

## Perceptions of the Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> Process in Regard to Student Discipline

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### Abstract

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This study was designed to determine perceptions of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process in decreasing student discipline effectively at the elementary level. Nine Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools were used for this study that met the following criteria: a) Leader in Me status in the southeastern state of the United States; b) K-5 Public School; c) Title I status; d) met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 2011-12 School Year; and e) minimum two years of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process. An on-line teacher survey was administered to kindergarten through fifth grade teachers in the nine Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools. The survey measured teacher perceptions of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> principles being used in the nine The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools with regard to student discipline. The independent variables of the study were key elements (strategies) of implementing The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process. The dependent variable was the perception of the effectiveness of strategies in reducing student discipline. Results from a Pearson product-moment correlation  $r$  on SPSS indicated there was a significant correlation between the teachers' perception of the level of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process implementation and perceived reduced student discipline. The analysis of the results indicate that the Level of Implementation scores and the Student Discipline scores had a significant positive correlation,  $r(120) = .61, p < .001$ .

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**Keywords:** Leader in Me, teacher perceptions, student discipline, Stephen Covey

### 1. Purpose

This research investigated the relationship between elementary teachers' perceptions of the level of implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process and their perceptions of student discipline referrals. Survey data were collected from teachers serving in schools that were identified as The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools. The central question guiding this study was: Does a relationship exist between elementary teachers' perceptions of the level of implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process and their perceptions of student discipline referrals? It centered on whether the degree of implementation would have more of an impact, if any, in decreasing student discipline.

### 2. Introduction

Large numbers of students present serious behavior problems, highlighting the need for improving discipline, increasing attention, and improving personnel preparation (White, Algozzine, Audette, Marr, & Ellis, 2001). Violent behaviors may include bullying, threats, intimidation, and physical force. Bullying involves threat and intimidation and thrives on fear and silence by victims and apathy by observers (Sautner, 2008). Victimized students may demonstrate considerable anger by bullying others and are significantly more likely to commit property delinquency (Rigby, 2002; Unal & Cukur, 2011).

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Increasing government, police, and law enforcement measures for school safety in response to unpredictable behavior is currently a top priority. However, adding layers of bureaucracy may interfere with connections and communications between teachers and students (Borrazzo, 2005). National, state, and local laws and policies currently regulate the school environment (US Department of Education, 2013). A United States Justice Department survey entitled *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2011* reports that bullying is a widespread and often underreported problem in schools and neighborhoods. In 2010, students ages twelve to eighteen suffered approximately 828,000 nonfatal victimizations, including 470,000 thefts. Approximately 359,000 violent victimizations occurred, of which 91,400 were serious (Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2012). Recent school shootings may suggest that some students lack a fundamental understanding of how to resolve intrapersonal and interpersonal problems in social settings (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). School shooters are often victims of bullying in school and suffer emotional injury that results in violence to solve problems. Ultimately, the fundamental challenge in developing whole-school discipline programs is to include an array of options that teach skills to live peacefully together. Effective policies encourage positive behavioral interventions and assessment to reduce school discipline (Losen, 2011; Pflieger & Wiley, 2012; Unal & Cukur, 2011), Proactive approaches to improve school safety and student discipline may reduce violence. Creating comfortable environments for students, collaborating school staffs, and establishing schools cultures that promote safety are examples of proactive strategies (United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education, 2004). Successful implementation of safe cultures depends on common vision, commitment, collaboration, and capacity of staff (Sautner, 2008).

School personnel are becoming increasingly frustrated with negative student behavior and may assume that parents take little responsibility for students' actions (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negon, 2008). Failed approaches, students' home life, poor motivation for change, lack of parental support usually receive the blame for unsatisfactory outcomes. The failure to achieve meaningful outcomes is possibly due to a poor match between the presenting problems and the intensity, fidelity, and focus of interventions (Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001). Discipline issues, classroom management, systemic politics, and policies are often the center of conflict for new teachers (Borrazzo, 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). A combination of professional and personal factors may lead to teacher burnout and early retirement (Borrazzo, 2005). Inadequate preparation for disruptive behavior in the classroom can increase school personnel frustration. Inadequate teacher preparation for dealing with classroom disruption increases the chance that teacher reactions will continue the escalation of minor disruptions. Reactive responses such as exclusion from the school setting, and in-school and bus suspension are often the intervention of choice (Sprague et al., 2001). Punishment consequences provide an immediate, short-term reprieve from the problem but may fail to effect positive, long-term changes and may degrade relationships with students (Borrazzo, 2005). Identifying problems is a crucial step in school restructuring and reform (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Acknowledging the existence of problems is often as challenging as constructing effective management and practices (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2011). Schools may profit from practical and long-term interventions that include families and communities (Algozzine, Wang, White, Cooke, Marr, Algozzine, Helf, & Duran, 2012; Borrazzo, 2005). Incidents of violence dramatize the need to create safe school environments (White et al., 2001). To break the cycle, educators and policy makers are implementing programs that reorganize school climates that support nonviolence.

