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Staff Perceptions of the Effect of The Leader in Me on Student Motivation and Peer Relationships in Elementary School

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Staff and student surveys at Lane Elementary School (pseudonym) confirm that students lack motivation to complete class work and often struggle to interact appropriately with one another. Similar concerns are reported across the United States as indicated by national Gallup Poll results on student motivation, peer relationships, and feelings of connectedness in schools. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine if elementary school personnel believe than an initiative called The Leader In Me has had a positive impact on student motivation and peer relationships. Underpinning this study were Perrin's student motivation theory and research on social and emotional learning, school/classroom climate, and character education. Interviews were conducted with a combined total of 18 teachers, administrators, and other staff members from three schools in the southeastern region of the United States where this initiative has been fully implemented. The data was analyzed and coded by common themes. The results confirmed that key elements of The Leader In Me including (a) a common understanding of and pervasive use of Seven Habits language, (b) student goal setting and data tracking, (c) leadership opportunities for students, and (d) a school culture that promotes student ownership of learning do indeed increase student motivation and promote positive peer interactions. A white paper was prepared and will be shared with Lane Elementary and others in the larger educational community who seek ways to increase student motivation and enhance peer relationships. This focused attention on improving the learning environment will better equip students to leave school systems college, career, and life ready thereby preparing them to be productive members of a global society.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

As a possible solution for addressing concerns about students who are unmotivated and who interact negatively with peers, teachers at Lane Elementary School (pseudonym) decided to implement an initiative based on Stephen Covey's work, The Leader in Me (TLIM). The vision behind TLIM is to "inspire greatness, one child at a time" (Covey, 2008). In this section I explore (a) evidence of the concerns of motivation and peer relationships in the educational setting at the local level and beyond, (b) the conceptual framework underlying the LIM initiative, and (c) the proposed direction of the study.

Teacher and student data at Lane Elementary School, a Title 1 school in the southeastern United States, reflect ongoing concerns with students' overall lack of motivation to complete assignments and with their inability to interact cooperatively with peers. According to the school's 2014 School Improvement Plan (demographics section), the population consists of approximately 850 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. Of these 850 students, 85% receive free or reduced lunch and 35% are English language learners; 64% are White, 8% are Black, and 20% are of Hispanic descent. The remaining 8% of the student population includes: Asian, Pacific Islander, Chinese, and American Indian students. Of these students, 39% are exceptional education students who have language, speech, behavioral, or learning disabilities. This percentage also includes two self-contained classrooms of gifted education students.

Despite the implementation of school wide expectations and positive behavior

incentives/recognition, staff members at Lane Elementary report that students lack the motivation to complete class work, and consistently engaged in negative interactions with peers. Teachers reported that students lacked the necessary skills to self-regulate behaviors and to positively connect with others (Climate Survey and Needs Assessment, 2013; 2014).

During the 2013-2014 school year, students participated in their first administration of a national Gallup Poll (2014). The poll indicated low scores in the areas of feelings of hope, motivation, and sense of well-being in students across the county, particularly in some of the more impoverished schools, including Lane Elementary. District-wide, only 52% of students in grades 5-12 (no survey data was gathered for lower grades) reported feeling hopeful, 50% of students said they were engaged at school, and 63% reported that they felt a sense of well-being. According to national Gallup Poll results, students' scores locally mirrored the concerns of the larger educational setting. Nationwide, only 53% of students in grades 5-12 (no survey data gathered for lower grades) felt hopeful, 63% were engaged, and 70% felt a sense of well-being. These results show the pervasive nature of these issues across the country.

Lane Elementary teachers tried to find ways to address these concerns at their local school site in order to help the students they serve. Past attempts to increase student motivation and foster positive peer relationships focused on building motivation through incentive and positive recognition programs or by targeting specific character traits that were intended to enhance prosocial skills, However, teachers and staff at Lane Elementary School had not used a comprehensive approach to address motivation and

positive peer relationships simultaneously prior to the current work with TLIM.

Teachers and staff at the school decided to implement TLIM in an attempt to help students develop skills that positively impact their motivation and peer relationships. The staff believed that, due to its inclusiveness, TLIM initiative might result in a different outcome than previous attempts. This decision was made by a majority vote (98% of faculty and staff) as indicated on the Needs Assessment results (2013).

Rationale

According to the results of a 2013-14 school climate survey developed by the school's administrators and completed by staff members, parents, and students, only 37% of teachers at Lane Elementary School believed that students enter their classrooms motivated and ready to learn. The survey also revealed that only 39% of students felt good about school in general. Other data from school based surveys and needs assessments from the same year indicated that 86% of teachers at Lane Elementary attributed students' lack of motivation to their negative feelings about school. In addition, 82% of teachers indicated that negative peer interactions resulted in disruptions to the learning environment and impacted the school climate. Additionally, the district-based Gallup Poll survey data (2014) indicated that 61% of students at the school itself had a sense of hopelessness.

The results of both the school climate survey and the school-based survey and needs assessment were indicative of past concerns. Historically, teachers at Lane Elementary gave negative answers to survey questions that asked about students' motivation to participate in class and those that asked about how students interacted with

peers. They further indicated that these are areas that negatively impact student achievement (Needs Assessments and Climate Surveys, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014). After analysis of the overall results of the surveys each year, the school's leadership team began working on an improvement plan. Through this process, the team focused on what steps they could take to resolve the issues within their realm of influence. In recent years, the Second Step Program (2009) was implemented and a book study that revolved around Eric Jensen's work *Teaching With Poverty In Mind* (2009) was conducted to address the faculty members' concerns about students' motivation, peer relationships, and sense of connectedness.

Second Step is a character education, social and emotional training tool designed to teach students how to react appropriately to negative situations and feelings of frustration, and to self-regulate behavior (2009). Teachers attended professional development sessions to learn about this curriculum and classroom kits for each kindergarten through fifth grade teacher were purchased. These kits included discussion posters, lesson plans, and teacher resource manuals. Follow-up coaching visits and ongoing progress monitoring were provided. The content was delivered in the form of 20-minute lessons twice a week.

Feedback from teachers (Climate Survey, 2010-2011) regarding the implementation of Second Step indicated minimal effects. Specifically, teachers reported that students viewed the lessons as simply a part of the curriculum and were unable to carry over the skills learned into daily experiences. If a conflict arose between students,

teachers stated that the students were unable to use appropriate vocabulary and skills learned through the Second Step curriculum to resolve conflict.

During a debriefing about the results of the Second Step implementation, faculty and staff agreed that, in order for teachers to have greater impact on the learning environment, they needed to have a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Title I students. During the 2010-2011 school year, a book study was conducted around Eric Jensen's book: *Teaching With Poverty In Mind* (2009). Monthly staff development sessions were used to discuss, chapter by chapter, how children of poverty differ from other students. Staff members identified key two points from the book: (a) the need to teach prosocial skills and (b) the importance of building a sense of hope and self-efficacy in students who, due to their life circumstances, may not think beyond getting through each day.

While staff knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of children of poverty increased, end-of-year data again showed minimal changes in students' opinions of school and teachers' perceptions of student motivation according to the 2011-2012 Climate Survey and student assessments (Needs Assessment, 2011). As with Second Step, there was no relevancy or connection to students' day-to-day interactions. The book study was simply an informational piece for staff.

In addition to school-wide attempts to provide staff and students with a common character education type of curriculum or program, a school-wide positive behavior recognition initiative was maintained. Students were given "HERO tickets" (meaning Helping, Exhibits safety, Responsible and respectful, Obeys rules) when they

demonstrated outstanding behavior. These students were also recognized publicly in an attempt to encourage similar behavior in other students. This system of positive reinforcement complemented the focus on Second Step and was a way to encourage students-something the staff identified as a need through reading the *Poverty* book study. At the end of the 2011 school year, the school's leadership team reviewed Needs Assessment surveys and referral rate data, they found no change.

The leadership team recognized that something needed to be done to address unmotivated students who often had difficulties interacting positively with peers; the intervention needed to be integrated within the context of the academic curriculum and needed to be viewed as a natural part of the culture of the school. During the 2011-2012 school year, the search for a solution of increasing student motivation (and thereby achievement) as well as an answer for encouraging cooperation and positive peer relationships continued. One of the teachers heard about TLIM which had shown promising results for in other schools in a neighboring district with similar demographics. A cadre of twelve school personnel arranged to visit these schools in May of 2012 and bring back their findings to share with the faculty and staff of Lane Elementary School. The Leader In Me is based on Stephen Covey's book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989). According to Covey the book is a "holistic, integrated approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness" (p. 3). The initiative is a teacher and student friendly version of the Seven Habits principles.

The Leader In Me came about when an elementary school principal named Muriel Summers attended a Seven Habits training in 1999. This training inspired her to take the

concepts she learned through the training and teach them to her elementary school students and staff. Her work evolved into a school-based initiative designed to incorporate the Seven Habits into the day-to-day routines of the school so that student engagement and motivation to achieve increased (Covey, 2005).

From a student perspective, the first three habits help students to recognize the importance of being proactive, putting first things first, and beginning with the end in mind by stressing independence, responsibility for one's actions and attitude, and doing the right thing without being asked. Habits four through six promote positive relationships with others by thinking win-win, seeking first to understand then to be understood, and synergizing (working together cooperatively). The last habit is related to caring for one's self holistically (mind, body, and soul) by being healthy and by giving to others (Covey, 2005). By integrating of the habits into the school day, the LIM initiative strives to ensure that the principles behind the habits are ingrained in the students and staff members, and will thereby lead to a successful school experience as well as a better quality of life for students beyond school (Covey, 2005).

Staff and students are introduced to the habits during the course of the initiative. It is an expectation of the initiative that everyone in the building learn and live the habits. In order for students to embrace the initiative, the adults must be well versed in and a model of the habits and what they stand for (Covey, 2005).

Lane Elementary School is currently in the early stages of learning about The Leader In Me. By conducting a study at schools whose faculty members have already fully implemented TLIM, I sought to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this

initiative. These teacher and staff perceptions of the impact of the initiative on student motivation and student peer relationships would be shared with Lane Elementary as well as others schools who are exploring methods to bring about positive social change in their schools and communities. The school level, district level, and national level data which includes Needs Assessments (2013-2014), District Gallup Poll survey data (2013-2014), and National Gallup Poll survey data (Crotty, 2013), revealed a significant loss of hope and a disconnect between (a) students and their academic study and (b) students and their peers. The implications of the potential impact of TLIM, could help to improve the lives of students.

