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The Leader in Me? Understanding Student and Teacher Perspectives of Leader in Me

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The Leader in Me? Understanding Student and Teacher Perspectives of Leader in Me

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Abstract

Within the last 20 years, Leader in Me has become increasingly popular among elementary schools looking to incorporate leadership skills in their curriculum. The purpose of this study was to look at the perceptions that students and teachers have of Leader in Me and their perceptions about its impact on student leadership. The author collected data through student and teacher surveys, student and teacher interviews, observations, and document collection. After analyzing and coding the data using the constant comparative method, the author found four major themes. First, participants believed Leader in Me helped students take more ownership of their learning. Second, participants believed the program led to an increase in student kindness. Third, teachers believed the program worked for most students, but not all. Fourth, teachers believed that it placed more work on them. This study provides beneficial information for schools who may be looking to implement Leader in Me.

The Leader in Me? Understanding Student and Teacher Perspectives of Leader in Me

“...you know a lot of kids when we first started this thought a leader was someone who was, you know, always in charge of everyone else, you know, the one that was very talkative in the class, you know, and they kind of thought of it like someone that would be like a teacher or a boss kind of figure, but we kind of showed them with the habits that it’s not what being a leader is. A leader can be anything.” -Mrs. Roberts, Cooperating teacher (all names have been replaced with pseudonyms).

Leadership programs are needed now more than ever. We now live in an expanding world due to the rise in technology and the global economy. We are becoming more connected with people across the globe in ways we have not been before. For this reason students are now needing to have the skills necessary to adapt and function in that world. Schools are now starting to make the act of teaching leadership development just as important as teaching content, because of the necessity of the skills these programs teach.

Purpose

I conducted this study because I wanted to gain a better understanding of the Leader in Me program and how students perceive the impact it has on their leadership abilities/responsibilities. I also conducted this study to gain a better understanding of the teachers’ perceptions of how it impacts their students. My research focused on the following questions:

What are teachers’ and students’ perceptions of Leader in Me?

What are teachers' and students' perceptions of Leader in Me's impact on student leadership abilities/responsibilities?

During this study, I was a yearlong clinical teacher at Northshore Elementary, while also working towards getting my M.Ed. In Teaching and Learning.

Leader in Me is a leadership and achievement program that emerged from Stephen Covey's (1989) *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The program was designed to help people become more effective through the development of seven habits. The seven habits include the following: "1. Be Proactive, 2. Begin with the End in Mind, 3. Put First Things First, 4. Think Win-Win, 5. Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood, 6. Synergize and 7. Sharpen the Saw", and they began to be implemented in the schools in 1999 when educators were looking for a way to improve student leadership and school culture (7 Habits highly affect students and schools, 2013, p. 4). Covey created this program in such a way that it "...[could] be applied to any individual in any situation..." (Miller, 2014, p. 97). Since it began, Leader in Me has been steadily increasing in popularity. As of 2014, there were 1,500 schools using this program (Miller, 2014, p. 97). One of the reasons in which this program is popular is that it takes the "...shared norms and expectations" of a school culture and unifies it under a common theme (Johnson & Stevens, 2006, p. 11). When implementing this program, the schools "focus primarily on teaching skills of the whole child: problem solving, creativity, teamwork, communication, and cultural sensitivity" (Barkley, Lee, & Eadens, 2014, p. 2). By doing this, the school hopes that leadership skills will develop within the students and student achievement will improve. They also hope that these skills will transfer into the students' adult life. Leader in Me continues to grow to this day, and within the last few years, Harris ISD began to implement this program district wide.

Northshore Elementary school is located on the west side of Harris, Texas. Harris has a population of around 122,000 people. Northshore Elementary school is part of the Harris Independent School District, which is home to 16,871 students from grades Early Childhood to 12th grade. Harris Independent School District has 70.8% of its students who are economically disadvantaged, 43.6% that are identified as at risk, 5.1% who are English Language Learners, and 10.9% who have been identified as having a disability.

Northshore Elementary is a Title 1 school, as well as the other 14 elementary schools in Harris Independent School District. Northshore is home to 530 students in grades K-5, and 33 teachers. Of those 33 teachers, only one teacher is male. The ethnic makeup of the school includes 9.2% African American, 41.5% Hispanic, 44.5% White, 0.2% American Indian, 0.4% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander, and 4.0% that have an ethnic makeup of two or more races. About two percent of the students are English Language Learners, 11.1% are considered to have a disability, 36.8% are at risk, and 73% are economically disadvantaged. Northshore has a mobility rate of 23.8%. The average class size at Northshore ranges from 17.4 students to 22.9 students.

Related Literature

While Leader in Me has been implemented in schools for almost 20 years, there is little literature available on the perceptions of the program. However, there is literature on the perceptions of general leadership programs. From the literature available, the main perceptions of leadership programs, like Leader in Me, include the following: they teach students how to become contributing members of society, they help build a sense of community on campus, and teach students how to take ownership of their learning.

A common perception of leadership programs, like Leader in Me, is that they teach students how to function in an ever-changing society and workforce in the face of rising technology and globalization (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012). Modern day leadership in the workplace now "...emphasizes relationships, networks, trust, ethics, and participation" (Rosh & Caza, 2012, p. 29). For this reason, skills such as collaboration, creativity, problem solving, and the ability to analyze information are now needed to meet the demands of society, which has led to more schools implementing character development programs (Thomson 2012). Thomson (2012) found that students who participated in a leadership program reported that the program allowed them to collaborate with others and learn how to speak publicly. Hines (2014) reported similar findings and added that students involved in leadership programs "... became more autonomous in their thinking, decision making, and actions as leaders" (p. 100). The students are given the tools necessary to develop those skills, as well as the opportunity and mentoring to use them.