### 2.1 The Leader in Me

The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> (Covey, 2008) is a holistic, school-wide experience that creates a common language and culture with commonplace, age-appropriate ways to integrate the principles of personal leadership and effectiveness into core subjects and curriculum. The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> schools report a decline in discipline problems, student satisfaction, teacher satisfaction, common language, and parent satisfaction and engagement (Hatch, 2012). The process aligns with the Standards for Staff Development of Learning Forward, formally the National Staff Development Council. The process includes teachers' visioning school outcomes, learning The 7 Habits, and serving as role-model leaders. Teachers build The 7 Habits and key leadership tools into schools' cultures and curriculums to teach character and leadership principles. Teachers, students, and parents utilize lesson plans, videos, student activity guides, teachers' editions, posters, books, Franklin Covey consultants, and [www.TheLeaderinMe.org](http://www.TheLeaderinMe.org) to implement and reinforce the process. The 7 Habits of Happy Kids (Covey, 2008) contains child-friendly stories that integrate with elementary classroom character lessons.

Stories progress sequentially from the independent habits one, two, and three to the interdependent habits four, five, and six, and seven. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens treats tough issues and decisions and provides a systematic guide on self-image, friendships, peer pressure, goals, and relationships with parents.

Covey's (1989) theory of effective behavioral habits reflects the values and principles of successful people. People who practice The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> are Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, Put First Things First, Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand Then to be Understood, Synergize, and Sharpen the Saw. Effective individuals live their lives according to these universal principles and personal values, maturing along a continuum from dependence, to independence with the first three habits, and to interdependence with habits four, five, and six. Individuals use the seventh habit to balance life with mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual activities. The seven habits are setting personal and/or group goals, organizing to meet goals, acting proactively, showing empathy to others, working as a team player, finishing the job, and relaxing to enjoy life. Leaders who live by the seven habits inspire others to use effective self-management and interpersonal social skills.

## 2.2 Strategies to Improve Student Behavior

Positively directed whole-school intervention continues to evolve as an effective and preferred method of constructive student discipline (Lewis & Sugai, 1999, Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). Sustainable discipline programs with high practitioner acceptability may increase the likelihood of enduring (Putnam, Handler, Ramirez-Platt, Christina, & Luiselli, 2003). Building rapport with teachers and administrators and awareness of schools' needs and unique culture may increase the success of interventions (Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, & Beech, 2006). Sustaining school-based support may become difficult to maintain without considerable effort on implementation and institutionalization intervention (Algozzine et al., 2012). Effective interventions require that students and parents find them purposeful and legitimate (Arum and Ford, 2012). Developing strategies for identifying and monitoring behavior is timely and socially valid (Hirsh, Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Schnacker, 2004). Schools have become increasingly proactive in promoting positive, safe, cooperative student behavior (Warren et al., 2006, Smith et al., 2004). Assertiveness training, anger management, literature, movies, and role-plays are useful tools to teach empathy and acceptable behaviors. Clear and measurable outcomes, data driven decisions, whole-school applications, evidence-based practices, collaboration, and sustainable preventive practices are useful components to create safe schools (Simonson et al., 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 2003, Smith et al., 2004).

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Participants

Nine schools comparable in socioeconomic and cultural status composed the sample for this study. Participants were Title I kindergarten through fifth grade public schools in the southeastern United States with a minimum two years' experience with The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process, and had met Annual Yearly Progress for the 2011-12 School Year. The sampling population began with 84 The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools provided by the Franklin Covey Company. The Title I criteria reduced the sample to 65. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 2011-12 school years reduced the sample to 59. The minimum of two years' experience with The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process reduced the sample to 25. The requirement of kindergarten through fifth grades reduced the sample to 14. Superintendents and principals of nine of the fourteen schools gave permission to participate, one superintendent denied permission due to new leadership, and four superintendents did not respond to the invitation. The final nine elementary schools used in the study were in four different school districts in a southeastern state of the United States. The student populations ranged from 280 students to 693 students, with forty percent receiving free-and-reduced lunch. The number of participants invited to take the survey was 197 certified general education teachers.