This local problem at Lane Elementary School mirrors similar concerns across the larger educational system in general with regard to students who are unmotivated and who interact negatively with peers. A review of literature on student motivation and peer relationships was conducted using two databases, ERIC (Education Research Complete) and SAGE. Sources for each keyword search (*motivation, peer relationships*) that were selected for use were peer reviewed and scholarly. Research conducted through the George Washington University Center (CEP) on Education Policy on student motivation (Usher & Kober, 2012) and a recent Forbes magazine commentary (Crotty, 2013) reported that 40% of high school students nationwide were disengaged from school. While similar studies at an elementary school level were not available, this statistic was significant because it mirrored similar data collected locally at the district and school level, which indicated a trend with students at all levels. Also discovered was research conducted through a joint partnership between the United States Department of

Education, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the United States Department of Justice (2014). This research reported that, between 2010 and 2012, there were 1,364,900 nonfatal victimizations at schools across the country (Roberts et al., 2014). These astonishing numbers certainly reveal a pervasive problem with incidences of negative peer interactions in our nation's schools, which corroborates the concern that teachers have at Lane Elementary School.

When conducting online searches for professional literature related to student motivation and peer interactions, links to educational organizations such as the American Educational Research Association (2013), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2014), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2014) were found. These sources provided links to the latest research available, including books, periodicals, blogs, and training resources related to student motivation, effective schools, and peer interactions in particular, links to bullying prevention. These issues are noted as hot topics of discussion on the home pages of the above referenced educational organizations. This confirms the survey data that Lane Elementary School collected indicating the negative nature of many of the students' interactions with one another. Websites such as StopBullying.gov (2014); Bullying Prevention News (2014); and Blue Shirt Day -World Day of Bullying Prevention (2014) all emphasize the need to not only draw attention to this serious issue, but to find ways to stop the detrimental effect that bullying has on students during their educational years as well as beyond (StopBullying.gov, 2014).

At the national level, President Barack Obama outlined plans in his 2015 budget

request to offer School Climate Transformation Grants, in the amount of $50 million that would be earmarked to help schools implement evidenced-based, behavioral intervention strategies that are designed to improve school climate and reduce bullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, President Obama asked for additional grant money in the amount of $45 million to help states, districts, and schools meet the specific needs of their communities by using these funds to support programs that improve school climate and students' mental and physical health (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). There is a nation-wide outcry to seek solutions and rectify these profound issues.

In addition to these web resources, the statistics cited through CEP, and a call to action by our nation's President, researchers across the country have addressed the issues regarding unmotivated and disconnected students. Nelson and DeBacker (2008) found that students who perceived themselves as not being valued or respected by peers were more likely to be academically unmotivated. Similarly, Roseth and Johnson & Johnson (2008) investigated preschool peer interactions and readiness to learn and discovered that negative interactive play behavior equals disengagement in classroom learning activities. Moreover, Klein et al., (2012) found a direct correlation between students who are disengaged and disconnected with school and the involvement with risky types of behaviors. Further research studies conducted by Ghilay & Ghilay (2015); McGrath & Noble (2007); and Rudolph (2010), found that there is a definite link to higher levels of student well-being and prosocial types of behaviors if students feel connected to one another as well as to a caring adult within the school. These findings are mirrored by Jose

& Pryor (2012); Sulkowski et al., (2012); and Haddock et al., (2014). When teachers do not connect emotionally to the students in their classrooms, students do not trust these adults and are very often unmotivated in class (Lindsey, Karns, and Myatt, 2010).

Research findings that link relationships with peers and teachers to disengagement in school are supported by neuro-science that indicates that learning has a strong social-emotional aspect (Caine & Caine, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Jensen, 1998; Sylwester, 1995). As Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2012) and Willis (2014) surmised from their research, students are much more likely to perform academically for teachers they care about.

Investigating ways to increase these social-emotional connections between student and teachers as well between peers provides students with a greater sense of well-being and increased motivation to perform academically in the classroom (Blum, 2012; Witt et al., 2013). Research has shown that educational environments that are viewed by students as safe and supportive increase the likelihood that students will achieve academically and develop qualities of good character and citizenship (Schunk et al., 2013; Headden & McKay, 2014; Low et al., 2014).

Definition of Terms

Begin with the end in mind: Prioritize, set goals, and plan ahead (Covey, 1989).

Connectedness: Belief by students that they are cared about as individuals by the adults and their peers in school (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2009).

Motivation: A combination of the value the learner places on what is being learned, how confident the learner feels about the possibility of actually being able to

learn what is being presented and, student's past success (or lack thereof) with learning (Marzano, 2001).

*Proactive: C*hoosing one's own actions, moods, and attitude (Covey, 1989).

*Put first things first: S*etting goals and planning ahead in order to accomplish tasks (Covey, 1989).

Seek first to understand: Listening to others without interrupting and valuing what they have to say (Covey, 1989).

Seven Habits: A set of guiding principles one should follow to live a meaningful life (Covey, 1989).

Sharpen the saw: Taking care of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in order to ensure balance in one's life (Covey, 1989).

Synergize: Working collaboratively with others (Covey, 1989).

Think win-win: Frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions (Covey, 1989).

Significance of the Study

Lane Elementary is located in a high poverty region as indicated by the demographic data available through the district website. The historical data provided through school-based Needs Assessments and survey data, as well as the data provided through the district's first Gallup Poll survey, indicated that students had little hope and little feeling of well-being. This information motivated the faculty and staff of Lane Elementary to become the change-agents these students need to improve their outlook. If

something can be done to increase student motivation and create more positive peer relationships in the school, this could carry over into the community as well.

The larger implications of this study regarding the perceived impact of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships would be to perhaps bring about this positive social change not only at Lane Elementary School, but at the community and national levels as well. If the outcome of this initiative does result in more consistent work habits (which could potentially lead to increased academic achievement), and helps students to build positive peer relationships, the impact on students' educational careers could be significant. More importantly, if TLIM initiative leads to increased student motivation and feelings of connectedness, the effect on the students' well-being outside of school could be life changing. The potential impact on the students' ability to leave school systems college, career, and life ready would prepare them to be productive members of a global society. If findings indicate that the perception of TLIM is that it does not positively impact student motivation and peer relationships, then the study will have at least opened up an important dialogue between school staff, students, parents, and community members about finding ways to enhance the learning environment so that students are motivated to succeed and so that they understand the real-world application that developing positive relationships and pro-social skills has for their future.

Research supports how students' feelings of connectedness at school result in decreased drug and alcohol use, fewer incidents involving acts of violence, and less risky types of behaviors (Dornbusch et al., 2001; Resnick et al., 1997). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which involved 36,000 middle and high school

students (Resnick et al., 1997) as well as a study by Dornbusch et al., (2001) found a relationship between school connectedness and lower use of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes in middle/high school age students. Additionally, a study by Catalano et al., (2004) found school connectedness to be associated with lower rates of drug and alcohol use, violent behavior, and membership in gangs. School connectedness promotes healthy self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and positive peer relationships (Loukas et al., 2010). Feelings of being connected at school also decrease conduct problems, antisocial behavior, depression, anxiety, and emotional distress (Loukas et al., 2010).

The potential implications for positive social change during students' academic career and life beyond school as a result of TLIM need to be examined.

Research Question

Faculty and staff members at Lane Elementary recognized the importance of exploring ways to address their long-standing concerns about students' lack of motivation and negative peer relationships. Past attempts to address these concerns did not produce the desired results for increasing students' motivation and for encouraging peer relationships that were more positive. While a gap in research on student motivation and prosocial peer interactions was not found in the review of literature, a comprehensive understanding of TLIM, an initiative that supports increasing student motivation and strengthening peer relationships not through the use of a program or curriculum, but by changing a student's mindset, is worth investigation. A qualitative case study documenting the perspectives of those who have implemented TLIM initiative will provide informative insights into both its' implementation and its' impact on student

motivation and peer relationships. These insights will be useful to teachers at Lane Elementary as well as those in the larger educational setting.

This study sought to answer the overarching question: What are the perceptions of the impact of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships as described by school personnel who have been involved with the implementation of the initiative in their elementary school? The following school faculty and staff were interviewed: teachers, administrators, and non-classroom personnel such as guidance counselors, instructional assistants, and intervention teachers. Explicit and targeted questions related to implementation and key aspects of the initiative were addressed. The answers to these questions are expected provide valuable information to the staff at Lane Elementary School about student motivation and peer relationships and about the feasibility of TLIM initiative.

Review of the Literature

The conceptual framework outlined in this section is a synthesis of research that is the basis for the key aspects of TLIM initiative which includes motivation theory and related research on classroom climate, character education, social-emotional learning, school-classroom climate, and effective schools research. Early motivational theorists either took the stance that motivation is a physiological process that is simply innate or that motivation is a psychological response to the desire of humans to receive recognition, prestige, a sense of belonging, or a sense of superiority (Perrin, 1923). The psychological perspective supported by many early theorists is aligned with the viewpoints of noted psychologist, McClelland. In his research on motivation, McClelland

developed a theory that motivation is driven by three basic needs: a) a need for achievement-a strong desire to perform challenging tasks; b) a need for affiliation-the establishment of interpersonal relationships, and, c) a need for power or a strong desire to influence others or make an impact (McClelland, 1961). These motivators are present in varying degrees in all people and are learned. Depending on one's life experiences, one of the three needs will be the dominant motivator (McClelland, 1961).

From an educational perspective, understanding which dominant motivator each student prefers, can help the teacher to differentiate the learning environment and the feedback provided to each student in order to enhance classroom performance. It would also benefit all students if the teacher created an environment that nurtured all dominant motivators so that: a) tasks are relevant and challenging; b) skills in relationship building were an authentic part of the curriculum and; c) project-based learning activities that allowed students to positively influence others or give back to others and their community were a regular part of the curriculum. This would help to sustain or increase motivation for all students.