Another perception of leadership programs is that they create a more positive school culture. One reason for this perception is thought to be the idea of leadership programs using a common language to unify the school, which Leader in Me does in the 7 Habits ("7 Habits highly affect students and schools"). This language is filtered into every aspect of the school culture, and it is accessible and inclusive for everyone. It carries more weight, because students are able to reconcile what they are doing in the classroom with what they are doing in the school community (Bowman 2014). When a school culture is unified in this way, relationships between classmates can form and trust can be built. It has even been reported that teachers have perceived this program to positively impact the relationships between faculty and staff. Pedersen et al., (2012) has reported that the leadership programs are more successful when the faculty trusts one

another and focuses on collaboration. See and Arthur (2011) also found that faculty believe it is important for them to model the skills that they want the students to acquire when implementing a leadership program. When the school climate is unified and everyone is working towards a common goal, it can positively impact student achievement and behavior.

There has also been anecdotal evidence suggesting that leadership programs, such as Leader in Me, have led to improvements in academic performance, as well as a decrease in discipline referrals. One such piece of anecdotal evidence is based upon the experiences of the principal at Mirada Elementary in Arizona in which she had seen "...improved academic ownership...and a decrease in negative student behaviors" (Whittle 2017). Barkley et al. (2014) have also reported similar findings in that they "...found that learning environment and student relationships correlated highly in reducing discipline referrals in Leader in Me schools" (p. 8). In order to validate these claims, further research would be needed.

The literature published on Leader in Me is not an adequate amount. This is a significant problem, because educators are not able to fully understand this program or determine if it would be a good fit for their school or district. One drawback may be that implementing this program can cost anywhere from "\$45,000 [to] \$60,000 over the first three years" (as quoted in Miller, 2014, p. 4). Since there is not a lot of research available, this study will positively contribute to the literature in several ways. One way it will contribute is that it will provide concrete data on the impact of this program and authentic perceptions of the workings of Leader in Me. That way, if other schools or districts want to implement this program, they will have a better understanding of what this program can do and if it would be worth pursuing. Another way this study will contribute to the literature is that it can provide more anecdotal evidence on a possible

link between leadership program implementation and improved behavior and academic performance.

What I Did

The following sections of this paper describes the action research study that I conducted in my second grade classroom placement. I focused on student and teacher perceptions of Leader in Me, as well as their perceptions of Leader in Me's impact on students' leadership abilities. Since this research was conducted in my yearlong clinical placement, the students were comfortable with me and the research I was conducting.

Participant Selection

The participants of my study included my students, my cooperating teacher, and another second grade teacher. The classroom consisted of 19 students. Of those 19 students, seven were boys and 12 were girls. The ethnic makeup of the students included the following: two African American students, five Hispanic students, 11 Caucasian students, and one student that was of mixed ethnicity. One student in the classroom was receiving Leveled Literacy Intervention, and one student received speech services. Leveled Literacy Intervention is an intervention that was designed by Fountas and Pinnell that "...provides daily, intensive, small-group instruction, which supplements classroom literacy teaching" (Fountas & Pinnell, "Leveled Literacy Intervention"). There were also four students in the classroom who had been identified as Gifted and Talented. Of those four students, three were boys and one was a girl. One student in the classroom saw the campus's behavioral specialist once a week.

Every student who received consent and assented to the study participated in the survey, observation, and data collection. Six students who received consent and assented to the study were interviewed. Interview selection was based upon my observations and survey data. I chose

two students who demonstrated strong leadership, two students who had demonstrated some leadership, and two students who did not demonstrate leadership. Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Jones, my cooperating teacher and another second grade teacher respectively, were also participants. They both were interviewed about their perceptions of Leader in Me. An informational letter about the survey and a consent form for the parents to sign was sent home with every student in the classroom. An assent form was completed at school for every student who received parental consent to participate in the study. The teachers also received an informational letter and a consent form. Copies of all forms were given to the participants to keep for their records.

Data Collection

For my data collection, I collected surveys, interviews, observations with head notes, and documents (Hubbard & Power 2003). For the survey, the participating students and both teachers were given a survey at the beginning of the research period. Both surveys had a mixture of Likert Scale questions and open ended responses. The teacher survey had 10 questions in total. Five of the questions were Likert Scale questions, and the other five questions were open ended responses. The student survey had seven questions in total. Four of the questions were Likert Scale questions, and the other three questions were open ended responses. For the students, the surveys gave me a better understanding of who I was going to interview and possible answers that I needed to follow up on during the interview. For the teachers, the surveys allowed me to gain a baseline understanding of their perspective, as well as possible answers that I needed to follow up on during the interview.

For the interviews, I conducted both student and teacher interviews. I conducted one interview with Mrs. Roberts and one with Mrs. Jones that lasted around 30 minutes. During the interviews, I gained a better understanding of their perspective of Leader in Me and how they

believed it had impacted their students. For the student interviews, I interviewed six students. Each interview lasted around 10 minutes. In the interviews, I asked students about their leadership and their perspectives of Leader in Me.

For the observations, I had three weeks in which I was doing observations. Over the course of those three weeks, I kept a journal with me, and I quickly jotted down any instances where I saw someone using a specific habit, exhibiting strong leadership, or not exhibiting strong leadership. At the end of the day, I fleshed out these notes.

I also collected artifacts from all consenting and assenting students. The artifacts were taken from their Leader in Me notebook. I collected the following artifacts from the notebook: the victory sheet where they recorded successes they had in the classroom, the classroom job sheet in which they discussed their classroom job, and the goals sheet where they set personal and academic goals and created a plan for achieving those goals. I chose to collect these sheets because it gave me a better understanding of what the students were valuing, how they perceived the responsibility of having a job in the classroom, and if they were working towards their set goals or not. Once I collected these artifacts, I made a copy of each sheet. That way, I was able to return them to the students quickly.

