or negative and anti-social behaviors. However, it can create a safe environment where children feel valued and respected. Character education and religion have often been linked together. However, teachers may not feel the responsibility to teach morals and values that could be construed or misguided by the opinion of others. Haynes and Thomas said,

The civic and moral values widely held in our society, such as honesty, caring, fairness, and integrity, can be taught without invoking religious authority. In public schools, where teachers may neither promote nor denigrate religion, these values must be taught without religious indoctrination. (p. 167)

Numerous character education programs have been developed in the last 30 years. The federal government created the National Character Counts Week. State and local governments as well as professional educational organizations have also created character education programs. Programs such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Character Counts!, Open Circle, and the LiM, provide instructional strategies to address student behavior and character education. While it is important to help each child become aware of proper morals and values and behavior expectations, teachers need to act in their classrooms using cross-curricular efforts to meet the needs of students. Bennett (1991) advocated morals and values should be taught. "If we want our

children to possess the traits of character we most admire, we need to teach them what those traits are” (p. 137).

Social Emotional Development in K-6 Students

In addition to having a leadership instructional model teachers can draw upon to improve leadership skills in K-6 students, curricula also need to focus on the social emotional development of students within schools. According to Blum and Libbey (2004), many students lack social-emotional competencies and become less connected to school as they progress through the school system. These authors indicated it can negatively affect students’ academic performance, behavior, and health. The KSDE has placed increased emphasis on social-emotional skill development in K-12 schools. For Kansas schools to be accredited, districts must have annual social and emotional learning (SEL) training for teachers within each district. CASEL (n.d.) defined SEL as “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” (p. 1). Through SEL, students can develop these skills and become more productive students and citizens in the future. The core SEL competencies set by CASEL are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. According to CASEL (n.d.), drawing on over two decades of research, using these interventions leads to better academic and improved behavioral outcomes. While CASEL is a resource provided to many educators, many researchers are making a case for SEL and the importance of teaching these skills in elementary school. CASEL has endorsed the LiM program “as an

evidence based social-emotional learning process K-6” (FranklinCovey Education, 2020a, p. 1).

CASEL (2003) stated SEL should include life skills, culture, and academics. According to CASEL (2003), it is vital to have interventions that make the learning environment safe. Providing ample time for students to create attachments to their teachers and peers allows students to make a connection that will likely keep them from joining in on bad behavior. Providing opportunities for students to engage in learning as well as their behavior, can create intrinsic motivation because they own their learning and behavior. Students will be more likely to engage with peers and the teacher when supportive surroundings that create safe zones are provided. The emphasis on SEL requires teachers to provide basic skills development that promotes good decisions and refusal skills. When providing a strong academic structure, good behavior can evolve around academics. Finally, CASEL (2003) stated social and emotional skills should be integrated across the curriculum for the best results.

According to Jones, Barnes, Bailey, and Doolittle (2017), children who master SEL skills will perform better in school overall and be more successful as an adult in both mental and physical health. It is crucial that SEL programs are not a one size fits all type of program. Jones et al. (2017) indicated that certain SEL skills should be taught before others can be learned, and this will depend upon the age of the child. According to Jones et al. (2017), few SEL programs focus directly on cognitive regulation and basic emotion skills. SEL programs do focus on the social domain, which demonstrates the need for students to learn new social experiences, which happens as early as five years of age.

The Leader in Me (LiM) Program

Although there are many character education programs available, the LiM provides a whole-self and whole-school transformation process (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f).

Instead of focusing on academic measures alone, the Leader in Me embodies a holistic approach to education, redefining how schools measure success. This approach empowers educators with effective practices and tools to teach leadership to every student, create a culture of student empowerment, and align systems to drive results in academics. (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f, p. 1)

According to FranklinCovey Education (2020a), “In today’s reality, we must consider the global playing field as global citizens” (para 4). Students are coming from diverse cultural backgrounds, and it is important to teach all students to communicate effectively, resolve conflict, work with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and be competitive in the workforce globally (Covey et al., 2014). There are three elements teachers must consider in today’s education reality: academics, school climate, and life skills (Pink, 2006). All three of the elements are addressed within the LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program. The LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program was designed to address the whole-self of school aged children. In addition, the LiM also focuses on common challenges and key initiatives in K-12 schools. Key topics include social emotional learning, college and career readiness, bullying, equity for all students, self-directed learning, positive and safe school climate, restorative practices, mental health, attendance, parent engagement, and data-driven performance (FranklinCovey Education, 2020e).

Creation of the LiM program. The first implementation of what was to become the LiM program occurred at A. B. Combs Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1999 (Covey et al., 2014). A school administrator, Principal Murial Thomas Summers, had been to a conference where Dr. Stephen R. Covey was presenting in Washington, D.C. Principal Summers felt as though she had just heard the calling of how children can apply the principles described in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989). Prior to implementation of the LiM principles at A. B. Combs, the seven habits had only been designed for adults. Upon her return to school, Principal Summers was faced with a grim decision passed down from the superintendent. Her school was failing. She had one week to design a system to keep her magnet school open. Principal Summers put together a task force of teachers, parents, and community members to help decide what was needed for their school. Out of their meetings came four basic needs that required purposeful focus for students to be successful. The first need was physical needs including safety, health, food, exercise, shelter, cleanliness, and hygiene. Social-emotional was the second need. It included acceptance, kindness, friendship, and respect. The third need was mental needs including intellectual growth, creativity, and stimulating challenges. The fourth and final need was spiritual needs of contribution, meaning, and uniqueness (Covey et al., 2014). According to Covey et al. (2014), if these basic needs are met, students are able to acquire the skills to be effective in the 21st century.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 1989) has been used to provide support to schools that have adopted the LiM program. While Principal Summers at

A.B. Combs Elementary School has been credited with the first use of the program, many schools use the LiM program today. Covey et al. (2014) quoted Dr. Karen Woodward, Superintendent, Lexington School District 1 in Lexington, South Carolina, who stated,

The Leader in Me has been instrumental in creating a cohesive, collaborative climate for students and staff. It has provided a quality foundation for establishing the change that we desired in our schools. The professional learning component changes the way teachers view themselves, their students, and the learning environment. It has been phenomenal what has happened. (p. xi)

The LiM program design. FranklinCovey Education (2020f) described leadership development by stating,

Many people equate leadership with a formal position of authority. But we believe anyone can be a leader by intentionally leading one's own life (leading self) and working well with and encouraging the greatness in others—whether family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues (leading others). (p. 1)

The LiM program provides the ability to become a leader of self and a leader of others by “communicating a person’s worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves” (Covey et al., 2014, p. 39).

The heart of the LiM program is *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) originally written for adult thought and education. This book provided a practical sequence to learn how to become a leader of self. The first three habits are Be Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, and Put First Things First. These habits provide the steppingstones for the learner to become more independent, providing skills of personal leadership. The next three habits are Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand, and

Synergize. These habits are extremely important as they emphasize “conflict resolution, listening, communicating, creativity, and dealing with diversity, problem-solving, and teamwork” (Covey et al., 2014, p. 44). The last habit is Sharpen the Saw, which provides the bookend for the seven habits. Sharpen the Saw, “focuses on the principles of renewal, continuous improvement, and leading a balanced life” (Covey et al., 2014, p. 44). This habit provides the support for the whole person and their well-being. As noted earlier in this section, Covey et al. (2014) pointed out, there are four critical basic needs in human development: physical, social-emotional, mental, and spiritual. Developing the seven habits emphasized by Covey et al., (2014) promotes positive development in each of the four human need areas.