In addition to McClelland's theoretical perspective on motivation (1961), Edwin Locke's research (1968) supports the idea that people are driven toward goal attainment when the goals that are set are self-selected, rather than imposed by someone else. Additionally, goals that are both specific and challenging lead to higher levels of performance (Locke, 1968). If incentives are offered for meeting goals, those incentives are only meaningful to the individual if the goal itself is meaningful (Locke, 1968). Locke also indicated that ongoing feedback as to progress toward goal attainment impacts

the individual's motivation to persist. This individualized goal setting motivates the individual intrinsically because the goal is personally meaningful.

Based on Locke's research (1968), it would seem that a teacher's role is to set up an environment that is challenging and allows for choice and individuality. If students are setting goals for themselves both academically and behaviorally, this encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and attitude. If students recognize the importance of a positive attitude and how this enhances productivity, this would most likely lead to positive relationships with others. Feedback and discussions about student progress toward goals; both academic and behavior would help to keep the student on track.

Both McClelland's (1961) and Locke's theories (1968) provide a theoretical framework behind motivation as it relates to TLIM initiative in that the habits promote the enhancement of motivation by stressing independence, taking responsibility for one's actions and attitude, and dong the right thing without being asked. The habits promote positive relationships with others by thinking win-win, seeking first to understand then to be understood, and synergizing (working together cooperatively). The last habit is related to caring for one's self holistically (mind, body, and soul) by being healthy and by giving to others. This support in the development of altruism exemplifies the definition of intrinsic motivation. The three basic motivators as outlined by McClelland (1961) appear to be the infused within the habits as does Locke's (1968) perspective on personalized, meaningful goal setting.

Closely tied to the ideas of taking responsibility for one's own actions and showing respect for others, is the concept of character education. In 1909, John Dewey

wrote *Moral Principles in Education.* In his work, he outlined his beliefs that it is the responsibility of schools to exist for the good of society. Dewey believed that the work of schools was to prepare students to be productive members of society by teaching students moral principles, what it means to be of good character, and how to conduct oneself appropriately (Dewey, 1909). He felt that the institution known as school was created by society for the expressed purpose of advancing the welfare of society (Dewey, 1909).

Other theorists shared Dewey's beliefs as well. Jean Piaget, noted psychologist, also believed that children needed to be exposed to moral principles as part of their curriculum in schools (Piaget, 1932). He observed children's interactions with one another and determined that children's ideas about morality develop as children engage in play. Through these social interactions, children form ideas about what it considered fair and unfair, right and wrong, as they endeavor to maintain friendships with other children. Piaget concluded from this work that schools should emphasize cooperative decision-making and problem solving, and should nurture moral development by requiring students to work out common rules based on fairness (Piaget, 1932).

Building on Dewey and Piaget, Kohlberg (1984) formed his own theories on the moral development of children. As with Piaget, Kohlberg believed that children form their viewpoints through their experiences (Kohlberg, 1984). Kohlberg believed that children were capable of gaining a conceptual understanding of principles such as fairness, justice, and rights by their interactions with others and he believed that these understandings strengthen as children mature. Through his research, Kohlberg (1984) identified six stages of moral reasoning grouped into three major levels. Each level

represents a shift in social-moral perspective. These levels range from the first level, where a child's moral judgments are characterized by an individual perspective, where the focus is on avoiding breaking rules due to fear of consequences, to the final level where the emphasis shifts from self to concern for the welfare for others.

While Kohlberg believed that morals came about based on developmental stages, he felt that these principles could be enhanced in children through the establishment of schools that functioned as a democracy (1984). He thought that students should participate alongside teachers in developing rules and procedures and in establishing collective norms for behavior that were fair to all. He surmised that if students had a hand in determining rules, they would be more inclined to follow them. Also, by discussing moral dilemmas and issues, each child's moral development could be stimulated (Kohlberg, 1984). Collectively, Dewey (1909); Piaget (1932); and Kohlberg's (1984) theories on character education compliment motivation theory, as does TLIM initiative in that it supports the ideals of independence, personal and civic responsibility, self-efficacy, and cooperation with others.

Intertwined with motivation and character education is a conceptual framework that provides a physiological justification for the promotion of an educational environment that is designed to meet the emotional needs of the student (Sylwester, 1995). Since the 1990's, there has been an explosion of research on how the brain learns best due in large part to technological innovations (Jensen, 1998; Caine & Caine, 1997). Researchers can now study the brain in action through the use of electroencephalography (EEGs), Positron emission tomography (PET scans), and other x-ray types of devices that

let us actually see images of the brain and how it responds to stimuli (Jensen, 1998; Caine & Caine, 1997). Brain research helps us to understand how the brain responds chemically to both positive and negative interactions with the teacher and other students in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Jensen, 1998). Additionally, brain research has shown that students learn best in an environment that is interactive, engaging, and positive (Jensen, 1998; Sylwester, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Caine & Caine, 1997).

Brain research corroborates findings related to motivation and character education as well as effective school theory in that it offers a biological perspective as to why learning environments need to focus on the positive and utilize instructional strategies that meet the unique needs of each student. A brain-based learning environment encourages self-efficacy, individualized learning, cooperation with others, and focuses on the social-emotional needs of the students (Jensen, 1998). This mirrors the underlying principles of the LIM initiative.

The principles behind motivation, character education, and social-emotional learning (brain research) collectively support the basic premise behind effective schools research. The effective schools movement began as a result of the Coleman Report (Coleman et al, 1966) which indicated that the student's home situation determined whether or not the child would achieve at school. Edmonds (1979) and Lezotte (1999) conducted research on schools that had a positive impact on student achievement (regardless of students' home life circumstances). Effective schools were found to have the following in common: a) a clearly defined mission and vision; b) positive school

culture and positive relationships based on mutual respect; c) safe and orderly environment; d) goal setting among staff and students and ongoing progress monitoring of goal attainment; e) collaborative decision-making; f) high expectations for all students and, g) an intentional focus on academic success.

The conceptual frameworks that focus on motivation, character education, social-emotional (brain-based) learning, school climate, and effective schools research provides a foundational understanding of the components that reportedly define TLIM initiative (Covey, 2008). An understanding of these theories will be the basis for synthesizing findings of teacher and staff perceptions of the initiative. Current studies in the areas of motivation, character education, social-emotional (brain-based) learning, school climate, and effective schools are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Research conducted within the last several years in the area of motivation mirrors early theorists' work (Locke, 1968; McClelland, 1961) in that it attempts to: a) define motivation; b) pinpoint ways to encourage or increase motivation and; c) identify environmental factors that create optimal conditions for high levels of motivation. Common themes found in the research reviewed in this area indicate that student motivation is higher in classrooms that are highly engaging (Jang, 2008; Martin & Dowson 2009; Oakes et al.2012; Rotgans & Schmidt; 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2009; Skinner et al., 2009; Vansteekiste et al. 2006) and in classrooms that allow for student choice in activities (Andrews, 2011; Fishback et al. 2009; Patell, 2013; Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

In addition, current research shows that when character education curriculum, activities, or programs provide for explicit instruction in social skills, self-regulating behaviors, and tolerance are used with fidelity, student achievement and motivation are positively impacted (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Dobbs, 2016; Oakes et al. 2012; Synder et al. 2010). This is reflective of early theorists who touted the need for these pro-social skills to be taught (Dewey, 1909; Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1965). Other research points to benefits such as higher student academic achievement levels when schools use an evidence-based character education program. Durlack et al. (2011) reported significant percentile point gains in achievement for kindergarten through high school aged students who participated in a social-emotional learning (character education) program. These students also showed improvement in attitude and motivation according to the observational and teacher survey data collected. Similar studies conducted (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Oakes et al. 2012) also found that teacher perceptions and observational data collected showed that students were more engaged and had more positive attitudes in classrooms where character-education programs were used. Especially noteworthy was the finding that this type of curriculum or program could be incorporated into routine educational experiences by school staff and teachers and does not have to be an additional subject added to the school day (Durlack et al. 2011).

Other research was conducted comparing schools with a character education program and schools without a character education program. The results indicated that school staff who used a research based, character education program with fidelity had fewer behavioral issues with students and higher academic achievement (Parker et al

2010). When students who are explicitly taught appropriate pro-social behaviors, student discipline issues will decrease while academic achievement increases (Parker et al 2010).

Research also supports the notion that the level of student motivation and engagement is connected to the type of instructional environment provided to students (Cohen & Geier, 2010; Moffett & Fleisher, 2013; Yang, 2011). If the environment is designed to pique the interest of students, addresses their biological and social-emotional needs, and includes hands-on activities and collaboration with others, then high levels of student motivation to stay on task and complete assignments will be sustained (Evans et al 2009; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Moffett & Fleisher, 2013; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Yang, 2011).

Research on teachers who both engage and motivate students cognitively and emotionally is further supported by studies related to classroom climate (learning environment). Researchers have found a strong relationship between a positive classroom climate and higher levels of student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Gillen et al, 2011; Johnson, 2009; Lowe et al, 2014; McMahon et al, 2010; Patrick et al, 2011; Reyes et al, 2012; Scott & Berbeco, 2013; Tobin et al, 2013). Teachers who offer students consistent and high levels of emotional, social, and academic support are found to have students who are motivated to achieve and that have stronger peer-to-peer relationships (Adelman & Taylor, in press; Ahnert et al, 2012; Burchfield, 2013; Cadima et al, 2015).

Along with motivation, student engagement, and classroom climate research, other studies indicate that students taught using brain-based strategies scored higher on

science assessments than their counterparts (Akyurek & Afacan, 2013). Brain-based strategies are defined by this study as strategies employed by teachers that include hands-on, and highly engaging activities, and involve the use of cooperative learning (Akyurek & Afacan, 2013; Bridgeland et al. 2013; Jennings & Greenburg, 2009). In extensive interviews with students, Martin and Pickett (2013) found that students' motivation increases when they are given choices of activities and they are interested in the subject matter being taught.

A key element of brain-based learning theory is the significance of the social-emotional aspect of learning. There is a very strong connection between positive social-emotional development and academic achievement (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). The ability to regulate emotions, decipher social cues, and cooperate successfully with peers, leads to a more positive and academically engaging learning environment. This sense of being emotionally aware also contributes greatly to students having a sense of hope, the ability to set academic goals, and successfully follow through with assignments and tasks (Duckworth, 2007; Cavanagh, et al. 2012; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Scheerens, 2013). Students who are emotionally self-aware and are able to connect positively with peers, have greater success academically and in life (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015; Levin, 2012).