Data Analysis

For my data analysis, I used the constant comparative method with initial coding through color coding (Hubbard & Power, 2003). I coded transcribed interview data, observation data, survey data, and data from the artifacts I collected. I looked for major themes, or codes, within the data, as well as supporting codes. To begin my analysis, I analyzed around twenty percent of the data, which generated around fifteen to twenty level I codes, or major themes, and I used those level I codes to code the remaining eighty percent of the data for level II codes, or sub

codes (Tracy, 2013). From the level II codes that I generated, I chose 3-5 in which I wrote memos reflection on each code which helped me to understand the relationships between my level I and level II codes (Tracy, 2013). I also created a code book in which I listed my level I and level II codes, the definitions of the codes, and examples of the codes (Tracy, 2013).

What I Found

After analyzing my data, I found four major themes that explained the perceptions that teachers and students had about Leader in Me, as well as how students and teachers perceived Leader in Me to impact students' leadership abilities/responsibilities. The major themes I will describe are the following: students take more ownership, increased student kindness, works for some but not all, and puts more work on the teachers. Interview, observation, survey, and artifact examples will be included to demonstrate the themes that emerged throughout this research project (teacher and student Likert scale responses will be included in Appendix A and B respectfully).

Students Take More Ownership

As I was analyzing my data, I found that this theme was the most reoccurring. Both the teachers and students perceived Leader in Me to do a great job of getting students to take more ownership of their learning. More specifically, the teachers perceived this to be occurring through different student responsibilities and various motivational strategies that Leader in Me provided for the students. Some of the student responsibilities in Leader in Me came in the form of a "job" or task that they were in charge of completing each day or week depending on the nature of the job. Everyone in the classroom was expected to have a job, and those who were following the rules and being an outstanding leader in the classroom had the opportunity to participate in schoolwide jobs if they wanted to. Classroom jobs changed once every six weeks,

or at the discretion of the teacher. When surveyed with the statement “I like my classroom job,” 64% of students surveyed chose strongly agree and 29% of students surveyed chose agree, so 93% of the students surveyed enjoyed their classroom job (see Figure 1).

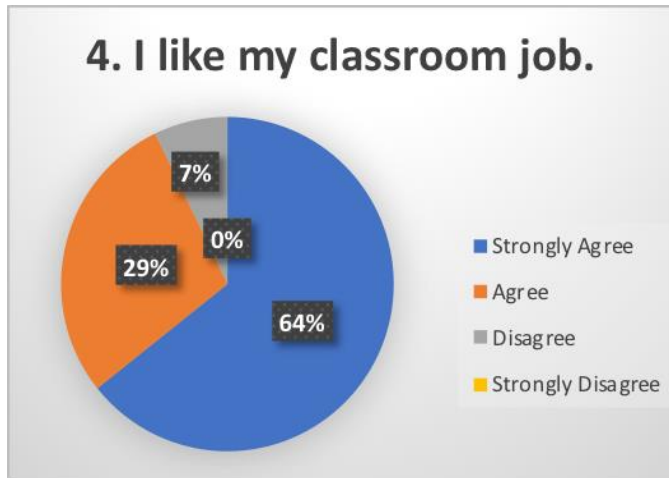


Figure 1. Student responses about classroom jobs.

When interviewed, participants were asked about their classroom jobs, many of them expressed that they enjoyed having a classroom job because it allowed them to help out in the classroom. When asked about her classroom job as the library helper, London explained that she enjoyed taking the library books back to the library and placing them on the library cart so that they could be checked back in. When asked to elaborate on why she liked her job, London stated, “Because I want to have a job that I can do, and show you and Mrs. Roberts that I can do it.” Other students gave similar explanations for why they enjoyed their classroom job. When asked why he liked his classroom job of paper passer, Michael explained that “I like passing things out,” and Bob explained that he enjoyed being the line leader because “it’s helpful for [the class].” From these responses, it seemed that the students perceived Leader in Me to help them learn how to be responsible and do their part in the classroom. They were the only ones in charge of their job, so it was up to them to complete it, not the teacher or anyone else in the classroom, unless it was a two person job.

This same perception is true when looking at schoolwide jobs. There were various jobs around the school in which students could participate in, and students were even able to have specific jobs within their specials. The students who participated in schoolwide jobs viewed those jobs as important ways in which they could help out the school. Both London and Michael were involved in the student Light House team, and when asked about the student Light House team, London explained that she enjoyed getting to make rules for the school, as well as helping improve the school. Bob also expressed a similar belief when he explained that he enjoyed being on the school's Clean Up Crew, because they recycled products and helped improve the world.

Another way in which Leader in Me helped students to take ownership of their learning was by teaching them how to set and achieve goals. For Leader in Me, students kept track of their progress throughout the program in a notebook called the Leadership Notebook. Inside each Leadership notebook was a sheet that explained the 7 habits, a sheet in which students tracked their attendance and how many AR points they had, information about their classroom job, and a sheet in which they wrote goals and the steps they needed to take in order to accomplish that goal. They had one for a personal and academic goal. When looking through their Leadership Notebook, I noticed that the most popular goal among the participants was reaching their Accelerated Reader, or AR goal each six weeks. When looking at their goal setting sheet in their leadership notebooks, 12 of the participants had an AR related goal (see Figure 2).