### 3.2 Materials

A senior consultant from the Franklin Covey Company, a principal for a Franklin Covey Lighthouse school, and the researcher constructed the survey based upon strategies using The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> and a review of literature. The initial draft of the survey was revised by a Samford University Director, a former school superintendent in the southeastern state of the United States, a principal for a Franklin Covey Lighthouse school, and the researcher. The survey for this study was first administered in a pilot study to nine teachers in a Leader in Me school of 712 students in kindergarten – fifth grade.

This TLIM school is a non-title public school, made AYP in the 2011-12 school year, and had been in the Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process since 2010. The results were analyzed using SPSS version 19, and a Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated to estimate the reliability of the pilot instrument (Field, 2009). According to Field (2009) Cronbach's coefficient alpha is an appropriate measure to estimate the internal consistency. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .99 for the entire instrument.

The pilot study participants were asked for feedback after the survey was administered to ensure modifications to improve the survey quality would be made if necessary. Participants reported that the statements were easy to read, directions appropriate, and time taken for survey administration was appropriate. The survey was not modified in any way and was used as the final draft used in the study. To ensure content validity, the survey identified key elements of using Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> to a high degree within classrooms and the school culture. Examples of the survey items include statements such as, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People are displayed in my classroom," and "Discipline referrals are not decreasing in my classroom since implementing the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." The twenty-statement survey used a Likert scale with one equaling strongly disagree and five equaling strongly agree.

#### 4. Procedures

Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade in participating schools received an invitation e-mail. Those who chose to participate clicked a link on the e-mail to the electronic on Survey Monkey. Follow-up e-mails encouraged participation to increase the response rate to sixty percent. Principals forwarded the link after an additional four days to promote sixty percent participation, and the senior consultant from Franklin Covey provided additional encouragement while visiting schools. Participants completed the ten-minute survey on Survey Monkey, the online data collection program. The program identified each responding school and protected the confidentiality of teachers. A Pearson product-moment correlation  $r$  using SPSS version 19 tested the hypothesis and analyzed the results at the .05 level of significance. The level of implementation of the Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process was the independent variable. The level of implementation questions were one through four, six, eight, and ten through twelve. The perception of reduced student discipline was the dependent variable and included questions five, seven, and nine. Questions 5, seven, fifteen, sixteen, and nineteen required reverse scoring.

The survey items were:

1. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People are displayed in my classroom.
2. The classroom mission statement is posted in my classroom.
3. A greeting routine is established in my classroom.
4. Student leadership work is displayed in my classroom.
5. Students do not take responsibility for their actions when they misbehave.
6. Students are participating willingly in the lessons on the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.
7. Discipline referrals are not decreasing in my classroom since implementing the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.
8. I incorporate the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People in everyday lessons.
9. Students are demonstrating the 7 Habits in their school day.
10. The 7 Habits language is incorporated in daily lessons, activities, and situations at least ten times a day in my classroom.
11. There are assigned student leadership roles in my classroom.
12. There are assigned student leadership roles in my school.
13. There is an active Lighthouse Team in my school.
14. I can name the Lighthouse Team members.
15. The 7 Habits are not being discussed frequently at faculty meetings.
16. Opportunities are not given to faculty for input in action plans.
17. Educator collaboration/discussion on the 7 Habits occurs at least five times a week.
18. I have received adequate professional development on the 7 Habits.
19. My principal does not support the implementation of the 7 Habits to a high degree.

20. I follow up and discuss the 7 Habits with students who are sent to the office for bus discipline referrals.

## 5. Results

The grand mean of each survey item was computed by using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool and a Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated to estimate the reliability of the pilot instrument (Field, 2009). According to Field (2009) Cronbach's coefficient alpha is an appropriate measure to estimate the internal consistency of a survey instrument. Once all pilot study participants responded and participant feedback indicated that modifications were not needed, the survey was administered to participants for the study.