Research within the past decade on effective schools theory (Fullan and Scott, 2009; Lezotte, 2010; Marzano, 2001; West et al. 2014; Gleason & Gerson, 2014;) substantiates the findings of earlier theorists (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2010) as to the

type of supportive environment needed to promote student growth. They too report like attributes that highly effective schools seem to have in common when it comes to promoting student achievement, regardless of environmental factors affecting the students' home lives. Along with a well-articulated vision and mission, a positive school culture, and a focus on setting and attaining challenging academic goals, Marzano et al. (2001), Fullan & Scott, (2009), and Lezotte, (2010) found that well established professional learning communities were commonplace in high performing schools. Additionally, high performing schools (Title-I and Non- Title I) have other elements in common: Positive relationships based on mutual respect, a safe and orderly environment, collaborative decision-making, and an intentional focus on academic success in addition to the clearly defined use of differentiation to meet the needs of students (Basque & Bouchama, 2013; Cosier, 2010; Kember et al. 2010; Leithwood, 2010; Newton & Winches, 2013; Parker et al. 2011; Parrett & Budge, 2012).

Past research on effective schools as well as the most recent findings outlined by Marzano et al. (2001) and Fullan & Scott, (2009) are confirmed by John Hatte's synthesis of more than eight hundred meta-analysis related to student achievement (2009). Hatte found that teachers have a profound impact on the motivational and engagement levels of their students depending on: a) How caring their relationships are with their students, b) How passionate they are about their pedagogy and how well this translates into an interactive, engaging classroom environment, and c) How committed they are to meeting the individual needs of each student (2009).

A synthesis of current research on motivation, brain-based learning, social-emotional learning, classroom climate, character education, and effective schools points to some common characteristics of learning environments where students work collaboratively and are highly motivated. These commonalities include: a) a need for schools to provide systematic and ongoing instruction of pro-social skills, b) the importance of establishing a highly engaging and collaborative classroom environment, c) a rationale for promoting self-reliance in students so that they are able to take responsibility for their actions and, 4) justification that, in order for the learning environment to be effective, a school culture must exist where these concepts are integrated within the context of the school day and a concerted effort is made by all stakeholders to sustain them. These are reportedly foundational aspects of TLIM initiative according to Covey (2008).

Implications

Educational environments that are supportive in nature, that promote collaboration, and focus on self-efficacy in students are vital for students to maintain high levels of motivation and encourage positive peer relationships. If local and national survey data historically show that students are unmotivated, have little hope, and have little feeling of well-being, then the traditional programs and methods used to address student motivation and positive peer interactions are seemingly ineffective. The summary of interviews conducted within this study explored TLIM and its perceived impact of key aspects of the initiative on student motivation and peer relationships. Since the original intent of this study was to make a determination as to the feasibility of implementing this

initiative, sharing the findings of the research with those interested in the outcome is the next step. A white paper that outlines the key aspects of TLIM as they relate to increased student motivation and more positive peer relationships seems the most logical direction for the final project.

Summary

Many schools struggle with students who are unmotivated and who often interact negatively with peers. Section 1 shows the pervasiveness of this issue as evidenced by the number of research studies and resources available for review as fellow educators seek answers to the same questions of how to motivate students and help them to develop more positive relationships. The conceptual framework behind student motivation, character education, social-emotional learning, and effective schools confirms that a caring, emotionally stable environment, is paramount to the success of students as they progress through their school years and prepare to be college, career, and life ready. If this is known, then one might wonder why students at Lane Elementary and around the country have little hope, little sense of well-being, and are disengaged at school. Lane Elementary has tried several strategies to address this concern to no avail. The faculty and staff sought to explore TLIM initiative as a way to address concerns about their students; this demonstrates their commitment and perseverance to finding something to help sustain high levels of motivation and to improve peer relationships. A comprehensive picture of this initiative, as provided by those who are well into implementation, will provide staff members at Lane Elementary School with pertinent information.

A description of the research methodology used in this study is discussed in Section Two.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

In order to determine the effect of TLIM on elementary school student motivation and peer relationships, the perceptions of teachers and other staff members who have been directly involved with the implementation of this initiative were sought out. A qualitative case study was used. By triangulating information obtained through interviews with classroom teachers, administrators, and non-classroom based personnel, the compilation of this information will prove beneficial to the staff at Lane Elementary School, as well as the larger educational community. In the following pages, data collection, data analysis, and plans for their dissemination are outlined.

I chose to conduct a qualitative case study based on The Leader In Me initiative because it is most conducive to the type of information I sought. The case study method allowed me to obtain a rich and comprehensive description of how those directly involved with the implementation perceive the effects of TLIM on elementary students. I was able to glean a true picture of any changes in behavior, motivation, and attitude of the students, as reported by those involved with the initiative. I was able to learn about implementation procedures and about changes related to how the adults in the building interacted with one another or with students after implementation. All aspects of the initiative, including implementation procedures and changes in how the adults in the building interacted, were relevant to the impact on student motivation and student peer relationships.

I contextualized the case study method according to Stake (1995) who claimed that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective. This viewpoint is directly aligned with my research question in that I had hoped to gain a deep understanding of how those individuals involved with this initiative perceived it. Through the interview process, I was able to gain detailed information about each participant's unique experiences with the initiative and to truly understand his or her viewpoint on how TLIM impacts students.

I interviewed 18 participants (six from three different school sites). According to Stake (1995), at the richness of a case study and the in-depth understanding that the researcher can gain is directly proportional to the amount of participants. Six participants from each of the three schools (two from each of the three sub-categories of classroom teacher, administrator, and non-classroom based personnel) was a manageable amount of interviews to conduct while also affording me the ability to truly probe in-depth during the interviews and gain a deep understanding of the participants' perceptions. This number of participants allowed me to collect enough information to reach saturation and enabled me to note themes or patterns in the data.

Along with case study, other types of qualitative research methods could also have also yielded useful information. For example, an ethnographic study would certainly have helped to uncover perceptions of teachers if I would have been able to conduct the research at a Leader In Me school where I could have immersed myself in the culture and gained long-term access to the setting (Lodico, et al. 2010). Similarly, phenomenological research could also have yielded valuable information about participant's interpretation

of his or her experience (Lodico, et al. 2010). However, phenomenological researchers collect extensive amounts of data over time not only through interviews, but also through observations in order to, as Lodico states, "learn the language and modes of interactions most appropriate to their lives" (p. 270). My plan involved gathering data through an interview format only.

Along with other types of qualitative research designs that could have been considered in regard to my study, quantitative methodologies could also have proven worthwhile. Survey research is another means of gathering information (Creswell, 2012). Survey research is a way of describing "the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a population" (p.376). This would involve collecting data through interviews or questionnaires. These questionnaires can be mailed or web-based. The use of questionnaires, while an efficient method of gathering data, is void of the more personal connection I had hoped to gain with participants and did not allow participants to ask questions (Creswell, 2012). A quantitative study that compares student achievement data before and after implementation of the initiative may answer questions about the apparent academic impact on students numerically, but would be insufficient in revealing the complexities of the how behind it. Academic gains are indeed one part of the overall picture of the effectiveness of TLIM. However, I was more interested in understanding any notable changes in student motivation and peer relationships, attributes that could not be fully understood from a simple numerical comparison. Educators who are involved with the daily happenings related to the initiative and have

firsthand knowledge of the true impact on students, were able to provide the greatest source of information for me as I endeavored to answer my research question.

Participants

Research was conducted with faculty members of three elementary schools that are located in the southeastern region of the United States. The schools are all Title 1 schools with demographics similar to Lane Elementary. Faculty from all three schools are currently involved in full implementation of this initiative. As part of the implementation process, administrators of these schools have invited other educators and community members to symposiums to hear about TLIM as well as to visit their respective schools. Through this open invitation to share their experiences, I made preliminary, informal contact with the principals of the three elementary schools. These administrators expressed a willingness to participate in my research pending formal approval from their district office and Walden University, which was obtained. Since the location of the schools I used in my research were quite a distance from where I live, I made initial contact with potential participants through e-mail. I explained that the purpose of my study was to seek out what the perceptions are of the effect of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships by teachers, non-classroom personnel, and administrators at schools who have fully implemented the initiative. I outlined how I intended to analyze the data obtained through interviews with these participant groups to look for common themes and patterns. And, I let the potential participants know that I planned to summarize the overall findings in order to share them with my own school, district, surroundings districts, and community members. Prospective participants were

provided with my email address and phone number if they needed further clarification regarding the study. I invited teachers and staff members from these schools to voluntarily participate in this work through a sample of a combined total of 18 classroom teachers, administrators, and non-classroom based staff such as instructional assistants, guidance counselors, and resource teachers, from all three schools (approximately six per school).

As stated previously, Stake (1995) points out that the richness of case studies and the depth of understanding that the researcher can gain are directly proportional to the number of participants interviewed. While I was seeking in-depth perceptions of those directly involved with the initiative (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995), six participants from each of the three schools (two from each of the three sub-categories) was a manageable amount of interviews to conduct logistically, while also allowing for time to deeply probe participant responses. Data obtained from six participants from each school site was enough information to reach saturation and enabled me to note themes and patterns in the data (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

A review of the three schools' websites revealed that the number of teacher and staff members at each school campus range from 85-120. These numbers indicated that obtaining a sampling of six staff members from each school site was indeed attainable. On the other hand, in anticipation that more than the desired number of participants would express an interest in being a part of this study, I had planned to use a method known as probability sampling (Patton, 2002). For example, if twenty-four teachers returned my letter expressing an interest in participating, I would randomly select every

sixth one from the stack of letters as my sample group. I would also separate the letters as they came in by job description which would include: classroom teacher, administrator, and non-classroom based personnel. I would number the responses as they were received and then stack them in numerical order for selection using the probability sampling outlined previously (Patton, 2002). This sample will help me to understand the in-depth perspective from each individual as well as each sub-group, and would be large enough to truly gain a rich description of the initiative (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

Once the e-mail was sent out asking for volunteer participants for my study, I immediately received favorable replies from the principals and assistant principals at all three schools indicating their willingness to participate. Other respondents included two classroom teachers, a guidance counselor, a cafeteria manager, and two other support staff members such (an instructional assistant and a resource teacher). The desired number of six participants from each school was not obtained through the initial e-mail. A second e-mail was sent out approximately one week later. Responses from the second e-mail resulted in reaching the desired number of eighteen participants, six from each school. After communicating via e-mail with each participant, dates and times were set up for me to visit each campus to conduct the interviews.