Figure 3 provides an illustration of skills students are taught that encompass each of the seven habits. In addition, specific outcomes parents, teachers, and business professionals expect to observe in students as a result of instruction in the LiM program are listed.

| Habits | Parent, Teacher, and Business Expectations | |
|--|--|---|
| Habits 1-3 (Independence) 1 Be Proactive 2 Begin with the End in Mind 3 Put First Things First | Goal Setting Planning Time Management Organization | Initiative Responsibility Vision Integrity |
| Habits 2-4 (Interdependence) 4 Think Win-Win 5 Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood 6 Synergize | Conflict Management Listening/Empathy Speaking Skills Problem Solving Teamwork | Respect Ethics/Manners Honesty Openness Valuing Diversity |
| Habit 7 (The Whole Person) 7 Sharpen the Saw | Physical Wellness Social Skills Mental skills Emotional Stability | Contribution/Meaning Desire to Learn Fun |

Figure 3. Adapted from The Leader in Me, the 7 habits: What parents, teachers, and businesses want, by S. R. Covey, S. Covey, M. Summers, and D. K. Hatch, 2014, p. 45.

Character traits are essential in the workforce and in life. In Kansas, the KSDE (2020) requires districts to demonstrate adequate yearly progress over five-year spans using KESA guidelines. The KESA requires districts to demonstrate student growth in four areas - relevance, relationships, responsive climate, and rigor - using evidence-based practices. The LiM program addresses each of these four KESA components by expecting students to practice each of Covey's (1989) seven habits. Be Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, and Put First Things First emphasize the KESA component of

relevance. If it is important to a student, it will be of relevance. Relationships and responsive climate are addressed in Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood, and Synergize. Habit seven, Sharpen the Saw, provides evidence-based practice for strengthening the whole person, the rigor focus within Kansas schools (FranklinCovey Education, 2018).

Components of the LiM program. The LiM program was originally developed in 1999 by a principal and teachers who wanted to teach their students leadership, responsibility, accountability, problem solving, adaptability, and social-emotional skills in addition to academics (FranklinCovey Education, 2018). Dr. Muriel Summers, Principal of A. B. Combs Magnet Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina identified leadership as the theme for the school. In addition to feedback from parents, Dr. Summers also decided to incorporate Baldrige Award criteria, Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and several other education sources that focused on the design, development, and implementation of a leadership emphasis for her elementary school. After implementation of the instructional program Dr. Summers and her staff created, improvements were noted in academic achievement, parent and teacher satisfaction, and higher levels of student confidence. After hearing about the results achieved by the magnet school, other schools implemented the model of instruction developed at A. B. Combs Magnet Elementary School (FranklinCovey Education, 2018). Based on demand from Summers and other principals and teachers who were intrigued by student success at A. B. Combs, Covey (2008) published *The Leader in Me: How Schools Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time*. This book became the foundation for FranklinCovey to codify the LiM process Summers and other

school district leaders had implemented. According to FranklinCovey Education (2018), the LiM program was created so that other schools could implement the same leadership model and achieve similar results.

The LiM (FranklinCovey Education, 2018) program was designed to give shared leadership responsibilities to students. This paradigm is not to be confused with management, as leadership is about doing the right thing, and management is doing things right (Covey et al., 2014). There are three tools used in the LiM program: leadership notebooks, student-led conferences, and quality tools. Each of these tools allows students to track their individual goals and expectations. Students use the notebooks to provide information to teachers as well as parents in student-led conferences. According to Covey et al. (2014), at Beaumont, a school implementing the LiM program, parent attendance at student conferences increased from 74 % to 98% (p. 117).

Within the LiM program is the *See, Do, Get* outline that is used to improve schools. *See*, stands for when an individual changes the way they see things. *Do* influences what an individual does. *Get* impacts the results an individual achieves (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f). Understanding that all students can achieve is an example of the five core paradigms that support *See*: (1) everyone can be a leader, not leadership is just for a few, (2) everyone has genius, not just a few are gifted, (3) change starts with me, not just improve schools, (4) change the system, educators empower the student to lead their own learning, not educators control, and (5) direct student learning, and develop the whole person, and to not focus solely on academics (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f). The *Do* and *Get* elements result from implementation of the five

paradigms of *Get*. The LiM *Do* element of highly effective practices does not just emphasize academics. This element includes a focus on school climate, leadership, and academics. Teachers who implement the LiM program provide leadership instruction to all students, create a school climate of student empowerment, and align the school climate to drive the results in academics. *Get* is the measurable results derived from emphasizing instruction in leadership, school climate, and academics. Students are encouraged to demonstrate leadership in the classroom and take on leadership roles within their class and school. School climate instruction emphasizes the role every student, faculty, and staff member plays in creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment. Teachers emphasize achievement and self-empowered responsibility for learning within the academic focus of the LiM program (FranklinCovey Education, 2020f).

The LiM program research. The LiM program emphasizes paradigms, a way of thinking or mapping out the next steps. This focus is initiated in elementary school and continues through high school. Within the LiM program, leadership is emphasized as a choice and is learned through self-discipline (FranklinCovey Education, 2020d). Disruptive behaviors come from poor self-control and often lead to problems in the classroom. Using the LiM program, students can learn the skills needed to be self-disciplined, which decreases the problem of discipline referrals in the classroom.

Dethlefs et al. (2017) engaged 600 students and 175 teachers at 11 different schools in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The authors reported that the schools using the LiM program were more likely to meet leadership goals than non LiM program schools. There were increased opportunities for students to lead and more opportunities

for people to notice when students were doing something good. Students in the LiM program schools had a 48 % greater likelihood of achieving their goals. The LiM program schools provided leadership opportunities to all students 38% more often than non-LiM program schools and had a 46 % greater likelihood that students felt they received help to make decisions in their school than non-LiM program school students (Dethlefs et al., 2017).

The climate within schools has also been researched. Dethlefs et al. (2017) conducted focus groups, interviews, and surveys of approximately 600 students and 175 teachers. The authors also used academic and behavioral data reported by the schools that indicated students in the LiM schools were more likely to have better attendance than students in non-LiM schools. In addition, students attending LiM schools reported they behaved better and were provided better opportunities to take ownership of their learning because of the climate that had been established using the LiM program. FranklinCovey Education, (2020c) reported that a positive school climate is a necessity for ensuring higher attendance. Having a positive climate also allows for positive relationships to form between students which in turn creates a safe place for students and increases the attendance in schools (FranklinCovey Education, 2020c). Supportive school environments lead to the development of the whole child's social emotional well-being (FranklinCovey Education, 2020c).

Using a qualitative research design, Bryant (2017) examined how educators are using the LiM program in their classrooms to provide a positive climate. Bryant found that educators incorporating the LiM program and utilizing *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) strategies saw a significant change in classroom climate.

Bryant reported positive changes in teachers' approaches to teaching and classroom climate when using the common leadership language, and an increase in students taking charge of tasks. Increases were also noted in students taking responsibility for themselves.

Caracelo (2016) evaluated the student leadership component of the LiM program and its impact on elementary student's behavior and academic achievement. The author identified collaboration as an observable leadership trait developed in students as a result of implementation of the LiM program. Caracelo further identified the changes in students' behaviors as positive leadership behaviors. Through interviews with faculty, she revealed an increased school climate of leadership and learning that was improving in the school after implementing the LiM program.

The LiM program leads to cross-curricular academic achievement increases by allowing students to set goals for themselves and achieve them. According to the LiM webpage (FranklinCovey Education, 2020b),

There is a growing body of evidence that Leader in Me positively impacts academics. This should come as no surprise to those familiar with the research showing that effective social-emotional learning enhances academic achievement. When the social- and emotional-skills of students are developed, along with those of the staff, students tend to achieve higher academically. (p. 1)

Pascale, Ohlson, and Lee (2017) conducted a longitudinal embedded multi-site case study exploring how the LiM impacted academics in 25 schools in Florida. The researchers looked at five years of state science and reading test scores and reported a 3 % improvement in science and a 4 % gain in reading. LiM schools in the first year of

implementation averaged 9 % higher academic scores in each subject area (science, reading, and math) than non-LiM schools on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) over the two-year period of the Pascale et al. (2017) study.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature related to, leadership, development of leadership knowledge and skills, school climate, academic achievement, character development, social emotional development, and the LiM program. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research methods used in the current study. The research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations are included in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program implemented in USD #123 elementary schools on school climate, academic achievement, development of student leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and student social emotional development. This chapter describes the methodology used in the current study. It includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design was selected to fully answer the five research questions guiding the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (p. 13). The phenomenon investigated in the current study was elementary school teacher perceptions about the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, development of student leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and student social emotional development. Using a qualitative research design allowed the researcher to understand teacher perceptions about the LiM program implementation in a K-6 environment.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated, "Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants" (p. 38). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), "Qualitative

research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of narrative and visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest” (p. 45). This process allows the researcher to review the phenomena in a holistic approach gathering data from the participants in the study. During the research “maintaining a reflexive approach throughout ensures a critical review of the involvement of the researcher in the research and how this impacts the processes and outcomes of the research” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019, p. 46).