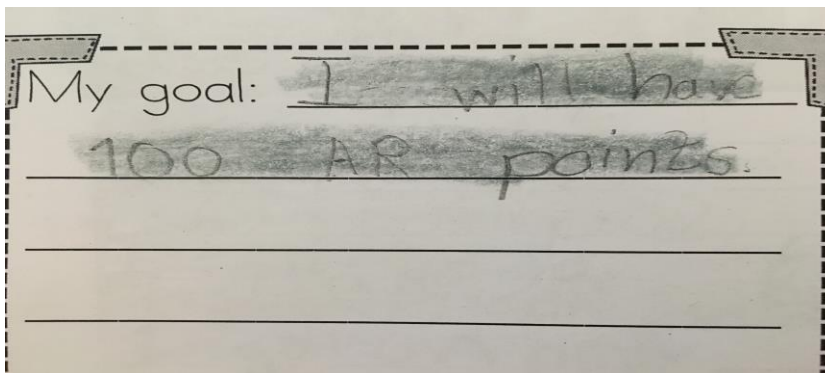


Figure 2. Example of a student's AR goal.

This was not surprising to me, as I observed the students reading and taking AR tests several times over the course of the school day. Other than the classroom/school wide jobs, the teachers believed that setting an AR goal was one of the biggest ways in which students were taking more ownership, because they were in charge of keeping up with their AR goal, tracking their points, and taking tests. In the classroom in which this project was conducted, the students had their AR goal posted on their locker, and they were to shade in their goal as they got points. This served as a visual reminder to the students of their goal and that they needed to continue to work on it and fully shade their goal in before the six weeks ends. They got a new AR goal every six weeks. The students were not constantly reminded to work on their AR goal, because that was part of them taking ownership for their learning and accomplishing the goal that they set. When asked about AR and goal setting, Mrs. Roberts explained that it motivated the students to continue to work hard. She went on to say that "...when the kids achieve a goal, it just makes them feel proud about themselves, makes them feel more successful and then they want to be here at school." Mrs. Jones also had a similar perception when in her interview she explained that "It gives kids that are not successful in academics, it gives them some success." It gave all students something to work towards, even those that struggled, because all students wanted to have success in the classroom.

When analyzing this theme, I found that the general consensus among participants was that Leader in Me helped students learn to take more ownership of their learning and actions, develop more responsibility in the classroom, and it taught them how to set and accomplish goals. This related to my research question, because it showed that the participants perceived Leader in Me to impact students' leadership abilities by fostering student independence and

teaching them to take charge of their life and their actions. These skills are important to have in the future, and Leader in Me laid the foundation for these skills to thrive in the future. This could impact schools looking to implement Leader in Me by seeing how this program was fostering independence in students and fostering responsibility, so that they could implement similar activities for students or change the activities to fit their school's needs. It could also impact the Leader in Me company, because they could see how participants viewed the student responsibility aspect of the program, and use their thoughts to improve the program for future students.

Increased Student Kindness

Increased Student Kindness was another prominent theme in my data. Across the board, both the teachers and the students had the perception that Leader in Me had increased student kindness and the instances of students helping one another. In her interview, Mrs. Roberts expressed that she had seen the teachings of Leader in Me help students become kinder to one another. She went on to say, "...part of our Northshore mission statement is be a leader even when no one is watching, you know, so we're looking for, that kids are helping others, you know, if they're having trouble with something or if they are sad, being a friend to them." While I am not sure how the classroom environment or peer to peer interactions were before Leader in Me, I observed several instances over the course of the three weeks in which students displayed kindness or helped someone else. Some of the actions I observed included sharing supplies without asking, helping out a friend if they were hurt or needed help, and including others in recess games. Some students even gave examples of how they helped out their families at home. For my observations, sharing supplies without being asked was the most common act of kindness

that I observed in the classroom. Below I include an expert from my observation journal that will serve as an example of the act of kindness that I observed most often:

February 12th 2018 10:35

During this same grammar lesson, I saw Michael looking around the room to see if anyone was finished with a pair of scissors, so that he could begin to cut and sort his abbreviations. Jeff, who sits next to Michael said “You can use mine” and gave his scissors to Michael. Jeff then told me “I’m going to wait until he’s done” and then he continued waiting patiently for Michael to finish before he finished cutting out his paper.

When interviewing students about what being a leader meant and how they were a leader in the classroom, several of the students brought up instances of them helping someone and displaying kindness to everyone. This was the leadership quality that students referenced the most. When I asked Emily about how she was a leader in the classroom, she gave an example of including someone on the playground. She said “...somebody was playing, I mean, somebody was playing by herself on the playground and people were teasing her, so I went to help her out.” She went on to explain that she did this because she thought how it would have felt if people were teasing her, and she would have wanted someone to come play with her if she was the one that was being teased. Jessica also gave an example of helping someone when asked how she is a leader in school. She explained that she helped Emily pick up her book box when it fell off the table. A big thing in Leader in Me was being kind and helping others, which ties in with the 7 Habits. The 7 Habits are used as reminders for students to exhibit these qualities, not only in the classroom, but everywhere they go. This was significant to my research questions because kindness was one of the qualities that Leader in Me was hoping to instill in students, and my participants believed Leader in Me made a significant impact in this aspect. Again, this shed light into how teachers and students perceived this program’s impact on student leadership abilities, which was one of my research questions. It demonstrated the take-aways students were getting from Leader in Me.

Leader in Me is all about teaching skills that students will need in the future. The students and teachers agreed that this program did a good job of demonstrating to students that kindness and helpfulness could be implemented anywhere.