Data Collection

Upon arrival at each respective campus, and after meeting each principal, I was escorted to a private office or room near the main building. Each participant had arranged an acceptable time for the interview with me via email and prior to my arrival. Interviews with classroom teachers were conducted before school and in one case, during a planning

time. Other participants arranged for interview times within the school day that did not interfere with their normal duties. Each school visit ended with an interview with the principal.

Before formally beginning each interview, I spent a few minutes with each participant recapping my purpose for being there and again conveying the confidential nature of the interviews. I assured each participant that all data collected would remain completely anonymous. Once again, I provided participants with my contact information in case they had questions after the interviews. We then engaged in some informal dialogue prior to the actual interview.

According to Stake (1995) and Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative interview questions should be concisely worded in order to avoid confusion. Also, questions should be specific enough to answer the overall research question, while also being open-ended enough to capture each participant's unique experience with the topic (Stake, 1995; Lodico et al. 2010). Creswell (2012), suggested beginning an interview with a question that is general in nature. This question is known as an icebreaker or grand tour question that is designed to "relax the interviewee and motivate them to talk" (p. 225). The first question is designed to be open-ended. Participants can provide as much detail as possible which will hopefully encourage them to talk freely about their own unique experiences with the initiative. My role as a researcher was to remain, at all times, a neutral party who is there to simply record the facts as presented. I maintained a warm yet objective demeanor throughout the process. I listened attentively, encouraged them to share openly about their perceptions and viewpoints, and I answered any questions that

they had. The questions that were asked during the interviews were designed specifically to correlate with the concerns that prompted this study in the first place (unmotivated students and negative peer interactions). The questions also related to the conceptual underpinnings (motivation-engagement, social-emotional learning, character education, classroom-school climate) of the initiative as were uncovered in the literature review. I also wanted to be sure that the questions were open ended enough to draw out any information on what particular aspects, if any, of TLIM itself seemed to be the most impactful according to the perceptions of the research participants. The questions were as follows:

1) Tell me about the implementation process of The Leader In Me.

2) What have you noticed about students' completion of classroom assignments since implementation of TLIM initiative*?*

3) What have you noticed about students' overall motivation in class since the implementation of TLIM initiative?

4) What have you noticed about students' adherence to classroom rules and procedures since the implementation of TLIM initiative?

5) What have you noticed about students' interactions with peers since the implementation of TLIM initiative?

6) What have you noticed about students' relationships with teachers and/or parents since the implementation of TLIM initiative?

7) What have you noticed about staff interactions with one another since implementation of TLIM?

8) What have you noticed about instructional strategies being used in the classrooms since the implementation of TLIM?

9) What have you noticed about teacher and staff attitudes since the implementation of TLIM?

10) What have you noticed about teacher and staff behavior since the implementation of TLIM?

11) Which, if any, aspect of TLIM do you feel has had the greatest impact student motivation and peer relationships?

I interviewed staff members of varying roles within the school. The administrators at the school site provided information related to the generalized impact of the initiative from their perspective, while both classroom teachers and non-classroom personnel confirmed these generalizations according to their perspectives from their unique vantage points of working directly with the students. A synthesis of the varying viewpoints at the school sites provided information related to the school-wide impact of the initiative. The perspectives that each stakeholder group provided served as a means of data triangulation.

With permission from participants, the interviews were recorded using a hand-held, digital voice recorder as well as a back-up cassette recorder. At the beginning of each interview and for identification purposes later, I verbally stated where the interview was taking place and with whom. For example, “school one, non-classroom personnel one.” The actual names of each school and of each participant were saved in an unnamed file on my personal computer. This method of identifying each participant was for my

personal knowledge only and was used during data analysis for triangulation purposes.

A strong commitment to the ethical protection of the rights to confidentiality and privacy of the participants of the study is essential. In order to ensure this protection, I obtained written informed consent from participants. I went to great lengths to ensure that their responses remain confidential by not using personal information, names, or the actual names of their places of employment in my findings. I also made sure that the data I collected was accurate by soliciting member checks of the transcriptions of interview data.

Since I had no connection with any of the participants in my study as they work in districts 200-300 miles from my own, I made every effort to establish rapport with the participants as well as develop a comfortable and trusting working relationship with them. I did this by keeping lines of communication open at all times and by explaining to the participants every step of the procedures involved with conducting the interviews as well as the final compilation of the data. I encouraged questions about any aspect of their involvement of study their will and assured them of their rights to anonymity. I provided participants with my email address as well as my cell phone number and assured them that they could contact me at any time. I was openly transparent by sharing the data that I collected with them through member checks to make sure the information I obtained was reported precisely and accurately.

Data Analysis Results

This transcription of the interviews took place immediately following the school site visits and interviews (Fall of 2015). The transcribed interviews were saved to a file

on my personal computer and one paper copy of each transcription was printed for coding purposes. This paper copy was kept in my home office in a locked filing cabinet before and after analysis. The cassette recordings of each interview were erased after transcription, but the hand held, digital recording device containing the interviews will be saved for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Each participant was provided with a copy of the transcription of his or her interview via email. Participants were asked to review the transcript for accuracy and, if they were comfortable with the transcript, to email me back the words "I approve." One participant emailed back about a spelling error, but all eighteen participants confirmed that the transcribed interviews met with their approval.

Once the member checking process was complete, data analysis began. I coded the interview protocols for each participant with a number and according to the role of the participant within the school (AD = Admin, CT = Classroom Teacher, NCP = Non-Classroom Personnel). Data gathered from each unique group (administrator, classroom teacher, and non-classroom personnel) was triangulated.

The actual data analysis method I used was a manual three step coding process as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). The first step was to simply read the text. Next, I transferred the transcriptions of the interviews onto a two-column matrix. The transcription data was on the left side of the matrix and a large blank space was on the right so that I could write key words or phrases that emerged during the analysis of each section or paragraph of the data. During this more critical review, I circled and highlighted key phrases that provided answers to my initial research question. This step

was repeated three times to ensure the analysis was thorough (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, I condensed the data into major categories or themes that came to light during analysis. The participants' perceptions indicate that TLIM does positively impact student motivation and peer relationships. The how behind this belief can be condensed into the following themes or categories: a) the use of seven habits principles/language, b) student goal setting and data tracking, c) students in leadership roles around the school, and d) the student focused culture of the school.

Using the data gleaned from the disaggregation process, I created a chart that provided a visual representation of these key findings (the four themes) that came to light during analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Key phrases and statements that indicated the effect of the LIM on student motivation and peer relationships were listed. This information was categorized by respondent groups for triangulation of findings.

The findings were further summarized through the accompanying narrative discussion defined by Creswell (2012) as "a written passage in a qualitative study in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis" (p. 254). This narrative includes a synthesis of the perceptions of the participants as well as an overall summarization. The analysis of the data led to the identification of the four basic themes referenced previously that explained the how behind increased motivation and more positive peer relationships as defined by research participants. Of the 18 participants, there was one who had slightly different perceptions than the other 17. This outlier or discrepant data was included in the analysis.

Careful consideration as to the collection methods used and the analysis of the

information obtained as a result of this study helped to ensure that a comprehensive picture of each aspect of the initiative, TLIM was accurately and concisely recorded. This data can then be shared as a resource for the staff members of Lane Elementary as well as those in the larger educational setting. As educators strive to provide environments that motivate students and create conditions that enhance peer relationships, this resource will be another tool to help teachers discern whether or not this initiative may prove to be viable option for their particular school settings.

The final project for this study (found in Appendix A) is a synthesis and interpretation of the findings that will be presented in a systematic way through the form of a written, narrative summary (white paper) and will help to guide professional conversations about student motivation and peer relationships at Lane Elementary School. This white paper will provide useful information to Lane Elementary as well as district office personnel who seek information about the outcome of this research study. The compilation of all data gathered, has helped me to answer the research question as to the effects of key aspects of TLIM initiative on elementary school student motivation and peer relationships as perceived by those who have been involved in the implementation at their school settings. Teachers and staff from three elementary schools shared their insights as to the effectiveness of TLIM from their unique viewpoints. The following section will provide a comprehensive review of the perceptions of these individuals.

Results

The research question posed during this study sought to discover the effect of TLIM (if any) on student motivation and peer relationships as perceived by those staff

members involved with the initiative at their school sites. Participant interview data confirmed that TLIM had a positive effect on student motivation. Additionally, participants report that TLIM has positively impacted peer relationships. During one-on-one interviews, participants discussed at length specifically what changes in student behavior led them to believe that student motivation and peer relationships improved post Leader In Me implementation. These responses were analyzed, compared, and synthesized. This data is summarized in the accompanying chart and narrative discussion. It is important to point out that 17 out of the 18 participants indicated that this is true for *all* students while one participant stated that this was only true for higher socioeconomic level students. When responses were compared by group, similar trends were noted. The following chart summarizes the key phrases and noted trends of the effect of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships by each of the three participant groups interviewed.

Table 1

Effect of TLIM on Student Motivation and Peer Relationships

	What participants noticed about the Effect of TLIM on Student Motivation	What participants noticed about the Effect of TLIM on Peer Relationships
Administrators	Students set and track their own learning goals Students "own" their learning Students are actively engaged Students take pride in their school Students embrace leadership roles Increased attendance Decreased discipline issues	Decreased bullying Decreased arguing More synergizing Mentor partnerships between students More harmonious relationships
Classroom teachers	Self-tracking of progress keeps students focused More on task behaviors Students verbalize Seven habits Students remind peers to work first then play Students are more respectful Less student disruptions	Less bullying incidences More collaboration Less teacher intervention needed Students problem solve own issues Students are more in control of selves
Non-classroom Based Personnel	Students take pride in sharing data Student ownership and pride of school Students embrace learning Students on task more often Students know what is expected (Seven habits) Increased student confidence	Students help one another Students remind others of expectations Cafeteria is calmer Students get along Less disrespect toward peers

Further disaggregation of the data collected during the study showed that participant responses could be categorized into four basic themes that explain the how behind increased student motivation and more favorable peer relationships. A summary of the descriptive phrases participants used along with the correlating category is shown in the table below. A detailed explanation of these results is included in the accompanying narrative discussion. Again, it should be noted that 17 out of 18 participants referred to *all* students in their responses while one participant stated that this was true only of students from higher socioeconomic levels.