Setting

USD #123, a rural Midwestern school district with a population of 466 students and 40 teachers employed in five schools in three communities (USD #123, 2020), was the site for the current study. The district encompasses 397 square miles in three counties. More than 300 of the 446 students who attend school in the district live more than 2.5 miles from the school they attend. At the time of the current study, there were 208 students in grades K-6, and 18 elementary teachers. The student population in 2019-2020 was comprised of 88.1% White, 0.2% African American, 6.9% Hispanic, and 4.0% other students. Thirty-six percent of students qualified for free and reduced lunch programs (USD #123, 2020). As of August 2020, USD #123 was the only school district in the state of Kansas to have implemented the LiM program in all elementary and secondary schools (USD #123, 2020).

Sampling Procedures

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), sampling for qualitative research is almost always purposive. A purposive sampling of certified K-6 elementary teachers was used for the current research. Study participants included 10 elementary teachers with

two or more years of teaching experience who had taught in the district prior to, during, and after the implementation of the LiM program.

Instrument

The instrument used for the interviews was a semi-structured interview protocol. The interview protocol included four descriptive and demographic questions and 15 semi-structured interview questions that were posed to answer the five research questions. Demographic questions included the following:

IQ1. How many years have you been teaching?

IQ2. What is your highest level of education?

IQ3. How many years have you taught in an elementary school setting?

IQ4. How many years have you taught in USD#123?

The semi-structured interview questions aligned with the research questions included the following:

RQ1. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on school climate?

IQ5. Describe what school climate means to you.

IQ6. Describe the school climate prior to the implementation of the LiM program.

IQ7. Describe the school climate after the implementation of the LiM program.

RQ2. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on academic achievement?

IQ8. Describe what academic achievement means to you.

IQ9. Describe academic achievement of students prior to the implementation of

the LiM program.

IQ10. Describe academic achievement of students after the implementation of the LiM program.

RQ3. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on development of leadership knowledge and skills in students?

IQ11. Describe what leadership knowledge and skills means to you.

IQ12. Describe the leadership knowledge and skills in students prior to implementation of the LiM program.

IQ13. Describe the leadership knowledge and skills of students after implementation of the LiM program.

RQ4. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact the LiM program on character development in students?

IQ14. Describe what character development means to you.

IQ15. Describe the character development of students prior to the implementation of the LiM program.

IQ16. Describe the character development of students after the implementation of the LiM program.

RQ5. What do elementary teachers perceive is the impact of the LiM program on social-emotional development in students?

IQ17. Describe what social-emotional development means to you.

IQ18. Describe the social-emotional development of students prior to the implementation of LiM program.

IQ19. Describe the social-emotional development of students after implementation of the LiM program.

To ensure the validity of the interview process, prior to conducting the study, the researcher asked two individuals familiar with qualitative research to review the interview questions for clarity and wording as well as alignment with the research questions. The reviewers indicated the interview questions were aligned with the research questions and had no suggestions for wording modifications.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission to conduct the study in USD #123 was sought on August 26, 2020 (see Appendix A). Permission to conduct the research was returned by USD #123 on August 27, 2020 (see Appendix B). A request to conduct the study was submitted to the Baker University Institution Review Board (IRB) on September 11, 2020. Permission to conduct the study was granted from Baker University on September 15, 2020 (see Appendix C).

Once approvals to conduct the study were received from USD #123 and Baker University, the researcher contacted the USD #123 superintendent through email to request the names of elementary teachers who met the criteria for participation. After the names of teachers were received, an invitation to participate in the research study was sent via e-mail to USD #123 elementary teachers who had taught in the district a minimum of two years prior to the inception of the LiM program (see Appendix D).

The invitation to participate included information about the purpose of the study, research and interview questions, amount of time participation in an interview would require, and measures that would be taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of

participants. The voluntary nature of the interviews was explained. Participants were made aware that the interview would be audio recorded and that they could opt out of the study at any time or indicate a desire to not respond to any interview question. It was also explained that once a transcript of the interview had been prepared, it would be sent to the participant to review for accuracy. Teachers interested in participating in the study were asked to contact the researcher via email.

The original research design involved conducting individual interviews using Zoom. However, the researcher had to modify the process for obtaining responses to the interview questions due to the COVID-19 pandemic that was occurring in the U.S. and throughout the world at the time the study was being conducted. The role of teachers was altered dramatically as a result of the pandemic. Schools closed for several weeks. When they did reopen, the delivery of instruction in many districts, including USD #123 was online. Many teachers were creating online lessons at the same time they were learning about online instruction. Although 10 teachers volunteered to participate in the study, none were willing to participate in a Zoom interview due to strained working schedules and for some, unfamiliarity with Zoom. However, 10 participants were willing to submit responses to the interview questions in writing via email. A signed and dated consent form (see Appendix E) that included the same information provided in the invitation to participate (see Appendix D) was submitted to the researcher prior to submission of responses to the interview questions. Responses to interview protocol questions received by email were converted to a Word document and an anonymous code known only to the researcher (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) was assigned to each document. Written responses to the questions on the interview protocol were saved on a

thumb drive accessible only to the researcher and arranged in order by the date the researcher received the responses via email.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative data analysis requires steps to be followed in a sequential order. Organization and preparation of the data for analysis is step one. This process involves transcribing the interviews, scanning the material, typing notes, and sorting and arranging the data into different categories. Creswell and Creswell's (2018) step two involves reading or looking at all the data. This allows the researcher to see the general ideas the interviewees are saying, determining an overall impression, and taking visual notice of ideas and patterns. Step three requires initial coding of the data. This allows the researcher to separate the data into chunks and put the data into categories. In step four, the researcher generates a description and themes. This process allows the researcher to develop themes or descriptions that are similar. Lastly, in step five, the researcher identifies the description and themes (i.e., specific codes, expected codes, surprising codes, or codes that are unusual) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Due to participants responding to interview protocol questions in writing, there was no need to transcribe responses to interview questions as recommended in Creswell and Creswell's (2018) step one. To apply Creswell and Creswell's (2018) second step, the researcher read all of the written responses to interview protocol questions multiple times to gain an overall impression of participant statements. Coding was the third step in the data analysis. To distinguish between differences and similarities in the transcriptions of interviews, sections of transcripts were highlighted in a colored font

(e.g., yellow for common phrases or comments, blue for responses that were important but different from other participants' responses). This allowed the researcher to note commonalities and differences across transcripts during analysis. Responses to each of the interview questions were analyzed and reviewed using this process. Common responses to each question lead to identification of common themes and subthemes (step four) in interviewee responses. Responses that were important but unique to one or only a few interviewees were noted in the summary of the major themes (step five). Once the researcher had identified major themes, the same qualitative experts who provided the review of the interview questions were asked to review the transcripts and identified themes. Both reviewers concurred that the identified themes provided an accurate representation of responses from the majority of participants in the study.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research demands the establishment of trustworthiness and the reliability of the methods of the study (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell, reliability and trustworthiness are accomplished by employing highly ethical standards when carrying out qualitative research. Reliability and trustworthiness were promoted through having two individuals familiar with qualitative research review the interview questions prior to conducting the interviews. Finally, reliability and trustworthiness were ensured through having two qualitative experts review the data analysis of transcripts for accuracy of theme identification.