Works for Most Students But Not All

Another perception that the teachers had of Leader in Me was that it works for some of the students but not all. This was a finding that I was expecting, because with any program, it is highly unlikely it will achieve its intended purpose with every single student. However, through analyzing my data further, I gained a more in-depth understanding and potential reasons for this phenomenon. When asked about the impact this program has had on students, both teachers explained that it had worked well with the students who were already successful in school, but maybe not as much with the students who were not as successful or may be dealing with difficulties outside of school. When asked about the visible impacts of this program, Mrs. Roberts explained “The ones that I don’t always, doesn’t always help, I feel like, are the ones that are already really low, or don’t have the good home life and they’ve got so many other issues that they’re dealing with at home, sometimes it’s a little harder for them or you know I may not, you know, it may eventually sink in, but it may not sink in right away this year.” Mrs. Jones echoed a similar sentiment when she explained that “...if it doesn’t really pierce their heart, then they just don’t care, and they’ll say they don’t care..” If a student is experiencing difficulties at home, it makes coming to school and dealing with the responsibilities there more difficult. It can also make students exhibit difficult behavior in the classroom. I observed one such instance in the classroom in which one of the participants had a difficult night at home, which impacted his behavior at school the next day. Here is my journal entry in which the incident is explained:

February 13th 2018 10:47

For our grammar lesson, we had a cut and sort flipbook with abbreviations. We did this activity together as a class. We looked at each abbreviation and determined if it was a correct abbreviation or an incorrect abbreviation. After we labeled each individual abbreviation, the students were then supposed to cut out the abbreviations and glue them under the appropriate column, so either correct or incorrect. Again, we had several students who could not find their scissors, they had to share like they did the previous day. We had just started the page when Jake began looking for scissors. He usually uses the teacher scissors, and he began searching Mrs. Roberts desk for them. Both pairs of scissors were being used at the moment. After searching the desk, Jake began looking around the room for one of Mrs. Robert's scissors. Jessica was using a pair of Mrs. Robert's s scissors. When Jake saw this, he went up to Jessica, snatched the scissors out of her hands and said "Gimme those scissors!" Jessica said "Hey!" and looked at me. I told Jake "You need to give those scissors back to Jessica and wait until she is done, or she if you can borrow someone else's scissors." Jake ignored me and continued to cut and glue his abbreviations. Jeff, who sits across from Jessica, then said to Jessica "you can borrow my scissors." Jessica took the scissors, told Jeff "thanks", and continued working on her abbreviation flipbook. After Jake finished the abbreviations page, he placed the scissors on Jessica's desk.

Even though there were some students in which Leader in Me did not impact in a significant way, at least at that moment, both teachers explained that they had seen improvements in student academics and behavior over all since they started Leader in Me. They did not give specific examples, just broad perceptions based on their observations, so it did not prove one way or the other of the significance of the impact Leader in Me had on students' behavior and academics.

This theme answered my research questions because it sheds light onto teacher's perceptions of Leader in Me and how they believed it to be impacting their students. This is significant, because with all leadership programs, it is not going to work with every student, and the teachers gave possible reasons for why they did not perceive every student to be impacted by this program. Students are dealing with difficult issues at home, or they may just not care about Leader in Me. Attitude is everything, and if the students do not have the attitude to follow Leader in Me, it may not have an impact on their life. Discussing the possible reasons for why this

program may not impact everyone can help schools implementing this program look possible ways in which Leader in Me can be improved.

Puts More Work on the Teachers

A significant perception that the teachers had of Leader in Me was that it put more work and stress on teachers that already had a jam packed school day. The teachers in my study explained that while they liked Leader in Me, they perceived it to be set up in a way in which there were exceedingly high expectations on teachers, especially at the beginning of the implementation. Mrs. Roberts referenced this in her interview by stating "...the first couple of years I feel like it was hard for some of us because we were trying to do everything and we needed to realize hey, this really needs to be on the students." In the beginning, the teachers were in charge of setting student goals and keeping track of them, keeping track of the students' attendance, their behavior, etc. The teachers also explained that in the beginning, it was heavily teacher centered, as it took a lot of time and effort to get started, but as the school got its footing in the program, the focus slowly started moving away from the teachers and more on the students. However, there still was a significant amount of responsibility that they took on. Mrs. Jones explained some of those responsibilities in her interview: "It's more me keeping up with it and constantly saying, change your goal, fix your goal, check your calendar.." While it was supposed to be more student centered, the teachers were still having to make sure the students were actually implementing and applying the program. They also had to make sure the students were updating their leadership notebook, connecting the 7 habits to the curriculum, and many other responsibilities. There were even more responsibilities that could have been added on if you were on a leadership committee like the Lighthouse Team, whose sole responsibility was to prepare the school for Light House status, which was the highest achievement for a Leader in Me

school. This means that they were fully implementing the program. Preparing for Lighthouse status was a big factor in the amount of work Leader in Me entailed according to both Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones was on the Lighthouse Team, so she had seen first-hand how much work went into preparing for Lighthouse Status. She expressed that it took a lot of dedication, and the process of becoming a lighthouse school often ended up more like a “dog and pony show” as she called it. You had to display certain things to become a Lighthouse School, which to her seemed unnecessary and stressful. “I mean, if we could get rid of something else (laughs) and add Leader in Me, maybe that would be less stressful, but, umm, yeah, I think the dog and pony show of it seems, but I’m not a dog and pony kind of person (laughs).” With all of those different responsibilities, the teachers often found that they could not get everything in, and that sometimes the Leader in Me activities had to take a back seat, which Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Roberts explained was often the case. Mrs. Jones explained that some days she said “...you know what, it’s not gonna happen today.” Mrs. Roberts echoed a similar sentiment when she said “That’s kinda the hard part, just, the time factor. Making sure you have enough time to do everything.” With everything a teachers were expected to do during a school day, adding in something extra that required a significant amount of time and work, like Leader in Me, could be challenging. This was a significant finding, because even though there were only two teacher participants, it showed what teachers were thinking about this program. There was a lot of work that went into being a Leader in Me school, which was very overwhelming for them at the start. This could be extremely helpful for schools looking to implement Leader in Me in the future, so that they know what to expect and can maybe lessen the burden and stress that it could cause teachers. This could also help the Leader in Me company improve their program, so that teachers could maybe implement this program in a stronger, more effective way.