Table 2

Commonalities of Descriptive Phrases of the "How" Behind Increased Student Motivation and Positive Peer Relationships Related to TLIM According to Participant Groups (Administrators, Classroom Teachers, Non-Classroom Personnel)

Participant Group	Seven Habits Principles Language	Student Goal Setting Tracking	Student Leadership Roles	School Culture
Administrators Teachers Non-Classroom Personnel	Students are more verbal. Students look you in the eye. Common language. Teachers use the language-model it. Students use seven habits to problem solve. Language embedded in everything. Students own their choices. Use language as a preventative. Students trust each other.	Students have leadership notebooks. Students lead parent conferences. Students own their own learning. Set their own goals. Graph their own data. Accountability. Expectations for academics, behavior-no excuses. Student owed data.	Students run the assemblies. Students give tours. Students pitch ideas. Students are empowered. Students take responsibility. Students take on roles formally owned by the adults. Students are in charge around here. Students are role models. Attendance is up, misbehaviors, down.	This seems like a different place. This isn't a program. Teachers don't stop at 2:30 to do TLIM. It's part of our culture. It's who we are and what we believe. The kids are in on everything we do. Students tell others, "we don't act like that here." It's very powerful here. Makes kids love to be here. In our DNA.

Theme 1: Seven Habits Language

According to research participants, a common and pervasive use of a set of academic, behavioral and social expectations had been pivotal in positively impacting student motivation and peer relationships at the schools I visited. All 18 participants interviewed shared the belief that the use and knowledge of seven habits language,

pervasively across campus and all stakeholder groups, has made a huge impact on students' motivation and ability to take charge of their own learning and behavior. One participant, however, indicated that this is true only for higher socioeconomic status students.

Further, all participants reported that a common understanding and ability to conceptualize the principles behind the seven habits by everyone in their buildings has made a significant impact on student motivation and peer relationships. The lead teacher at one of the schools stated that "having a common language kindergarten through fifth grade is helpful with behavior." She also commented that, because there is a common language and set of expectations, "teachers are nicer to each other and to the students."

The first three habits focus on taking charge of one's self by putting first things first, beginning with the end in mind, and being proactive. These habits teach students about taking responsibility for one's own learning and behavior. When students follow these three habits, they truly own their own academic progress and can make appropriate choices when it comes to behavior. Participants report that students who live these habits, epitomize the statement, "I am in charge of me." Administrators, classroom teachers, and support personnel all report that this belief by students seems to be at the heart of what has increased student motivation. Kindergarten teachers interviewed at two of the schools pointed out that this ownership begins early as evidenced by their observations of students taking responsibility for themselves in their classrooms since implementation of TLIM. Kindergarten teachers interviewed at two of the three elementary schools visited talked about how their students had internalized the idea of "putting first things first" and

were finishing work before play both at school and at home.

Habits four through six are relational in nature and emphasize the importance of working cooperatively with others by seeking first to understand before being understood, thinking win-win, and synergizing. The conceptual understanding of these three habits is what leads to more positive peer relationships according to participants. Administrators at all three schools reported incidences of being called out to handle disputes between students only to arrive upon the scene to find students problem solving and working through the issue themselves using habit language. Many participants gave examples of students being nicer to one another and helping out other students without prompting. Participants also reported that discipline concerns had decreased since implementation of TLIM.

Many of the research participants emphasized that the seven habits are taught beginning as early as pre-kindergarten. By clearly outlining and defining what each of the habits mean and represent, the students and the adults on campus develop a conceptual understanding of them. Along with the emphasis on clearly outlining the common language and expectations at their schools, all 18 participants stressed the importance of the integration of the seven habits throughout the instructional day. Participants described the seven habits as a way of thinking infused within the curriculum and all interactions, rather than an add-on, character education instructional component.

In addition to ensuring that a common language and set of expectations was pervasive throughout the school and interwoven in all aspects of the day, research participants stated how vitally important it was for the adults in the building to be role

models in action of the seven habits in order for the habits to carry over to the students and become simply a way of life. A guidance counselor who was interviewed said that she could see a "major difference" in the classrooms of "people really embrace the seven habits because they have a little bit different mindset." A lead teacher who was interviewed stated that "once you start utilizing that language and you just start acting those things out." As she stated, it simply becomes a mindset, a "way of doing business". A fifth grade teacher commented that "motivation is high because the teachers live by example." She went on to explain that teachers who really internalize the habits in their personal lives as well as at school "naturally reflect that onto the students."

Moreover, all participants report that this common set of principles has become the norm as well as an expectation on their campuses. When all stakeholders' expectations are aligned, it makes it easier for students to understand what is expected of them and act accordingly. One interesting example that a principal gave to illustrate how this common language had become the norm at her school came in the form of a parent phone call. The principal reported that she had received a parent complaint about a negative comment that a teacher had allegedly made to a child. The parent demanded to know why a staff member at a Leader In Me school would not be modeling the seven habits at all times if that was the expectation. The administrator's point was that at her school, parents will call out staff members who are not modeling the seven habits. It has to be pervasive and used consistently. It had become the expectation of all stakeholders at her school.

Theme 2: Goal Setting and Data Tracking

One of the main components of TLIM (and that participants point out stems from a deep understanding of the first three habits), has to do with school-wide and individual student goal setting and progress monitoring. According to participants, goals are posted throughout the school and in the classrooms. These goals are related to academic achievement and are tied directly to school improvement plan goals. Each school-wide goal is the basis for similar grade level goals and individual classroom goals. These goals are further broken down to individual student level goals. Students create attainable academic goals based on the overall school, grade level, and classroom goals that are tied to their own individual skill level. By understanding that the school-wide goals for increasing achievement have to do with how each individual student makes progress toward their own learning, participants report that students thereby own their learning.

According to research participants, a big part of the goal setting process is the actual tracking of progress toward meeting these goals. Simplistic charts that show current and desired levels in the areas of reading, math, science, and even attendance and discipline referrals at the school level are posted throughout the campuses according to the administrators interviewed. Grade level specific and related goals are posted outside classrooms while individual class goals are posted in prominent places in each classroom. This data tracking is a part of the school culture and is a school wide expectation. At the schools visited, research participants shared that students track their own individual progress toward goals in their Leadership Notebooks. Each student is provided with a two-inch binder in which to keep all pertinent data related to goal setting and monitoring.

This is referred to as a Leadership Notebook. Students not only record incremental steps toward meeting these goals in their binders, but report out about their progress to teachers, other adults in the school, and fellow classmates. During parent conferences about progress, students lead the meetings and share the contents of their Leadership Notebooks with parents as well. Of the participants interviewed, 17 out of 18 believe that this focus on achievement and on holding students accountable for their own progress is a motivator for students. One participant reports that this is only true of students at higher socioeconomic levels.

Incremental steps toward achieving school-wide, grade level, class, and individual goals and making academic growth are celebrated with students. Each school reported various ways that they acknowledge student progress toward reaching these goals from school-wide pep rallies to individual recognition in the form of certificates or even verbal praise. One of the sections in the Leadership Notebooks is called “celebrations” and allows students to choose artifacts to display such as charts, graded tests, or photograph illustrating their progress toward goals. It should be noted that 17 out of 18 research participants report that students show pride at these accomplishments, which also increases motivation in all students. One research participant stated that this is only true of students at higher socioeconomic levels. Research participants pointed out how setting and monitoring goals was an integral part of their school culture. From colorful displays of school-wide goals that were clearly visible in the entry ways of each school, the grade level goals and graphs displayed in the hallways outside of classrooms, down to individual student tracking and monitoring through the use of the Leadership Notebooks,

setting and monitoring progress was an important school norm.

Theme 3: Student Leadership Roles

Another important component of TLIM as reported by research participants, is the concept of putting students in leadership roles within the school (and within the community). Research participants talked in great length about how students develop a deep sense of responsibility when given roles at school. Leadership roles are more than just school or class "jobs." Leadership roles are not assigned, but instead, students themselves decide where and how their help is needed and take on the roles themselves. In some instances, students must apply for positions, and justify why they are a good fit for a particular role.

Leadership roles for students often include tasks that were normally done by the adults in the building. Students assume tasks such as answering phones, making sure the morning announcements are turned on, and logging into the teacher's computer to take attendance. One principal explained that one of her students is currently making scarves for the school's Relay for Life team. The student was on the announcements that morning doing a commercial encouraging students and staff to purchase her creations. Any proceeds earned through the sale would be donated to the school's Relay for Life Team. The principal said that students would make appointments to see her with the secretary and come in to pitch their ideas about fundraisers, or other school events that they want to see happening. The students at these school sites manage recycling and coordinate awards ceremonies, food drives, and similar activities.

Participants indicated that students feel a strong sense that the adults in the

building trust them to help the school run efficiently and effectively. Students truly feel that they own the school. This perpetuates a sense of pride and respect of their school. This encourages students to keep the grounds clean, participate in various campus beautification projects, and proudly conduct campus tours for visitors pointing out all of the positive attributes of their schools.

Many of TLIM study participants noted that a positive side effect from students having leadership roles and a sense of ownership of their school is increased attendance. Administrators report that student absenteeism has decreased. Students understand that others are depending on them to be at school to take care of certain tasks and they do not want to let others down. They take their responsibility very seriously.

Increased confidence in students who are in leadership roles was another common theme found in research participants' responses. A resource teacher at one of the schools spoke about her own autistic son who had been a part of TLIM initiative since kindergarten. As a current fourth grader, he is now one of the school's ambassadors. As a school leader, he conducts campus tours and speaks at public events about the initiative to groups both large and small. For a student who began his school career often afraid in unfamiliar situations and nervous about talking to strangers, she has seen her son blossom into an eloquent and confident public speaker. She attributes this to the leadership roles he has been encouraged to undertake through this initiative.