Researcher's Role

As stated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is interpretative research which in turn allows the researcher to be involved with the experiences of the

participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) acknowledged the importance of clarifying any bias the researcher might have and stated that it is important to be open and honest with the readers. The researcher acknowledges and is mindful of any personal bias and prejudice associated with the focus of the current study. At the time of the study, the researcher was a teacher in a school district that neighbors the district in which the research was conducted. The researcher recognized the potential for bias but maintained honesty and reliability throughout all phases of the study. As a teacher, the researcher may have opinions related to students, curricula, and schools that could impact the current research. Every effort was made to acknowledge potential biases and to maintain a neutral mindset while designing the study, collecting data, and analyzing and interpreting the data.

Limitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby, (2008), “Limitations are factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of results” (p. 133). Limitations may arise in methodology, data, or method of analysis. The following were limitations for this study:

1. The school district in which the research was conducted is a rural school district. Results of the current study may not apply to larger school districts.
2. Factors other than LiM program may have impacted teacher perceptions about changes in school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional well-being.
3. Teacher bias about the LiM program may have affected their responses to the

qualitative interview questions.

4. In person interviews were not possible due to the pandemic. Study participants provided written rather than oral responses to interview questions. The style of responding to interview questions prevented the researcher from asking follow-up questions that may have helped to clarify the intended meaning of responses.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methods used to conduct the study. This chapter included the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researchers' role, and limitations. Chapter 4 provides the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

This study examined perceptions of teachers at a rural elementary school about the LiM program. Five purposes guided this study. The first purpose was to determine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on school climate. The second purpose was to examine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on academic achievement. The third purpose was to investigate the perceptions of elementary teachers about the LiM program impact on student leadership knowledge and skills. The fourth purpose was to examine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student character development. The final purpose of the study was to explore elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student social emotional development.

At the time of the current study, no research was found that had examined K-6 teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, student development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, or social-emotional development in a rural setting. The current study focused on a K-6 elementary school within a rural Midwestern school district (USD#123). The LiM program was first implemented in the district in 2016. Chapter 4 includes a summary of descriptive and demographic characteristics of study participants and the results of the data analysis of the interviews conducted with 10 K-6 elementary school teachers.

Descriptive and Demographic Background of Study Participants

To understand the background of the participants, four descriptive and demographic questions were asked. Of the 10 respondents who participated in the study nine were female and one was male. The 10 teachers who participated in the study reported a combined teaching experience of 158 years. Five participants reported fewer than 10 years of experience, two reported 15 and 16 years respectively, one participant had 25 years, and two reported more than 30 years of experience in teaching. Four of the 10 participants had earned a BS in Elementary Education while the other six had earned a Master of Science Degree in Education. Four of the nine participants had taught in areas other than elementary education. All participants had been teaching at USD #123 for four or more years. Appendix F provides a summary of descriptive and demographic information for each participant.

Results of the Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the identification of five themes: the LiM program impact on school climate, the LiM program impact on academic achievement, the LiM program impact on the development of leadership knowledge and skills, the LiM program impact on character development, and the LiM program impact on social-emotional development. This section describes the results of the analysis related to each theme.

The LiM program impact on school climate. Study participants were asked to describe what the term ‘school climate’ meant to them. Participant 4 provided an answer that resembled the response provided by other participants when she indicated that school

climate refers to “the friendliness, values, practices, and goals a school puts into practice along with the community and parents.” Participant 6 stated,

I believe school climate describes the atmosphere of the building. This includes all administration, staff, and students. School climate encompasses a sense of belonging, attitudes, and actions toward others, and the systemic interactions between all.

When asked to describe school climate prior to the implementation of the LiM program, eight participants mentioned their students got along well and were doing what would be expected in school. When asked to describe school climate after the implementation of the LiM program, Participant 1 indicated, “The only thing that changed was the vocabulary we used.” However, the response of Participant 4 was more representative of those who participated in interviews. This participant stated,

After implementation, the practices were more intent. There was increased student/parent involvement and more visible signs of the mission statement and the goals being implemented. There was increased excitement and students were working on positive habits and doing activities associated with being a good leader. Students were recognized for their leadership and their leadership qualities. There is a leader in each person. One just has to look for it.

Participant 5 stated that after implementation of the LiM program, “Students and teachers were more aware of what they were doing, why they were doing it, and how it would impact their lives and others lives.” Participant 6 added, “For the staff who commit to teaching and fostering the seven habits in their students, the sense of belonging for the students, and the environment of the classroom are significantly more positive.” Both

Participant 1 and Participant 7 mentioned they believed the impact of the LiM program was greater at the elementary level than at the high school level.

The LiM program impact on academic achievement. When asked to define the term ‘academic achievement’, an array of answers were provided by respondents.

Participant 1 shared that “Academic achievement means that students are capable of completing their work in a timely manner and achieving passing grades on their completed work with minimal support.” Participant 2 provided a broader explanation of academic achievement,

Academic achievement means being successful in your leaning. Of course, that could be interpreted many other ways. When I look at a student, I don’t consider academic achievement as meaning that they pass every single standard. I look at things like, are they enjoying school? Are they making improvements from where they were before? At the current level they are at, can they continue to strive and achieve at further grade levels, or will they constantly be behind to the point that it will be a detriment?

Participant 4 suggested academic achievement means, “the process and success of students and staff in achieving educational goals set forth.” Participant 6 indicated that academic achievement means, “All of our students are learning and achieving to their maximum success and potential.” Participant 9 suggested, “Academic achievement is providing students with quality curriculum and instruction to not only prepare them for future educational endeavors but to challenge them with taking an active role in their learning progression.”

All study participants indicated that prior to implementation of the LiM program, academic achievement was primarily focused on teacher and parent expectations for performance in the classroom. Participant 4 indicated that prior to the implementation of the LiM program, “The majority of the students were achieving their goals, although they were not always aware of what goal they were trying to achieve. They relied-on teachers and parents to tell them how they were doing.” Participant 5 offered a similar view and indicated, “Students did what they were supposed to do without a lot of thinking about why it was being done. [It was] more the teacher and parent responsibility.” Both Participant 8 and Participant 9 relayed that prior to the LiM program implementation, only the teachers were responsible for the academic achievement of students.

When asked to describe how the LiM program has impacted academic achievement, one participant did not think there had been any change in academic achievement. Participant 2 stated,

There has not been any difference in academic achievement. The kids who are shown the importance of education at home are going to be the same kids that strive the hardest at school. Of course, this could be different for the upper grades, but at the level I am at, I do not think there is any change.

The majority of participants described specific effects of the LiM program on academic achievement. Participant 3 indicated that after being involved with the LiM program, teachers “can see an improvement in academic achievement.” Participant 4 added additional insight into the impact of the LiM program on academic achievement and stated,

Students are aware and are charting their own progress of their goals. Students are given tools to help them see and chart their progress or lack of progress toward their specific goals. Goals are more visible. They are written down and everyone is held more accountable.

Similarly, Participant 7 and Participant 8 suggested that students are more actively engaged in academic achievement growth. These two respondents both indicated that student assessments based on their personal growth and achievement and student record keeping promotes students taking an active role in their growth, not just parents and teachers.

The LiM program impact on development of leadership knowledge and skills. All study participants offered similar responses when asked to describe what is meant by the term *leadership knowledge and skills*. According to Participant 1, leadership knowledge and skills means, “the ability to be in charge of yourself and provide positive encouragement and support to others. Leaders have initiative and are willing to go above and beyond to complete the job without harming others.” Participant 2 suggested, “Leadership knowledge and skills means that you are responsible, respectful, and strive to always do what is right even when it is hard.” Participant 4 reiterated, “Leadership knowledge and skills helps one to recognize and be the best person they can be. It is a means to living a productive and successful life in all facets of life.” Participant 6 described leadership knowledge and skills as, “The students recognize the characteristics of positive leadership, and can connect elements of their daily life into what it means to be a leader. This is inclusive of personal responsibility and working with their peers.”