The survey participants for this study were kindergarten through fifth grade general education teachers employed in the nine Leader in Me Schools that met the criteria of the study: a) Leader in Me status in a southern state; b) K-5 Public School; c) Title I status; d) met AYP for the 2011-12 School Year; and e) minimum two years of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process. The nine Leader in Me elementary schools are located in four different school districts in the southeastern state of the United States, ranging from the north central of the southeastern state to the far southeast of the southeastern state. Six of the elementary schools are located in the north central part of the state. One school is located in the central region of the state. Another school is located in the eastern central region of the state. The seventh school is located at the southeastern region of the state. To maintain requested and appropriate confidentiality, the nine Leader in Me schools have been labeled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I in this study. The student populations of the schools in this study range from 280 students to 693 students. All schools in this study have at least 40 percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch; therefore obtaining Title I status for the state. Student average attendance and test scores meet the No Child Left Behind accountability criteria of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals.

## 6. Statistical Results

The survey items were examined to determine which items were teachers' perception of the level of implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process (independent variable) and which survey items included teachers' perception of reduced student discipline (dependent variable). The level of implementation survey items include: 1-4, 6, 8, and 10-20. The dependent variable (the perception of reduced student discipline) was included in survey items 5, 7, and 9. The average score of each individual's responses to all survey items ranged from 1 to 5. The following survey items were scored in reverse: 5, 7, 15, 16, and 19 to ensure that participants were reading the statements completely and to reduce guessing.

### 6.1 Reliability

To ensure that measurement error was kept to a minimum and normally distributed, reliability and validity of the measurement was considered equally. For a survey to be reliable, the individuals being surveyed should respond to items in a similar manner across time and space. Highly reliable surveys can be interpreted consistently across different situations and produce consistent results when the same entities are measured under different conditions (Field, 2009). The survey items had consistent meaning to responders and provided clear relevant unbiased appropriate terms. To ensure robustness of the survey and its ability accurately to assess the elements for which it was designed, the survey items were thoroughly reviewed by a senior consultant and subject matter expert from the Franklin Covey Company working with Leader in Me and Lighthouse status schools, a principal in a Leader in Me/ Lighthouse status elementary school, and the researcher. Based on their subject matter expertise and experience in survey data, the first prototype of the survey was revised by the researcher's dissertation committee to ensure the survey would provide highly reliable results for its intended purpose. A pilot study was used in this study so that the researcher could administer the revised survey to nine teachers in a Leader in Me school to further assess its reliability and validity. This K-5 Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> school had similar characteristics as the schools participating in the study. A Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the survey. A Cronbach's alpha calculation determines the variance within the item and calculates the covariance between a particular item and any other item on the scale. Higher alpha level results increase the validity and indication of internal consistency with a maximum reliability is 1.00.