Additionally, having students in leadership roles has positively impacted incidences of off task behaviors. Administrators report discipline issues have decreased significantly because students have assumed these leadership roles. The school-wide

expectation is that students in leadership roles must also serve as role models. They are often mentors for younger students as well and recognize the importance of setting a good example. One administrator summed it up best when she surmised that students in leadership roles have such a sense of pride about their school and the responsibility that they have undertaken, they simply want to do the right thing when it comes to behavior.

In addition to school-based leadership roles, research participants also spoke of habit seven which has to do with taking care of one's self physically, emotionally, and spiritually while also thinking of the needs of others. As a result, student involvement in altruistic types of community service projects is encouraged. Each grade level undertakes a community based project designed to give back to the local community in some way. Participants explained that the students themselves often are able to identify a need out in the community and come up with plans to address this need. All three schools reported having student leaders involved with food drives for local organizations. The students are in charge of coordinating these events from start to finish. According to research participants, these service projects have opened up students' eyes and hearts as to the sometimes unfortunate circumstances of others. This has made them more tolerant, caring, and understanding citizens.

Theme 4: Student Focused School Culture

Throughout the interview process with study participants, a common reference that seemed to be prevalent was that of the culture of the school. Participants maintain that the focus is always on the students. School staff make sure that students are involved in all aspects of running the school, that students work alongside the adults in the

building as leaders, and that the learning that goes on is being controlled by the students. One principal explained that "The kids are in on everything we do." Letting go of control was hard for some staff members according to the research participants, but once the students were in charge, student achievement took care of itself. Over time, the administrators interviewed said they noticed staff members often meeting with students during their own lunch times, staff members mentoring students without being asked, and staff members stepping up to take on additional leadership roles themselves for the betterment of the learning environment. One participant said this type of dedication and focus on the culture is just how "we do business around here." Another participant said simply, "It's just in our DNA." Participants say that their schools "feel different" compared to other schools they have worked at that were not Leader In Me schools.

This student-focused culture was very evident as I entered each building. The walls were covered with examples of student work and photographs, plaques, and other displays highlighting the students' academic achievement, civic involvement, leadership roles, and altruistic contributions. A principal at one of the sites talked about her school's Leadership Wall. She talked about the pride students feel each time they pass the wall and see their names written or photograph displayed there. Along with student information, bios of community leaders and inspirational leadership quotes are also posted for students to read. The actual physical environment of each building confirmed that the focus of that school was on highlighting student leadership and celebrating student accomplishments.

One of the research participants, a cafeteria manager, said she has "seen a huge

change in the climate of the school, especially the cafeteria, over the time that TLIM has been in place." Students running, shouting, and playing had been replaced with students acting in a more respectful manner. The day of our interview, she reported noticing at a fifth grader assisting a kindergartener during breakfast. This fifth grader, in years past, would have been more apt to tease the younger child. Instead, he was going out of his way to be very helpful. These are the kinds of things she reported she had noticed about the changes in student behavior. She summed it up with the following statement: "The kids are nicer now and there just seems to be this culture of caring."

Research participants attribute the current success of the initiative to staff buy-in from inception. Staff members have to be committed to the process and to living the *seven habits* themselves before students internalize the principles. Moreover, the adults in the building must be dedicated to keeping the initial commitment alive. Participants report a feeling of excitement and high expectations in their buildings.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that TLIM initiative positively impacted student motivation and peer relationships. Further analysis of the data gathered revealed that participant' descriptions of how TLIM motivated students and improved peer relationships fell within four basic categories. The last interview question asked of participants was whether or not they thought any one aspect of the LIM had the most impact as far as the initiative's effect on student motivation and peer relationships. Interestingly, responses from participants were evenly distributed between: a) the use seven habits language, b) having the students be responsible for setting goals and tracking

their own progress, c) making sure students are empowered through leadership roles, and d) the overall child focused school culture. One would then surmise that all four aspects working in conjunction as an integrated approach clearly are what impacts student motivation and peer relationships.

Also noteworthy from the data analysis is the identification of an overarching theme across all of the interviews. This common phrase that came up repeatedly whether participants were talking about student motivation, student completion of tasks, student behavior, peer relationships, leadership roles, or the climate or feel of the school, was the term "student owned." Students who feel a sense of ownership over their own academic performance and behavior choices, are motivated to attend school more often, engage academically, and connect with others in more positive ways. This sense of ownership is fostered by teachers who model expectations, provide students with opportunities to lead, and establish a student-focused school culture.

In the following section the results of the second literature review, conducted in part to discern the best method for sharing the results of the study, and the steps involved with the creation of the final project will be addressed.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This study sought to determine the effects of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships as perceived by those school-based personnel who were directly involved in the implementation of the initiative. The reasoning behind conducting the study was to provide information to my school and district regarding the feasibility of undertaking this initiative as a possible means of addressing our own local concerns related to student motivation and peer relationships. Through this study, I was able to determine that TLIM does indeed positively impact student motivation and peer relationships at schools similar to my own. In this section, I will describe and outline the goals of the final project. Additionally, I will present a literature review that corroborates the results of the project and substantiates the rationale behind utilizing the format of a white paper (See Appendix A) to share the findings of the study along with information about other key aspects of the final project.

The goal of this project is to share the findings gleaned through my research about the perceived effect of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships with educators in my school, district, and the larger educational community. The interview data gathered during this qualitative case study confirmed that this initiative does indeed have a positive impact on student motivation and peer relationships. The details as to how research participants view the impact of this initiative will inform professional practice which could result in positive social change in the educational setting. The results will open up dialogue about how current practices in schools could be revised or changed.

The next step in the process is to share this information with other educators in the most efficient and succinct manner possible.

Rationale

I developed this project as a way of sharing the findings of my study with the staff at my local elementary school and district personnel in order to answer to questions about the feasibility of implementing an initiative called The Leader In Me. Staff members at my local elementary school along with district office personnel were interested in determining if this initiative might provide some insight regarding local concerns of unmotivated students who often engage in negative peer interactions. By interviewing staff members at schools in another district where TLIM has been fully implemented, the insights and perceptions of the research participants were gathered, reviewed, and will then be presented to my local school and district pending Walden approval. These findings could potentially lead to discussions and action planning around improving learning environments for our students.

Stake (1995) claimed that truth is relative and dependent upon one's perspective. The truth is exactly what I sought through my research as I hoped to gain a deep understanding of the perspectives and opinions of school personnel directly involved with TLIM. In order to determine the perceptions of research participants, I utilized a qualitative case study methodology through which I conducted one-on-one interviews with voluntary participants. Through the interview process, I was able to gain detailed information about each participant's unique experiences with the initiative and truly understand their viewpoints on how TLIM impacted students. The 18 sets of transcripts

compiled during the study were synthesized and summarized. The next step was to share these results in a concise manner. During an extensive review of the various ways to most effectively report qualitative data in an efficient format, it was concluded that a white paper would be an appropriate method for the final project and most directly aligned with reporting data in an easily understood format. Supporting research as to why the white paper is most appropriate for sharing my study findings is presented in the review of literature.

Review of the Literature

A Boolean search was conducted through Walden library's Thoreau Multi-Database using key words related to the attributing factors that led to increased student motivation and positive peer relationships as a result of TLIM initiative. These themes and key words were: *Common language* (social-emotional learning, character education), *student goal setting, leadership roles,* and *school climate*. This corresponding research corroborated participant perceptions

The common language and expectations provided through the use of the seven habits teaches "non-cognitive skills" (Tough, 2012) such as persistence, self-control, grit, and self-confidence (Mathews et. al, 2013; Reinke, 2013). Research by Agboola and Tsai (2012) and Durlak (2011) support this belief that character education is best actualized when it is embedded in everyday life and enables students to practice good virtues that will extend into life beyond school. Further, research conducted by Elias (2014) found that an emphasis on social-emotional and character education is best conceptualized if it is systematic, continuous, and integrated.

This viewpoint is also supported by Marshall (2011), who found that "rather than being a bag of virtues designed to control student behavior, integrated character education is a school and community process for educating the whole child in a healthy, caring environment" (p. 53). He further supported this claim by saying that:

> A school of character is a community that begins by establishing social conventions within community traditions and continues with moral development through role modeling, student, home and community interactions, student discussion and reflection, and students' active involvement in their own learning. Thus, character development is integrated into all aspects of students' learning experiences. (p. 53).

This is supported by research conducted by Bohanon (2015) suggesting that strategic changes in adult behavior as a strategy for impacting student behavior has a positive impact.

Along with a common language to ensure students know what to expect from their learning environment, they need to be provided with a sense of direction for learning, through the setting and monitoring of learning goals. Research by Newman (2012), supports the belief that goal setting and self-monitoring by students is an essential part of the learning process. He stated that "goal setting is a first step not the last in transforming the teaching and learning occur for students" (p. 13). When students are able to articulate how their own learning goals and how they connect to the educational goals of the school, then everyone in the building is speaking the same language and the responsibility for learning is shared by all stakeholders (Newman, 2012).

Setting goals and working toward them appears to be an important aspect of self-regulation. Carpenter (2013) concluded that to be able to successfully engage in goal setting and self-monitoring, students must be aware of their own thinking processes and how to break down a task in order to work toward attaining the end result goal). Carpenter further states that "multiple elements must come together in order for students to demonstrate self-regulation: they must feel self-efficacious; engage in goal setting, planning, and reflection; and be able to dissect particular tasks and how best to complete them given the available resources" (p 43). Students who come to school unable to engage in these processes must be taught these habits of mind (Carpenter, 2013).

Farrington and colleagues (2012) have termed these habits of mind as academic mindsets. When students are able to see the value and relevance of goal setting, it helps them to develop feelings of connectedness with school. Farrington and colleagues (2012) also emphasized that students to must be taught to develop and achieve successful academic mindsets. Furthermore, using strategies that attempt to develop or sustain academic mindsets have been shown to not only improve academic performance, but tend to increase perseverance and self-determination in students (Farrington et al., 2012; McCray, 2015; Sokol, 2013; Steagall, 2012).

Goal setting and monitoring are an important part of self-determination and are closely tied to the idea of self-regulation. Self-regulation skills have been correlated with higher academic achievement and are a critical component to success in school and beyond (Farrington et al., 2012: McCray, 2015; Steagall, 2012). Additional research by Palmer and Wehmeyer (2014), Duckworth (2011), and Duckworth et al., (2011),

confirmed the significance of goal setting and monitoring. Their studies report that opportunities for students to goal set, plan, and self-evaluate positively impacted students' ability to self-regulate, self-direct, and own their learning.