Implications for Teachers

Conversations about leadership education and providing students with the necessary tools to be productive members of society are becoming more common, which is why a leadership program like Leader in Me is becoming more popular in schools. Due to increased popularity of this program, more schools may begin its implementation, and it is important for educators to understand exactly how this program works in the real world, and if this program, or certain elements, would work in their own school.

For myself, and possibly other teachers who have not had much experience with Leader in Me, this study demonstrated to me how a leadership program can motivate and empower students to be successful in the classroom both academically and behaviorally, as well as prepare them for the future. According to all of the students sampled, they believed that this program helped them learn how to become better leaders by using the tools given to them by Leader in Me. As I have seen and as the teachers and students perceived, Leader in Me had helped students become more goal oriented, responsible, and respectful to those around them. These are skills that will be vital for students to have when they enter the workforce in the future, and it is important for educators who are seeking to instill these qualities in their students to see that this program offers students the opportunity to learn these skills. This project also taught me how to implement this program, if I teach in a Leader in Me school, or how to implement something similar in my own classroom if an existing leadership program is not in place. I would not be doing my job if I did not prepare my students for the future, which includes giving them tools to be contributing members of society. In the future, if I do not teach at a Leader in Me school, I want to provide my own students with responsibilities in the classroom and implement procedures that encourage and foster respect and collaboration among all of my students. I want

them to learn how to take ownership for their own learning and the actions that they take. The information that I learned from this project will help me accomplish this goal, by taking the elements from this program that the students believed impacted them and incorporating them into my classroom environment. This information will also help me if I teach in a Leader in Me school because I now have a better idea of how students perceived this program, and I can tailor it to better fit their needs. I also have a better understanding of the teacher side of Leader in Me and could have a better idea of what I will be expected to do as I implement this program in the classroom.

While working on this study, I was left with a few questions. What happens when a school reaches Lighthouse Status? Does the school hit a Leader in Me plateau, or do they continue to look for ways in which they can improve the program? Also, why do some students know how and why it is important to be a leader in school, yet they exhibit undesirable behaviors? Two of the participants expressed that they believed that they were great leaders and listed ways in which they exhibited leadership qualities, yet they exhibited undesirable behavior in the classroom on a consistent basis.

All teachers want their students to succeed in the classroom both academically and behaviorally. My recommendation for teachers would be to consider implementing a leadership program. Talk with other teachers at different schools that are implementing leadership programs, research various programs online, or talk with your administration about the possibility of establishing Leader in Me or another leadership program. Leader in Me is an expensive program, and if the school budget is tight, it may not be a viable option. However, getting a grant like Northshore did could be one solution, or even implementing another leadership program that may be more cost effective. Think about your school's goals for the

students and the tools you want them to have when they leave your school and decide if establishing Leader in Me, or another leadership program, would work for your school.

Final Thoughts and Limitations

Overall, perceptions of Leader in Me from both the teachers and the students were positive, and both groups communicated that they believed it had a positive impact on students' abilities to be successful leaders in the classroom. This was shown by having the students take more ownership of their learning experiences and overall increased student kindness visible throughout the classroom. However, the teachers also perceived this program to have some drawbacks, such as the extra stress and work that it placed on teachers, as well as the lack of impact on some students.

While this research shed some light on the perceptions of Leader in Me, this is only a small sample consisting of one classroom and another teacher. The results could have been drastically different if more participants were solicited. This project was also conducted during a short window, so potential change over time could not be observed. I understand that Leader in Me may not be a viable option for every school, but a similar leadership program might be. Or if establishing a leadership program is not an option at all, including different leadership skills like responsibility, goal setting, and respect can be interwoven with the curriculum. There are several ways in which leadership skills can be implemented. By looking at Leader in Me and perceptions of this program, this research is opening up the door for others to gain a better understanding of how teachers and students view leadership programs and students' abilities to demonstrate leadership in the classroom and beyond. It is my hope that more research will arise from this research or that changes to existing leadership programs can be made for the betterment of students' and their future success.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey Likert Scale Data:

Question 1: I think Leader in Me is a beneficial program

Strongly Agree: 1
Agree: 1
Disagree: 0
Strongly Disagree: 0

Question 2: I think Leader in Me has positively Impacted the leadership abilities of my students.

Strongly Agree: 1
Agree: 1
Disagree: 0
Strongly Disagree: 0

Question 3: I think that Leader in Me has positively impacted the school climate.

Strongly Agree: 0
Agree: 1
Disagree: 1
Strongly Disagree: 0

Question 4: A majority of my students display the 7 habits on a daily basis.