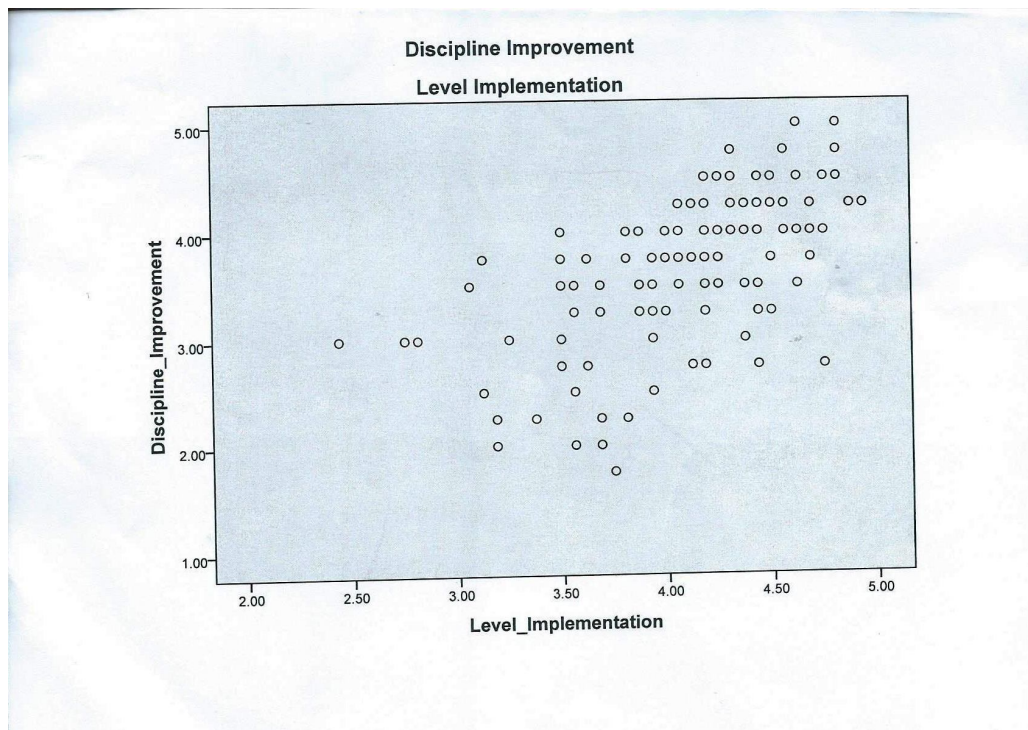
## 6.2 Validity

**Internal Validity.** To avoid extraneous variables that may alter the internal validity, the researcher selected schools with the following similar characteristics: a) Leader in Me status in the southeastern state of the United States; b) K-5 Public School; c) Title I status; d) Met AYP for the 2011-12 School Year; and e) Minimum two years of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process. All schools chosen have reached The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> status, therefore all the schools in the study should have reached similar Franklin Covey standards. Although the chosen schools may implement Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> to various degrees, the criteria selected for participation (The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> status) ensures that treatment fidelity (extent of which the experimental intervention is implemented) is similar. The participant criteria for the study and the Franklin Covey standards in reaching The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> status decreases the chances of internal threats directly involving the experimental intervention.

**Population Validity.** To determine population validity, a researcher assessed the degree of similarity among the research sample that was used in the study, the accessible population from which the research sample was drawn, and the larger target population to which the research results are to be generalized. The criteria of the participants of this study ensures that the study is focused on elementary schools that have Title I status (forty percent or more free and reduced lunch population) and adequate student attendance and test scores to meet Adequate Yearly Progress guidelines. All schools in the study have received The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> status through Franklin Covey company and have been using the process (Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup>) for at least two years. The results of this study can be generalized to a larger population with similar characteristics.

## 7. Analysis

A Pearson product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) analyzed the survey results. The hypothesis was as follows: There is a significant correlation between the teachers' perceptions of the level of implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process and their perception of reduced student discipline at the elementary level. Implementation survey items in the study included statements such as, "There are assigned student leadership roles in my school" and "There are assigned leadership roles in my classroom." This involves leadership roles being established in the classrooms and school-wide positions that students may apply. Examples may include: office helpers, lunchroom teacher leaders, sweepers, ambassadors, lunchroom table washers, physical education helpers for kindergarten, etc. Student discipline survey items in the study included statements such as, "Students do not take responsibility for their actions when they misbehave" and "Discipline referrals are not decreasing in my classroom since implementing the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." Survey items like these were used to obtain perception data on student discipline and The Leader in Me effectiveness. The analysis of the results indicate that the Level of Implementation (LI) scores and the Student Discipline (SD) scores had a significant positive correlation,  $r(120) = .61, p < .001$ . The mean LI score was 4.10 and the mean SD score was 3.67. The standard deviation for the LI scores was .50, and the standard deviation for the SD scores was .70. A visual observance of the scatter plot and a comparison of the Pearson  $r$  and Spearman  $\rho$  values (Figure 1) tested the assumption of homoscedasticity (Fields, 2012). The absence of outliers on the scatter plot and the similar values of the Pearson  $r$  (.61) and Spearman  $\rho$  (.64) indicate that no violation of the assumption occurred. The coefficient of determination of .37 suggests that the Level of Implementation scores explains 37% of the variability in Student Discipline scores.

**Figure 1: Scatterplot of Discipline Improvement**

As hypothesized, there was a significant correlation between the teachers' perception of the level of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process implementation and perceived reduced student discipline.