All study participants responded similarly when asked to describe student knowledge and skills related to leadership prior to implementation of the LiM program. The majority of participants indicated there was limited emphasis placed on evaluating leadership knowledge and skills in students. Participant 4 indicated, “Students who demonstrated good academic performance and were friendly toward others were often evaluated as leaders.” Participant 5 said, “There wasn’t a real evaluation tool. They [students] were just using good citizenship and following the golden rule.” According to Participant 7, there was “not much opportunity for leadership. Teachers led and students followed. [There was] little voice in their education.” Participant 1 described what leadership meant prior to the LiM program implementation by stating, “Being at the front of the line and also having your name written down as a student that could possibly answer questions when a substitute was in the room.” Participant 5 shared, “Usually it was the high students, or the students considered ‘good kids’ that were the ones who were chosen for the leadership roles or those roles sought-out by them [students].” Participant 8 described student leadership prior to the implementation of the LiM program as, “teacher led.”

All participants described significant changes in how leadership knowledge and skills are emphasized and evaluated in the curriculum and school climate after implementation of the LiM program. Evaluating leadership in students after implementation of the LiM program Participant 1 said, “We now evaluate leadership by the student’s ability to use the seven habits during their daily lives.” Participant 3 suggested,

We are now able to evaluate [leadership knowledge and skills] by seeing how students are reacting to the LiM program and we have our counselor working with them in small groups on the seven habits. Then students are evaluated through group interactions.

In addition, Participant 5 said, “Some of the [leadership] qualities are evaluated by taking into consideration if they are using the LiM seven habits that they have been taught and how are they now interacting with their peers as leaders.” Participant 9 described evaluation of leadership in students after the implementation of the LiM program as, “students having greater opportunities created for leadership, student led and teacher facilitated. Students now have a better role in their leadership process.”

When asked what skills demonstrate leadership learning in the LiM program, Participant 1 said,

I think the thing that stands out the most to me is the frequent use of being proactive and in charge of yourself. It is your [the student's) responsibility to do what you need to do to be successful in your daily life and long term.

Participant 4 indicated the skills in the LiM program that demonstrate learning leadership are,

teaching, learning, and applying the seven habits in your everyday life. Placing goals in visible areas where one can see them often, writing a mission statement, tracking one's progress, being proactive, having a plan, importance of work and why, collaboration, and balancing life.

Participant 6 described the leadership skills that stand out in the LiM program by stating,

What I have enjoyed most about the LiM programming is the ways in which the curriculum has connected each of the seven habits into what it means to be a leader. Yesterday, I worked with students on Habit 3 and Habit 7 lessons on showing gratitude toward others. This is a win-win because both the student and the individual receiving the gratitude feel great. This is also sharpening the saw, as it sharpens the heart. Further, it teaches them [students] to show appreciation to those around them while in leadership roles. Lessons like that are what stand out to me the most and show that LiM is not a separate channel, but rather a channel that we all can run through.

Participant 9 shared, “Many students take the time to actually think before they act and are more willing to work with others instead of having it all their own way.”

Student leadership engagement after the implementation of the LiM program has been “significant”, according to Participant 1. This participant stated,

We have partnered classes so older students are mentoring younger students. We have student leadership council that talks about things going on at MHES and how they can make things better. They also talk about community service and things they can do to help others.

Participant 4 indicated student leadership engagement after the implementation of the LiM program was “more student led, and student ideas for leadership opportunities and activities were welcomed and encouraged. Student leadership council was formed for students, and civic and community service became more of the norm, instead of just once in a while.” Participant 5 remarked, “More students are willing to take on being in charge of activities and want to work with others to form a team to do something good.”

Adding to this, Participant 7 shared, “More leadership opportunities have been created and the discussion of leadership is more prevalent among the students and their peers, teams, families, and communities. The idea has grown that leadership is an action, not a position or title.” One participant viewed student leadership knowledge and skills somewhat differently than other participants. Participant 2 stated,

In all honesty, I truly believe that most kids naturally have leadership qualities and then there are some kids that no matter how much you teach it and preach it, they will never pick up on those skills. Our students here are always willing to step up and help-out in any way they possibly can, but again, I think a lot of that comes from home.

The LiM program impact on character development. All study participants provided similar definitions to describe what the term ‘character development’ means. Participant 1, when defining character development said, “Character development is students developing character traits that we would consider to be effective for success in society.” Participant 3 had a similar response, “Character development means to provide opportunities for students to develop lifelong skills that will provide them with opportunities to lead and succeed in future endeavors.” Participant 4 responded, “building one’s internal and external motivators, the formation of values and conscience, and the development of the whole-self including, heart, mind, and body.” Participant 6 added,

Character development means that students are developing and are provided opportunities to practice them [values]. They [students] have skills to assist them

in becoming a positive, successful member of society. This is inclusive of many social emotional skills and competencies.

Study participants reported similar views about how character development was taught prior to implementation of the LiM program. Participant 4 suggested that prior to the implementation of the LiM program, teaching character development to students was, “mainly left to our school social worker to lead specific lessons on character development. It was also taught with specific curriculum and books.” Participant 5 stated, “We used situations that happened in the classroom or articles and news stories. We discussed how people acted or reacted and what could have been done differently.” Participant 8 mentioned, “Character development was taught by individual teachers in isolation.”

All study participants indicated that after the implementation of the LiM program, there is more overt emphasis placed on character development. Participant 2 said, “We talk about how we are all different and have different personalities, but how it is important that each of us follow the seven habits to be the best that we can be.” Participant 3 stated, “We strive to teach the program early, as early as pre-school, and continue to offer support and opportunities for students to grow in character development.” Participant 4 stated,

The LiM promoted character development throughout the district by the intrinsic teaching of good leadership habits, common language skills, and the encouragement of the staff to learn, apply, and live the seven habits in their daily lives. Positive leadership skills and character traits are intrinsically taught.

Participant 7 stated, “This program [the LiM] allowed for consistency in expectations, verbiage, and habit development.”

The LiM program impact on social emotional development. All participants provided similar definitions of the term ‘social-emotional development’. According to Participant 1, social-emotional development means, “the development of the ability to control and monitor one’s attitude, feelings, and reactions in social situations.” Participant 3 stated social-emotional development is, “developing students both socially and emotionally to help them learn coping skills for success in dealing with life’s challenges.” Participant 5 and Participant 6 responded similarly when describing social-emotional development. These participants indicated development of social and emotional skills requires that students are developing relationships and are provided opportunities to practice foundational skills related to success as a student and individual.

Teachers were consistent in responses when asked how District USD #123 taught social-emotional development prior to the implementation of the LiM program. Participant 1 responded, “These [social-emotional] skills were taught with books, role playing, and through the school social worker when available.” Participant 4 said that prior to implementation of the LiM program, “The school social worker taught lessons and tools to promoted healthy decision making.” Participant 5 said, “We never had a formal program. Just when things came up, they were talked about or if there was something in the news, it was talked about.” Participant 7 stated social emotional skills were taught through, “individual teacher expectations and lessons, with no consistency.”

Study participants were also consistent in their responses when asked to describe how District USD#123 promoted social-emotional development after the implementation of the LiM program. Participant 3 stated,

We are giving students opportunities to learn and grow from the implementation of the LiM program. Additionally, with the LiM school wide, our students at the high school level have taken on a project to assist other students in suicide prevention. This has been created by the students and I believe it is because of the tools they have been given by the LiM program over the past several years. This initiative was started by student leadership. I feel our students are prepared socially and emotionally for the world in which they live.