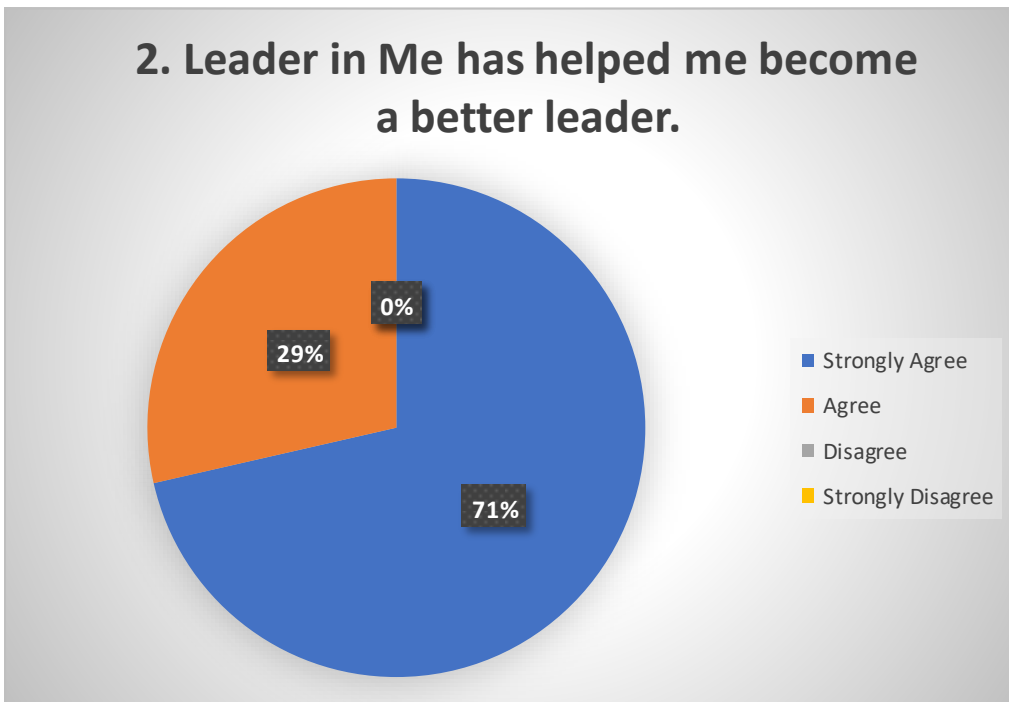
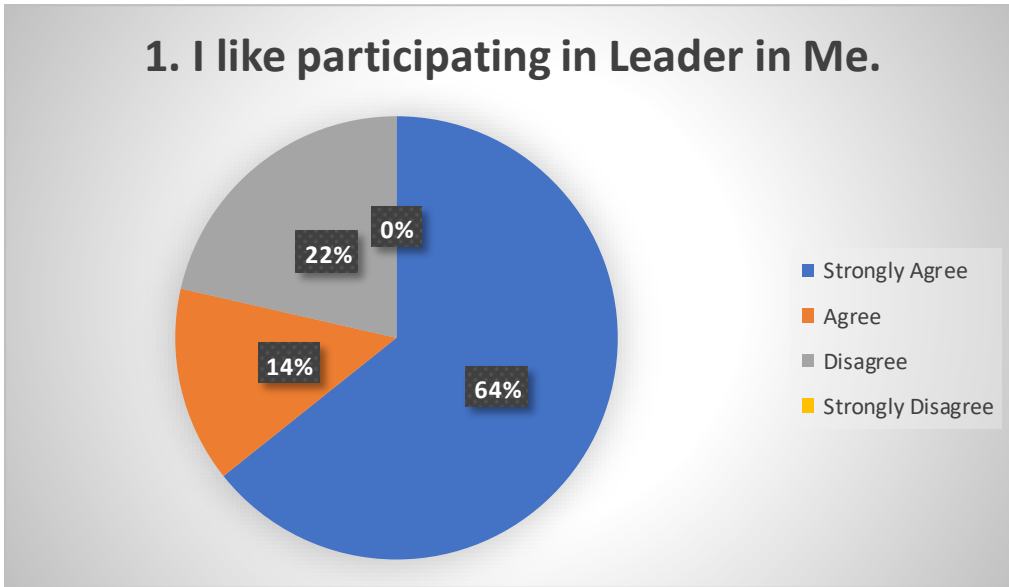
Strongly Agree: 0
Agree: 1
Disagree: 1
Strongly Disagree: 0

Question 5: I think that all schools should implement Leader in Me.

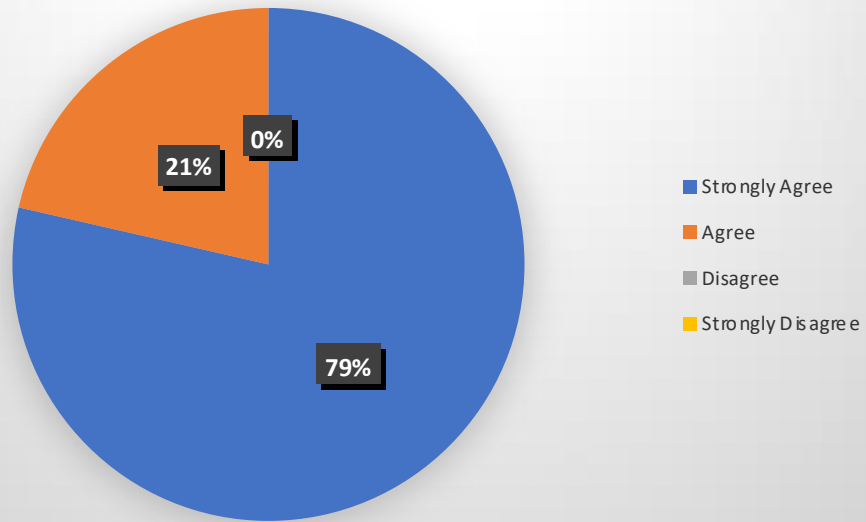
Strongly Agree: 1
Agree: 0
Disagree: 1
Strongly Disagree: 0