### 7.1 Discussion

The following hypothesis was tested: There is a significant correlation between the teachers' and administrators' perception of the level of implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process and their perception of reduced student discipline. The hypothesis was tested by using a Pearson product-moment correlation  $r$ . SPSS was used to analyze the results. The hypothesis of the study which predicted a correlation between teachers' perceptions of the implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process in reducing student discipline was supported. The analysis of the results indicate that the Level of Implementation (LI) scores and the Student Discipline (SD) scores had a significant positive correlation,  $r(120) = .61, p < .001$ . The perception of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process had a significant relationship to perceived student discipline reduction. The perception survey results of this study indicate that implementation of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process does in fact have perceived reduced student discipline. Integrating the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People school-wide increases the likelihood of reduced student discipline in schools. The most unique and significant finding of this study was that, surprisingly, the survey results indicated varied degrees of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People implementation in the chosen active The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> schools. For example, School C had a total mean of 2.40 for statement 13 "There is an active Lighthouse Team at my school", whereas School F had a total mean of 4.92, a 2.51 point difference. On statement 2 "The classroom mission statement is posted in my classroom", School D had a mean of 2.86 and School F had a mean of 4.58, a 1.72 point difference. On statement 4 "Student leadership work is displayed in my classroom", School D (2.86) and School B (4.57) had a 1.71 point difference in total means. Although there were varying degrees of implementation in the schools, the survey results indicate that a perception exists that the implementation of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People reduces student discipline.

With the increase of student discipline in schools, scholarly research is growing. By examining the relationship among The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process and student discipline, this study represents an addition to the literature.

Understanding the similarities and differences of these studies gives insight into the explanation of student discipline and strategies employed in schools to reduce discipline. The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process is similar to Sugai and Horner's (2002) description of a whole-school behavior support system to reduce student discipline. Both interventions: (a) target all students, (b) have measurable outcomes that are valued by stakeholders, (c) are dominated by positive reinforcement and skill-building approaches, (d) stress prevention, and (e) integrate all elements of the school culture in designing, implementing, and evaluating discipline practices. The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process also demonstrates a similarity to four other interventions: the Unified Discipline Approach by White, et al. (2001); the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model by Warren, et al. (2006); the School Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) model by Simonson, et al. (2008); and the Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) model. These interventions have the following common principles: (a) maximizing stakeholder participation, (b) emphasizing prevention, (c) applying to real-life setting, (d) providing faculty and staff in-service training, (e) allowing for ongoing assessment for continual evaluation and refinement of interventions, and (f) including direct modeling and practice of behavioral expectations.

Research can build upon other scholarly research. This study builds on research, such as Collinwood's (2009) study on a school system's performance for the six years before implementing the Seven Habits and for the two years after implementing the Seven Habits. Collinwood explored the Seven Habits' effectiveness on reading, math, and student discipline. For those schools who fully implemented the habits in 2007 and 2008, the six previous years yielded an average of 69.63 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards. In the two years after full implementation, the average jumped to 84.87 percent, a 15.23 point improvement. Moderate implementers also showed improvement but the improvement was insignificant statistically: a 4.89 point change after moderate implementation, from 66.98 before to 71.87 after using the habits. Collinwood (2009) found that moderate implementation has very little impact on student performance, but a full implementation has a significant (0.05) impact on student performance in reading. Collinwood's (2009) study revealed the changes in math scores were not as pronounced. Moderate implementers had an average of 83.13 percent meeting and exceeding the math standard before the habits and 86.05 percent doing so after moderate implementation, an improvement of 2.92 points. In contrast, Collinwood (2009) found that the average number of disciplinary referrals between full implementers and moderate implementers was not great enough to be significant.

The average number of referrals was lower for full implementers than moderate implementers, but upon analysis, there was not a significant difference. Although there was not a significant relationship between full implementers and moderate implementers, Collinwood (2009) found statistically significant declines in students' reports of friction in the classroom in full implementers versus moderate implementers. Student satisfaction with school rose significantly and students began to desire more cohesiveness and less friction in the classroom. Evidence from the literature exists that indicate that The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process does in fact reduce student discipline. For example, Hatch (2012) uncovered several The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools that experienced reduced student discipline. Hatch (2012) gathered student discipline data from principals from The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools across the world. Hatch (2012) found that at English Estates Elementary in Fern Park, Florida, discipline referrals dropped from 225 to 74 in just over a year after implementing The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> Process. At Dewey Elementary in Quincy, Illinois, discipline referrals dropped 75 percent after its first year of implementation, and referrals for completion of work declined 68 percent. Joseph Welsh Elementary in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada reported a 67 percent drop in discipline referrals its first year of doing The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> Process. A First Nation (Native American) school in Nova Scotia, during the first six months of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> Process reported zero suspension, whereas for the same period the previous year they had experienced twenty suspensions. While some scholarly student discipline research shows unbiased solid evidence of decreased discipline by using The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process or other behavioral interventions, some research indicate major flaws in results. For example, Ross and Laurenzano (2012)'s study allowed for two action steps that ultimately skew the results and render the study useless for academia. These two action steps include the following: (a) principals were allowed to review initial summaries for incorrect facts or misinterpretations, and (b) principals were allowed to choose participants who were presumably more informed and supportive of The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process than others. The principals' biased actions can ultimately affect the results and may not be easily generalized to a larger population with unbiased research steps. Therefore, caution is advised for researchers seeking to build on Ross et al (2012) research.