Participant 4 stated, “Promoting a balanced life and making good choices are promoted throughout the LiM.” Participant 6 said,

When working with students in the classroom setting, and the individual setting, students are working on, and many are able to identify how to utilize essential elements of the seven habits to assist them in skills such as emotional regulation, peer interactions, and stress-management.

Participant 7 stated, “This program [the LiM] allows for consistency in expectations, verbiage, and social-emotional development through understanding and mastery of the seven habits.”

Summary

The results of the data analysis based upon responses to interview questions about the LiM program from 10 participants were presented in Chapter 4. Interview questions focused on elementary teachers’ perceptions about school climate, academic

achievement, development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development before and after implementation of the LiM program. Chapter 5 provides an interpretation and recommendations. This final chapter includes a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

This chapter presents an interpretation of results of the study and recommendations for action and future research. Three sections are included within this chapter. The first section includes a study summary. The second section relates study findings to the literature. The final section provides conclusions related to the current study.

Study Summary

This section provides an overview of the problem investigated in the current study. A review of the purpose statement and research questions is provided. The methodology used in the study is explained. Finally, major findings are presented.

Overview of the problem. Since the 1970's, most of the research in elementary schools has focused on early intervention for negative school behaviors and preparation of students to be academically successful. Limited research has focused on leadership development during the elementary school years (Rodd, 2012). While studies have been conducted on the LiM program outcomes, the majority of research has been conducted in suburban and urban school districts. No studies were found that had been conducted in small rural school districts at the time of the current study.

According to the superintendent of USD #123, prior to the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic school year, personnel from USD #123 believed they needed an intervention that would increase adequate yearly progress in order to meet new expectations from the KSDE and KESA (Superintendent USD #123, personal communication, September 4, 2019). Following a systems approach, the accreditation

requirements in KESA focus on environmental, psychological, physiological, social, and economic elements within K-12 education (KSDE, 2020). For Kansas schools to be accredited, they must follow KESA guidelines regarding the five R's: relationships, relevance, responsive climate, rigor, and results. Included within these guidelines are social emotional learning, kindergarten readiness, individual plans of study, high school graduation, and secondary success (KSDE, 2020). According to FranklinCovey Education (2018), the LiM program includes a holistic program approach across grade levels that focuses on developing student behavior, learning, leadership, and social emotional behaviors. Few studies have examined teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, student development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, or social emotional development. The current study examined the perceptions of elementary teachers in one rural Midwestern school district about the impact of the LiM program on those variables.

Purpose statement and research questions. The purpose of this study was to examine rural elementary school teachers' perceptions about the LiM program's effectiveness in a small Midwestern rural school district on school climate, academic achievement, student development of leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development. Five purposes guided the current study. The first purpose was to determine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on school climate. The second purpose was to examine elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on academic achievement. The third purpose was to investigate the perceptions of elementary teachers about the LiM program impact on student leadership knowledge and skills. The fourth purpose was to examine

elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student character development. The final purpose of the current study was to explore elementary teacher perceptions about the LiM program impact on student social emotional development.

Review of the methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research design was used in the current study. Upon receipt of approval to conduct the study by the Institutional Research Board at Baker University and the Superintendent of USD#123, the researcher e-mailed 18 teachers who had worked in the district two years prior to and two years after implementation of the LiM program. Ten teachers agreed to participate in the study. An interview protocol that included descriptive and demographic questions as well as semi-structured interview questions aligned with the research questions was developed for use in the study. The semi-structured interview questions focused on teacher perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, leadership knowledge and skills, academic achievement, character development, and social-emotional development in K-6 buildings. Due to the daily challenges associated with how school districts were operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were restructuring lesson plans and instruction on an almost daily basis. Along with time constraints, in-person interviews were not an option due to proximity regulations resulting from COVID-19 and participants indicated that scheduling a 60-minute Zoom session was not possible either due to lack of knowledge about how to use Zoom or the unpredictable daily teaching schedule. However, all participants were willing to respond to interview protocol questions in writing. Participants emailed responses to questions on the interview protocol to the researcher. Participant responses were completed during the fall of 2020. Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five steps: organize and prepare the data for

analysis, read or look at all the data, code all of the data, generate a description and themes, and represent the description and themes, were applied during data analysis. Reliability and trustworthiness were insured through having external subject matter experts review the interview protocol prior to implementation. In addition, subject matter experts also reviewed the data analysis process and identification of themes from the data.

Major findings. The study participants defined the term ‘school climate’ as the atmosphere within a building which includes friendliness, values, practices, and goals that can be observed by teachers, students, and parents. In describing the school climate before the LiM program implementation, eight of the 10 participants indicated that school climate consisted of students doing what was expected. Study participants indicated that after implementation of the LiM program there was a more intentional focus on school climate by administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. The whole school adoption of the LiM program principles resulted in an intentional focus on Covey’s (1989) seven habits, consistent use of vocabulary that emphasized seven habit practices, increased student and parent involvement, and more visible signs of the mission statement and school goals implementation. Participants described the post-LiM program school climate as a friendly environment where the community and parents were involved in setting goals, learning values, and practicing the LiM program elements.

Varied definitions of ‘academic achievement’ were provided by study participants. The study participants indicated that prior to the LiM program implementation many students were achieving goals but were unaware of who the goals were made for and why they were pursuing identified goals. Students were doing what

they were supposed to do but it was teachers and parents driving goal setting. After the implementation of the LiM program, most participants stated that students were more actively engaged in determining personal goals and making progress toward goals.

All study participants defined 'leadership knowledge and skills' by using terminology that emphasized being responsible for personal behavior and striving to be the best person you can be. Study participants indicated that before implementation of the LiM program, formal evaluation was not used at USD #123 to measure leadership knowledge and skills. Students were taught good citizenship and followed the golden rule. Most skills were taught by the counselor and were taught on an as needed bases. Participants also stated that there was not a lot of opportunity for students to practice or demonstrate leadership. According to study respondents, after implementation of the LiM program, the development of leadership knowledge and skills received a more focused effort by teachers at USD #123. Post LiM program implementation, a tool to evaluate application of the seven habits in school and non-school activities was implemented. Most school activities are led by students and facilitated by teachers. Leadership is regarded as what you need to do to be successful in your daily life. The discussion of leadership is more prevalent among students, teams, families, and within the community. Post the LiM implementation, leadership is viewed as an action, not a position.

Study respondents defined 'character development' as the formation of lifelong values and skills needed for success in society including awareness and the development of the whole-self including, heart, mind, and body. Study participants indicated that prior to implementation of the LiM program, student character development was primarily

provided by the school social worker or counselor. Teachers also informally taught character development when situations occurred in classrooms that provided an opportunity to teach character development. Study respondents indicated that after implementation of the LiM program, teachers in USD #123 began teaching character development as early as pre-school through instruction in specific age appropriate behaviors and actions emphasized in the seven habits. According to study participants, the whole school focus on character development has resulted in consistency in student behavior expectations, the language used to communicate behavior expectations, and seven habit development.

Participants in the current study defined ‘social-emotional development’ as the ability to control and monitor one’s attitudes, feelings, and reactions in social situations, the development of relationships with others, and the development of coping skills to deal with life’s challenges. Study participants indicated that before implementation of the LiM program, social-emotional skills were taught by the school social worker who used books and role playing exercises. There was no formal program at USD #123 to emphasize social-emotional development using a consistent approach by all teachers. Study participants were unified in their perceptions that after implementation of the LiM program, students are able to identify and utilize essential elements of the seven habits to assist them in emotional regulation, peer interactions, and stress-management.