Appendix B

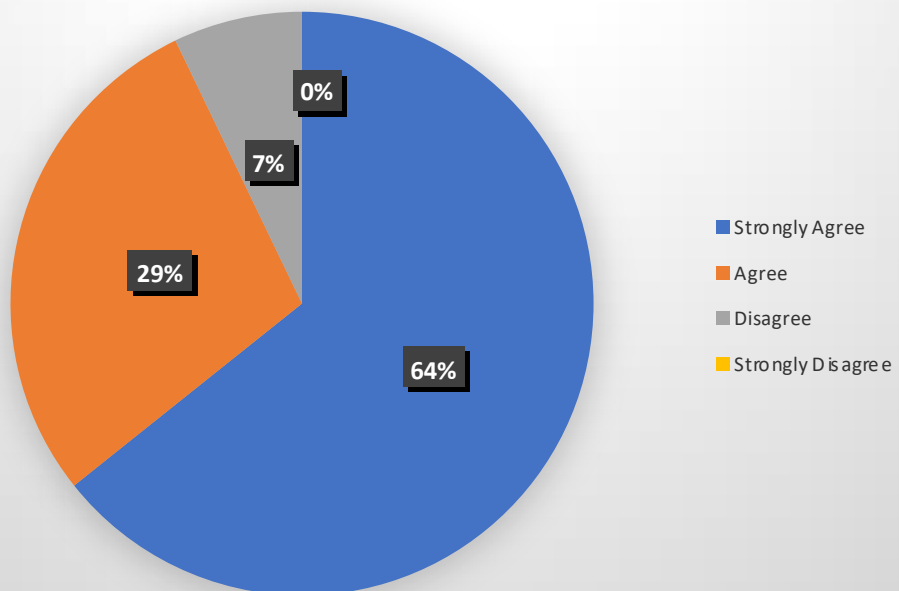
Student Survey Likert Scale Data



3. I am a leader in the classroom.



4. I like my classroom job.



Appendix C

Codebook			
Code Name	Level	Definition	Example
Works for most students but not all	II	Anything that mentions the difference in impact on student's academics, behavior, future behavior, and the possible circumstances for those differences.	"Umm, but with behavior, when those kind of kids are dealing with so many issues, I don't really know how effective leader in me is..."
Positive view of Program	I	Any instance where it is mentioned that participants like any aspect of the program.	"Because it talks about being a leader and I just like it."
Impact on Behavior	I	Any instance where Leader in Me's impact, or lack thereof, is discussed or shown.	"Umm, but with behavior, when those kind of kids are dealing with so many issues, I don't really know how effective Leader in Me is..."
Difficult home life	I	Any instance where difficult home lives are discussed.	"The ones that I don't always, doesn't always help, I feel like, are those that are already really low, or don't have the good home life..."
"Old Habit"	I	Students are not as enthusiastic about Leader in Me as they once were.	"...now it almost seems like an old habit."
Impact on Academics	I	Any instance where Leader in Me's impact on grades, subject areas, or methods of teaching are discussed.	"I have seen some positive impact, especially with students that don't succeed academically."
Motivating Students	I	Any instance where different methods of student motivation or students inspiring others is discussed.	"I like inspiring others to do the right thing."
Impact on students in the future	I	Any instance where Leader in Me's use in the future is	"...but our goal is that they will use it for the rest of their lives."

		discussed.	
Puts more work on the teacher	II	Anything that mentions the teachers having more responsibilities placed on them by Leader in Me.	“The negative part, I feel, is it’s another thing for a teacher to do.”
Implementing the Program	I	Any instance that discuss the beginnings of this program on the campus or current practice of the program in the classroom.	“... We had, umm, a time set aside and we really worked hard to make sure that the kids understood it, because it was new and it was fresh.”
Lack of Time	I	Any instance where not having even time to fit everything in, or forgetting to implement certain aspects of the program is discussed.	“...I say, you know what, its not gonna happen today.”
Lighthouse Preparation	I	Any instance where the Lighthouse Team, Lighthouse Status, or the process to become a Lighthouse School is discussed.	“...Lighthouse Status is kind of the Ta-Da of the Leader in Me.”
Impact on Teachers	I	Any instance where the personal or professional impact this program has had on teachers is discussed.	“So not only does it help the kids, it helps me reflect on things that I need to do on a daily basis also.”
Students Take More Ownership	II	Anything that discusses students taking more ownership of their learning, responsibilities in the classroom or school, keeping track of their leadership notebook and AR, setting goals, and any instances in which	“I feel like the students are taking more ownership of who they are...”

		parental or community involvement is discussed.	
Classroom Responsibilities	I	Any instance where classroom jobs or responsibilities are discussed.	“Uhh, I pass out our privacy folder, I hand out journals, and I hand out papers.”
Schoolwide Responsibilities		Any instance where schoolwide responsibilities are discussed.	“...there’s about 5 or 6 different school wide teams...”
Being Responsible	I	Any instance where students are following directions at school or at home.	“...you do the first thing when someone tells you to.”
Being a Leader	I	Any instance in which the meaning of being a leader is discussed.	“A leader can be anything.”
Parental Involvement/ Community Involvement	I	Any instances where parental and community involvement is discussed.	“...when the parents come and they get to look at the notebook, you know, it’s kinda sometimes an eye opener for parents...”
Leadership Notebooks	I	Any instance in which the leadership notebook or the pages inside the leadership notebook other than AR are discussed.	“We have our attendance goal, our math goal, our reading goal, we have our victories, it tells us, like, how many points we have, it tells us our attendance goals.”
AR	I	Any instance where AR, AR points, AR incentives, or AR goals are mentioned.	“It also has helped some of my kids when we make out goals for AR and they’re keeping track... so they’ll work hard.”
Goals and Accomplishments	I	Any instance where goals and accomplishments other than AR are mentioned.	“I sleep in my own bed.”
Increased Student Kindness	II	Any instance where student kindness, respect, and helpfulness is being	“...Leader in Me is a way to show that you can be respectful, nice, and kind.”

		discussed, described, or shown.	
Helping Others	I	Any instances where helping others at school or at home is being discussed, described, or shown.	"...not just because I want to, because, umm, it's the right thing to do."
7 Habits	I	Any instance where the 7 Habits are being stated or discussed.	"...the 7 habits...they're there for you so you just don't, uhh, break the rules..."