## 7.2 Theoretical Implications

Analysis of the strategies used in The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process found displaying the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Pilot Total Mean = 4.56; Study Total Mean = 4.58) as the common primary strategy used in The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> schools and the pilot school. The three highest total means for the pilot study were statement 1 (Mean = 4.56) "The 7 Habits are displayed in my classroom"; statement 15 (Mean = 4.78) "The 7 Habits are not discussed at faculty meetings"; and statement 19 (Mean = 4.78) "The principal does not support the 7 Habits to a high degree." The three highest total means for the main study were statement 1 (Mean = 4.58) "The 7 Habits are displayed in my classroom"; statement 12 (Mean = 4.48) "There are assigned student leadership roles in my school"; and statement 19 (Mean = 4.50) "The principal does not support the 7 Habits to a high degree." Both the pilot study and the main study shared two similarities with statements considered in the top three highest means, statement 1 (pilot- 4.56; study-4.58) and statement 19 (pilot-4.78; study- 4.50). Although the pilot study and main study indicated that the principals do not support the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People to a high degree, the results indicate that the strategies implemented in the classrooms and in the school building are most important factors when it comes to student discipline being reduced. Top strategies implemented in the classrooms of the main study include displaying The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People in classrooms (4.58), assigning student leadership roles school wide (4.48), posting mission statements in classrooms (4.45), establishing an active Lighthouse Team in the school (4.42), and assigning student leadership roles in the classroom (4.36).

There are several implications for the three highest means for statement one of posting the 7 Habits in the classroom (4.58), statement 12 of assigning school wide leadership roles (4.47), and statement 19 of the principal not supporting the 7 Habits to a high degree (4.50). Statement one may have a high mean because schools who are implementing the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup>, whether low, moderate, or high will most likely have the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> posted somewhere in the classroom in order to obtain Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> status, and posting the habits requires little effort from the teacher. Low implementers may have a one or few postings of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup>, where a high implementer may have more postings throughout the classroom. Statement one can be easily satisfied by using one posting of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> in the classroom. Statement 12 may have a high mean due to student leadership roles placed throughout the school, unlike statement 11 where student leadership roles are placed in the classroom environment. Teachers resistant to placing leadership roles in their classroom may have rated this statement higher if they had observed other teachers assigning leadership roles.

Statement 19 refers to the principal's high level of support of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup>. This statement was scored in reverse, so responders who may have read the statement quickly, may not have realized the wording of the statement. If the responders read the statement correctly, then their responses indicate that the principals are not supporting the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> to a high degree. It is possible that their principal may be supporting the habits to a low or moderate degree. There are implications for the three lowest means for statement 17 (2.83), statement 7 (3.42), and statement 10 (3.53). Statement 17 measures the perception of collaboration and discussion on the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> at least five times a week. Schools with low or moderate implementation may not collaborate or discuss the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup> at least five times a week. Statement 7 refers to the perception discipline referrals decreasing in the classroom since implementing the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People<sup>®</sup>. There again, schools with low or moderate implementation may not perceive discipline referrals decreasing in their classroom, or since the statement is scored in reverse, a responder who is taking the survey quickly and with little attention to detail may not have read the statement correctly. Statement 10 refers to the language of the habits (such as Habit 1: Be proactive, Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind, etc) being implemented into daily curriculum lessons, activities, and situations at least ten times a day in the classroom. Schools with low or moderate implementation may not incorporate the language into their classroom as often as a high implementer would. This study finds that strategies in The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process made significant contributions to the explanation of perceived reduced student discipline and strategies that are successful in the classroom and school.