Findings Related to the Literature

Trait theorists, including Jago (1982), Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), Bryman (1992), and Bass (2008), theorized that leaders are born, not made, based on the Great Man Theory of the 19th Century. In contrast, Bennis (1989), van Linden and Fertman

(1998), Kretman (2009), and Bonstingl (2006) theorized that leadership qualities can be learned as early as kindergarten and that students should be provided opportunities to develop leadership skills. According to van Linden and Fertman (1998), everyone has the potential for leadership. These authors stated that providing opportunity to students as young as kindergarten allows for children to explore leadership possibilities that contribute to development of habits that denote leadership. Kretman (2009) stated these habits become a learned leadership behavior rather than characteristics a person is born with. Findings from the current study did not concur with the trait theorists (Bass, 2008; Bryman, 1992; Jago, 1982; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). However, the current study did concur with the theorists who indicated leadership can be learned (Bennis, 1989; Bonstingl, 2006; Kretman, 2009; van Linden & Ferman, 1998). All participants in the current study provided examples that illustrated how leadership qualities are being taught in K-6 elementary school buildings in USD #123 and how students are demonstrating application of leadership knowledge and skills including goal development, being proactive, tracking progress toward goal achievement, and collaboration with others.

According to Cohen et al. (2009), school climate is the term schools use to describe the quality and character of school life. Eccles and Roeser (2011) indicated that school climate impacts almost every element of the student school experience including teacher-student relationships, feelings of classroom belonging, motivation to perform well academically, engagement, learning, and social emotional well-being. Participants in the current study provided examples of how the LiM program impacted school climate. They were consistent in stating that after implementation of the LiM program in USD #123, teachers, staff, and students began to use the same vocabulary to refer to student

expectations for behavior, goals related to academic achievement were developed, and the seven habits were regularly applied. Student performance became more consistent, impacting school climate. According to Cohen et al. (2009), school climate and environment are important through the early years of education (Cohen et al, 2009). Participants in the current study reiterated Cohen's comments through their views that staff who commit to teaching the LiM program principles provide an increased impact in the classroom environment when students participate in learning friendliness, values, practices, and goals. These learnings not only impact school climate but also interactions with the community and parents.

Academic achievement has been defined by many researchers (Academic Achievement, 2020; Aturupane et al., 2013; Regier, 2011) as student success in academics. Regier (2011) stated that academic success is important because it lays the foundation for positive outcomes that are valued in society. Risser (2013) suggested that it is important to develop and continually refine interventions and prevention programs that promote academic success for school-age children. Participants in the current study provided a similar emphasis on academic success when asked to define academic achievement. Respondents described academic achievement as a process provided by teachers and staff that results in the success of students in achieving education goals to their maximum ability.

Zimmerman (2002) stated that self-regulation was not a mental ability or academic performance skill but a self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills. This allows learners to be proactive in their learning by monitoring their behaviors in terms of their goals and self-reflecting on their

increasing effectiveness. Zimmerman (2002) also stated that research shows that self-regulatory processes are teachable and can lead to increases in students' motivation and achievement. Respondents in the current study concurred with Zimmerman. Participants 4, 7, and 8 described how students were applying self-regulatory behaviors after the LiM program implementation through being aware of and charting their own progress related to goals. According to all study participants, the goals for academic and personal performance are more visible, are written down, and every student is held more accountable. Student assessment is based on personal growth and achievement and students, in addition to parents and teachers, are taking an active role in their growth.

Although many programs and organizations focus on young adult and adult leadership skills, Karagianni and Montgomery (2017) stated that children and adolescents can also take part in leadership roles. According to these authors, the amount of time spent in K-12 education provides an opportunity to teach leadership skills. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) suggested a need for renewed student leadership commitment. The authors suggested leadership development in the K-6 setting can involve communication skills, public speaking, creative thinking, problem-solving, leadership skills, peer support, social-emotional development, and self-awareness. Rehm (2014) also suggested that leadership development needs to impact student behaviors, perceptions, and traits that evolve through programs that are related to skills taught in school. Respondents in the current study concurred with these researchers. Participants 1, 3, and 5 described how after implementation of the LiM program, student knowledge and skills related to leadership were evaluated using indicators from the seven habits. All study respondents indicated that post the LiM program implementation, students have greater opportunities

for leadership and play an active role in demonstrating leadership knowledge and skills. Examples of how students demonstrate leadership knowledge and skills post the LiM implementation included displaying goals in visible areas of the school, writing a mission statement, tracking personal progress toward goal achievement, being proactive, having a plan for work completion, stating the importance of work and why it is important, collaboration, and balancing activities in daily living.

Berkowitz (2002) stated that moral anatomy is the psychological part of character development and the development of an entire moral person. The author also indicated that character can begin to develop at birth. Vardin (2003) said, “Founding fathers of America believed that good character was needed by its citizens in order to preserve a democracy” (p. 32). According to Vardin (2003), character education was intended to develop the whole child, but sometimes gets lost in the translation on who decides what to teach. Haynes and Thomas (2007) indicated character education may not entirely rid schools of violence or negative behaviors, but it can create a safe environment where children feel valued and respected. In alignment with Berkowitz (2002), 9 out of 10 study participants in the current study emphasized the importance of the application of the LiM program beginning in pre-school and continuing as students progress through the grades. Upon implementation of the LiM program, character development in students received increased emphasis. Haynes and Thomas (2007) emphasized the whole child development emphasis in character development. Current study participants concurred with Haynes and Thomas. Participant 6 described character development as “the development of the whole-self including, heart, mind, and body.” Participants 4 and 7 stated the LiM program has promoted character development by the intrinsic teaching of

good leadership habits, common language skills, and encouragement. Positive leadership skills and character traits are intrinsically taught in the LiM program.

According to Jones et al. (2017), children who master SEL skills perform better in school overall and are more successful as an adult in both mental and physical health. CASEL (2020) has over two decades of research using targeted interventions to lead to better academic achievement and improved behavioral outcomes in students. CASEL (2003) stated social and emotional skills should be integrated cross-curricular for the best results. CASEL has endorsed the LiM program “as an evidence based social-emotional learning process K-6” (FranklinCovey Education, 2020a, p. 1). In the current study, all participants described benefits associated with the increased emphasis placed on social emotional development in the LiM program. Participants 4 and 6 described responses to student social-emotional development after the implementation of the LiM program. Both participants indicated that after the LiM program implementation, through working with students in the classroom and in individual settings, most students are able to identify how to utilize essential elements of the seven habits to assist them in skills such as emotional regulation, peer interactions, and stress-management. According to study participants, all three of these elements are essential teachings in social-emotional development. Participant 9 stated that since the implementation of the LiM program, student interactions with peers and daily self-awareness has increased in and out of the classroom.

Conclusions

This study examined rural elementary school teachers’ perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership

knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development. Ten respondents answered the interview questions via e-mail for this study. This section includes implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Implications for action. Participants' responses to the interview questions provided detailed information about the perceptions of elementary teachers on the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development in a small rural school. Four actions are recommended based on the results of the current study. First, the results of the current study should be shared with administrators, teachers, and parents in the district in which the study was conducted. A second action is to share results with administrators and teachers from rural districts throughout Kansas. The third action is to recommend to USD #123 the comparison of academic achievement data two years pre-LiM program implementation and two years post LiM implementation. This action would provide qualitative data that could assist in further illustrating the impact of the LiM program on academic achievement within USD #123. The fourth action is to share results of this study with members of the Kansas State Department of Education. This state agency may want to consider promoting the LiM program to districts throughout the state as an option for detailing some of the SEL data that must be submitted annually.

Recommendations for future research. The current qualitative study focused on the perceptions of rural elementary school teachers about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character

development, and social-emotional development. Future research could replicate and extend this study as follows:

1. Only 10 participants were included in the current study. Future studies could include an expanded number of participants.
2. The current study included nine female and one male participant. Future studies could focus on male elementary teachers perceptions about the LiM program.
3. The participants for the current study were elementary teachers who were employed in a small rural district prior to and after implementation of the LiM program. Future research could focus on perceptions of parents and community members about the impact of the LiM program in schools where the program has been implemented.
4. The current study was conducted in a small rural school district in Kansas. Future studies could be conducted in varied sizes of schools and school districts throughout the state of Kansas where the LiM program has been implemented.
5. The LiM program has been implemented in schools and school districts throughout the U.S. and internationally. The majority of research that has been conducted has been quantitative. Future qualitative research studies with teachers, administrators, parents, and community members could be conducted to obtain information about how leadership skills are taught to students.

6. The current study was conducted with elementary school teachers who were teaching prior to and after implementation of the LiM program. No secondary teachers were involved in the study. A recommendation for future research is to conduct a similar qualitative study with secondary teachers to determine their perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development. Additional studies could also investigate similarities and differences resulting from the LiM program implementation in elementary and high school settings.
7. The current study was conducted with elementary teachers from one rural school district in Kansas. Additional studies should be conducted within other rural school districts throughout the nation.
8. The current study focused on teacher perceptions of the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social emotional development. Future studies could investigate the impact of the LiM program on student behavior infractions, conflict resolution, and attendance.

Concluding remarks. A number of scholars, including Bennis (1989), Covey (1989), Di Giulio (2014), and Northouse (2016), have stated that leadership is a process that can be developed over time and can be individualized based on each person's character. Results from the current study added additional documentation about the development of leadership knowledge and skills during elementary school years.

Intentional instruction on leadership development has the potential to positively impact school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development. Students who acquire leadership skill development during their early school years can continue to enhance these behaviors through school and into adulthood and become contributing members of their communities. Study participants pointed out several times that working with only one of the components from the LiM program would not likely have provided the student leadership growth noted after program implementation. Respondents were clear in indicating that it takes implementing the entire LiM program by all teachers and administrators for successful student outcomes to be achieved. Teachers at the elementary level provide emphasis on the elements of the LiM program in their classrooms daily and have the same students all day. One participant indicated that being consistent and using the same terminology to refer to the LiM program components provided teachers with a place to start, a program to follow, and a mission with a purpose to emphasize leadership skills and development with students. Covey et al. (2014) stated,

The more students feel healthy and safe today (physical need), the more they feel accepted and appreciated for who they are today (social-emotional need), the more they feel their minds challenged and progressing today (mental need), and the more they feel their spirits lifted today (spiritual need), the more open they become to thinking about their tomorrows. (p. 31)

It is hoped that more schools in Kansas will adopt a program similar to the LiM, or other leadership program and curriculum to provide leadership skills development as early as kindergarten.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Request to Conduct the Study in USD#123

August 27, 2020

Dear Superintendent XXXXXXX,

I would like to ask for permission to conduct a research study at your school district in my qualitative study for my doctoral dissertation. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Baker University. My dissertation is titled: Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of the Leader in Me on School Climate, Leadership Knowledge and Skills, Academic Achievement, Character Development, and Social Emotional Development in K-6 Buildings. Your school participation will help me in the study of The Leader in Me. Your school district will not be identified and will be anonymous using a #123 to preserve your anonymity. The results will be used in my dissertation to provide research for my doctoral dissertation.

All information provided will be treated strictly as confidential and purely for academic purpose.

Looking forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,

Darnell L Vargo
Baker Doctoral Student
8393 Frog Holler
Manhattan, KS 66503
785-556-0153
darnellvargo@stu.bakeru.edu

Appendix B: USD#123 Approval to Conduct the Study in USD#123



To Whom it May Concern:

USD [REDACTED] gives approval for Darnell Vargo, Doctorate student at Baker University, to conduct her dissertation research in the district.

Brad [REDACTED]

Brad [REDACTED]
Superintendent

Appendix C: Baker University IRB Approval to Conduct the Study



Baker University Institutional Review Board

September 15th, 2020

Dear Darnell Vargo and Tes Mehring,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Sara Crump, PhD
Nick Harris
Christa Manson, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate in a Study

Dear XXXXX,

I would like to invite you to participate in a qualitative study I am conducting for my dissertation. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Baker University. My dissertation is titled: *The Impact of The Leader in Me on Leadership, Leadership Knowledge and Skills, School Climate, Academic, Character, and Social-Emotional Development in K-6 Students*. If you agree, your participation will involve a one-on-one interview that will take place at a mutually agreed upon time via Zoom and should last no longer than 45 minutes. Your interview will be audiotaped and the transcript of your responses to the questions will be coded with an anonymous number to preserve your anonymity. Your identity will not be revealed at any time.

- The interview includes 22 interview questions. Four are demographic questions (background questions about your teaching experience) and eighteen questions are about your perceptions of The Leader and Me. I have attached the questions so that you will have an opportunity to review them.
- Participation in the interview is strictly voluntary. There are no risks associated with participation in this study. There is no compensation or other benefits associated with participation.

If you decide to participate you may withdraw from the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering. Once the interview is completed, I will prepare a transcription of your responses and email the transcript to you for you to review for additions, omissions, and accuracy. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me using my contact information provided below. If you would be willing to participate in an interview, please contact me at the e-mail address provided below. I will then contact you to set up a mutually agreeable time for an interview via Zoom.

Thank you for your consideration in helping me to complete my doctoral dissertation.
Sincerely,

Darnell L Vargo
Baker Doctoral Student
8393 Frog Holler
Manhattan, KS 66503
785-556-0153

darnellvargo@stu.bakeru.edu

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Tes Mehring tmehring@bakeru.edu

Interview Questions

Demographic Questions

- IQ1.** How many years have you been teaching?
- IQ2.** What is your highest level of education?
- IQ3.** How many years have you taught in an elementary school setting?
- IQ4.** How long have you taught in USD#123?

Interview Questions

- IQ5.** Describe what school climate mean to you.
- IQ6.** Describe the school climate prior to the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ7.** Describe the school climate after the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ8.** Describe what academic achievement means to you.
- IQ9.** Describe academic achievement of students prior to the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ10.** Describe academic achievement of students after the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ11.** Describe what leadership knowledge and skills means to you.
- IQ12.** Describe the leadership knowledge and skills of students prior to implementation of the LiM program?
- IQ13.** Describe the leadership knowledge and skills of students after implementation of the LiM program?
- IQ14.** Describe what character development means to you.

- IQ15.** Describe the character development of students prior to the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ16.** Describe the character development of students after the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ17.** Describe what social-emotional development means to you.
- IQ18.** Describe the social-emotional development of students prior to the implementation of the LiM program.
- IQ19.** Describe the social-emotional development of students after implementation of the LiM program.

Appendix E: Consent Agreement

Consent Agreement

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of The Leader In Me program implemented in USD #123 elementary schools on school climate, academic achievement, development of student leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and student social emotional development.

What you will do in this research: You will be asked 4 descriptive and demographic questions and 18 questions that focus on your perceptions about the impact of the LiM program on school climate, academic achievement, leadership knowledge and skills, character development, and social-emotional development.

Time Required: Your written responses will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Risks: No risks are anticipated. At any time, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you may skip the question.

Benefits: You will not receive any compensation or benefits from participating in this research.

Anonymity: Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and non-identifiable by using a code (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) that will be assigned to your written transcript.

Participation or withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time from the study. You may withdraw by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate.

Contact: Darnell L. Vargo (785)556-0153, or darnellvargo@stu.bakeru.edu

Agreement:

I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time. My signature below indicates agreement to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of participant

Appendix F: Study Participant Descriptive and Demographic Information

Table 1

Study Participant Descriptive and Demographic Information

| Participant | Sex | Education | Years Teaching | | |
|-------------|--------|-----------|----------------|------------|---------|
| | | | Total | Elementary | USD#123 |
| 1 | Female | MS | 15 | 9 | 9 |
| 2 | Female | BS | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| 3 | Female | MS | 35 | 25 | 12 |
| 4 | Female | BS | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| 5 | Female | MS | 32 | 32 | 16 |
| 6 | Female | BS | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| 7 | Male | MS | 16 | 9 | 14 |
| 8 | Female | MS | 9 | 9 | 6 |
| 9 | Female | BS | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 10 | Female | MS | 25 | 25 | 25 |

Note. BS = Bachelor of Science; MS = Master of Science.