### 7.3 Practical Implications

One of the most important findings of this study was the identification of Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> strategies that played an important role in the classroom and school wide. In addition, the literature review supports this study's findings that professional development is necessary (Mean = 4.30) to implement an intervention, such as The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process, successfully. Professional development is necessary to support teachers in becoming effective in helping students learn socially, and professional development can increase intervention sustainability (Sergiovanni, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Pajak, 2008; Algozzine et al., 2012; Peters, 2012). In addition to the professional development being provided for teachers, it is important that other staff members be trained, such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers, aides, and school office personnel. This study reaffirms the crucial role of teacher commitment in implementing intervention strategies within the classroom and school wide. Teacher "buy in" is important for teachers to understand that they make a difference in the school as a whole (collective efficacy) and to have ownership in what they do so that intervention fidelity and sustainability can occur. The survey instrument in this study proved to be a reliable tool to measure the Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> strategies occurring within the classroom and school. Limitations of not receiving 100% response rate may be due to teachers taking the survey during their own time. The response rate could have been increased by giving teachers time to take the survey, such as during a faculty meeting. School administrators can use the survey to rate their own perceptions as well as perceptions of their teachers. If areas are found to be of concern, they can be addressed and appropriate actions can be taken, such as more support from administrators in that area. If teacher perceptions view that student discipline is a problem, administrators can take appropriate actions. If student discipline continues to be an issue, even after implementing the strategies to a high degree, the administrator must target the problem and find other solutions, such as identifying contributing factors promoting the behavior. The survey measure only provides a snapshot of The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> strategies being implemented and the perception of student discipline, not solutions. Therefore school leaders must make collaborative plans of action in dealing with issues.

The findings in this research have practical implications for all schools wanting to improve student discipline. Leadership is an integral aspect in changing the school culture and when implementing a whole school intervention program. The principal must inspire a shared vision to reduce student discipline, enable teachers and staff to act, provide professional development on the whole school intervention program, recognize contributions to the program, and collect and share student discipline data with faculty, staff, students, and parents on a regular basis. An additional benefit for schools is that improvements in the school environment have been linked to improvements in educational outcomes. Although more research needs to be completed to support these findings, there is enough evidence to begin to act. School principals can place more emphasis on student bonding, encouraging positive school classrooms and the creation of new student organizations.

School superintendents and school board members can reexamine their use of resources by supporting whole school intervention programs and professional development. To ensure high quality teaching and learning, schools should ensure that students are safe and should teach students how to live and work together. The development of safe and responsive schools requires a comprehensive and long term planning process, an array of effective strategies, such as The Leader in Me<sup>©</sup> process, and a partnership of school, family, and community. Unfortunately, there is not a way to guarantee that even a highly effective school will not experience serious disruption or violence. Yet in the face of deadly violence that could threaten any school at any time, school districts should devote staff and fiscal resources to preventive planning that can increase the probability that their schools will remain safe and provide positive learning environments.

### 7.4 Conclusions

National, state, and local education goals demand increased attention and emphasis on improving school discipline and safety. This increased responsibility encompasses a variety of settings such as the classroom, playground, cafeteria, hallways, and school bus transportation. Schools are responsible for reducing bullying, managing classroom discipline, and finding creative ways to engage students, faculty, and parents. Other responsibilities include relationship building, the sharing of leadership, and the establishment of consistent standards or rules for how people are to behave personally and toward others.

Due to the increased pressures of maintaining safe environments, schools with high levels of student discipline are searching for ways to improve the educational setting. Distant student/teacher relationships and reactive measures once was a strategy in handling discipline. Research is now indicating that positive, proactive interventions are effective in building relationships and trustworthiness, as well as reducing student discipline. Behavioral challenges are a concern to schools while federal laws require more accountability in keeping students safe. Factors beyond the control of schools, such as neighborhood crime, poverty, and the incoming academic achievement of students, influence the climate of safety at schools. Yet large differences in safety among schools serving similar students, suggest that factors under the control of schools may strongly influence school safety. Schools can foster safer environments, regardless of the characteristics of the students who walk through the doors. Specifically, reactive discipline strategies are less effective than proactive measures, such as whole school intervention programs. Collaboration and trust increase the perception that schools are safe. The school community's interaction with families, students, and colleagues determine differences in school safety. In addition, researchers suggest that building a whole school intervention discipline program with high practitioner participation is successful in reducing discipline. The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process is a whole school intervention program that focuses on character, goal setting, problem solving, and leadership principles. This study and other studies on The Leader in Me<sup>®</sup> process effectiveness represent a beginning to the examination of reducing student discipline.

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