Student Leadership Roles

When students are competent at owning their learning, they are able to take on leadership roles that positively impact the school as a whole as well as the learning of others. This sense of student ownership is confirmed by Byland (2015), who outlined how one school went from "tough kids to change agents" by incorporating leadership opportunities for students. These opportunities included leadership lessons and opportunities to practice the skills learned through mentoring others. Barnett (2013) instituted a similar student leadership initiative in order to help students feel a sense of ownership of their school and thereby their own learning. Her students were asked for their opinion about what they wanted their school to look like. They helped to develop the school's vision, began conducting school tours for visitors, and even helped hire prospective teachers by sitting in on the interview process. Her students also began acting as peer mentors. These student leadership opportunities have led to what she deems a dramatic transformation in school culture. There is power in giving students a voice when it comes to decision making and leadership at the school level (Beechum, 2012; Damiani, 2013; Prenkert, 2015; Quinn & Owen, 2016; Walker & Hoyt, 2015).

Student Focused Leadership School Culture

When students take on leadership roles within the school, they have an active voice when it comes to helping to shape and share responsibility for the culture and

climate of the school. Research conducted by Hughes and Pickeral (2013) found that a school climate of shared leadership for all stakeholders creates safer and more engaging schools for students. They further defined shared leadership as all stakeholders, including students, working in partnership to develop the school's purpose and sharing the duties and responsibilities of actually running the school. Accountability and empowerment are key components of shared leadership. An important point made by Hughes and Pickeral (2013) is that "Just as we have high expectations that all students can learn, principals must have high expectations that students, parents, teachers and staff can lead" (p.4). This seems to be the common theme and message coming from staff members at TLIM schools that I visited.

Moreover, Cardillo (2013) reports that when the adults and students in a building share leadership, you will find a "student-focused school" (p.1). He also stated that "consistently and deliberately supporting students to be engaged as co-leaders is an essential requirement for successful school climate improvement" (p.1). He further explains that school should be working toward creating leaders today, not just simply for life beyond school. Finally, Cardillo says that "we need to consciously engage them (students) in our work, not as an afterthought but as a fundamental part of the initial process to transform our schools into the places we want them to be" (p.3). Additional studies that support shared leadership between the adults and students in the building include: Barber, 2013; Blum, 2012; Daughtery, 2014; and Parrent & Budge, 2012).

These findings mirror research conducted by the National School Climate Center (2012) which concluded that successful schools foster youth development, establish

relationships of mutual respect with students, and encourage each stakeholder (staff, students, and parents) to contribute to the physical and emotional well-being of the school. The Center also reported that schools that encourage civic projects help to build trusting relationships between all members of the school community which further enhances learning (2012). This confirms the value of the altruistic focus of some of the student leadership opportunities (community service projects) mentioned by participants at TLIM schools I visited.

Research in the areas of self-determination and motivation confirm that this concept of student ownership is indeed fostered by: a) providing students with a common set of behavioral and academic expectations, b) helping students to set and monitor goals, c) ensuring students are involved with leadership opportunities within the school, and d) sustaining a school culture focused on students (Corpus & Wormington, 2014; Froiland et al., 2012; Williams, 2011; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012).

Additional research conducted by Ashley (2015), Dagget (2014), Henderson (2013), and Pederson et al., (2012); Reeves, (2011); and Thapa et al., (2012) reported that schools with a student-focused culture foster supportive relationships, high levels of trust, and high expectations for all. This substantiates participants' perceptions of how TLIM perpetuates a culture that "feels different" from other schools.

In order for students to feel connected at school and develop a sense of responsibility toward their own achievement, a culture of caring must be established and a skillset provided to students that affords them opportunities to take charge of their own learning. The increased confidence that students gain results in them having the ability to

then lead others. The second literature review conducted for this paper confirmed this and demonstrated the interconnectedness with the theoretical framework that provided the foundation for this study. Early theorists' perspectives on what motivates students and leads to positive peer relationships were indeed corroborated through the new studies that were found. Moreover, the actual findings of the study served to triangulate both the previous as well as most recent literature review.

The next step in the process was to determine the best method for sharing these findings with the target audience. An additional literature review and extensive Boolean search was conducted through Walden library's Thoreau Multi-Database using key words such as *white paper, position paper, imparting research, consumers of research.* Similar phrases were researched using ERIC. Parameters such as peer reviewed research and research conducted within the last five years were used. This search was also extended to include books and websites. Repetitive references starting to come to light and at a point, no new references surfaced. While many of the resources discovered were a bit older than five years, because of the extensive search that was conducted I am confident that saturation was reached of the sources available.

Through this literature review, I found information that substantiates the use of the white paper as a format for sharing findings. In today's fast paced world, time is of the essence. Most consumers of research report that, in order for the research to truly impact practice, it must be a quick read, have a limited amount of jargon, and a simple format (Beechum, 2012; Nelson, Leffler, & Hansen, 2009). This research was confirmed by a report from Learning First Alliance (2016). Through focus group discussions, a

panel of experts brought together by the Alliance concluded that are many barriers to using research to inform practice. These barriers included difficulty of practitioners understanding the research in the often cumbersome delivery formats and the time required to obtain, decipher, and understand the research (Balfanz et al., 2016).

Further, Hines and Bogenschneider (2013) found that those in a position to use research to bring about changes in policy often do not have the expertise to interpret often complex research nor the time to do so. Additional research by Tseng (2012) supports Hines and Bogenschneider (2013), in that when it comes to interpreting research, those with limited expertise prefer short, quick reads such as policy briefs, position papers, and executive summaries. Research by Kantor (2009) and Kemp (2005) also support the premise that the more concise and simplistic summaries of findings are, the more likely the information will be used to inform practice and bring about change.

The aforementioned research supports the use of an efficient and easily understood method to share findings of research. Since the objective of a white paper is to impart information to others in a format that is succinct and efficient (Madden, 2009), this method is ideal for communicating the findings to stakeholders (Wood, 2013). Moreover, research conducted in both in Canada (Galway & Sheppard, 2015) and in the United States (Honig & Koburn, 2008) indicate that district office personnel often look to local in house types of research when planning school improvement efforts. This research provides further justification that disseminating the information learned to my local school and district in this format will strengthen the likelihood that the data will be reviewed by those with the authority to bring about real change to the educational setting.

Researchers at Purdue University Writing Center (Sakamuro et al., 2011) stated that white papers are often used to "argue a specific position or propose a solution to a problem" (owl.english.purdue.edu). White papers are used to inform stakeholders by providing them with pertinent information in a succinct format that is easy to comprehend and often promote change within a system (Click, 2011; Hoffman, 2013a; Hoffman, 2013b; Graham, 2013). At the very least, research confirms that white papers can open up dialogue, enhance collaborative discussions among stakeholders, and aid in decision making (Gordon & Gordon, 2003; Stelzner, 2006).

The actual structure of a white paper varies by researcher, however, most contend that the writer should keep in mind the audience to which the information is being relayed, use language that is easy to understand, and summarize findings succinctly (Bly, 2006; Hoffman, 2013b; Hoffman, 2013c; MacArthur, 2008; Madden, 2009; Sakamuro et al., 2011). As the final project culminating my research, I followed the guidelines outlined in the research I found related to writing a white paper and endeavored to simply provide a factual overview of my study as concisely as possible (Bly, 2006; Boys, 2014; Mehring, 2014; Stelzner, 2010). Keeping in mind that my audience included district office personnel, fellow principals, and school staff from Lane Elementary School as well as educators in the greater academic community, I highlighted the key elements of my research and focused mainly on the findings**.**

An analysis of the key aspects of the theoretical framework and current research behind student motivation and related research on character education, social-emotional learning, and classroom climate and effective schools confirmed the interconnectedness

of this research to the findings of the study. Both McClelland's (1961) and Locke's (1968) theories related to motivation give credence to providing a learning environment that promotes independence, encourages taking responsibility of one's own actions and attitude, and doing the right thing without being asked. According to research participants, these are some of the basic premises behind TLIM. The habits also promote positive relationships with others by thinking win-win, seeking first to understand then to be understood, and synergizing (working together cooperatively).

The last habit is related to caring for one's self holistically (mind, body, and soul) by being healthy and by giving to others. Participants gave numerous examples of students who voluntarily assisted one another and who took on leadership roles involving service learning types of projects within the school and community. This support in the development of altruism exemplifies the definition of intrinsic motivation as provided by Kohlberg (1984) and demonstrates the connection between theory and practice as outlined in the findings of my study.

Furthermore, Marshall (2011) confirmed the need for schools to provide systematic, ongoing instruction of pro-social skills as well as the value in ensuring that students take responsibility for their actions. Marshall (2011) also pointed out that a school culture must exist where these concepts are integrated within the context of the school day and a concerted effort is made by all stakeholders to sustain them. The results of the study demonstrate yet another example of theory being put into practice in that participants described the habits as a way of thinking infused within the curriculum and all interactions, rather than an add-on, character education instructional component. This

example of the interconnectedness between research and practice is further supported by Agboola and Tsai (2012) and Durlak (2011) who confirm the premise that character education is best actualized when it is embedded in everyday life.

Finally, a direct connection between theory and practice is once again noted when thinking in terms of the student leadership and student ownership components outlined by participants in relation to TLIM. Damiani (2013) and Quinn & Owen (2016), and others confirm that there is power in giving students a voice when it comes to decision making and leadership at the school level. Research in the areas of self-determination and motivation confirm that this concept of student ownership is indeed fostered in part by ensuring that students are involved with leadership opportunities within the school.

In summary, a caring, student focused environment is key to ensuring students are motivated and that they engage in positive peer interactions. A systematic, pervasive set of expectations and common language will enhance pro-social skills. Establishing a highly engaging and collaborative classroom environment and providing a rationale for promoting self-reliance in students ensures that they are able to take responsibility for their actions, which, in turn, also positively impacts both motivation and peer relationships. And finally, in order for the learning environment to be effective, a school culture must exist where these concepts are integrated within the context of the school day and a concerted effort is made by all stakeholders to sustain them.

In order to impart this information to educational practitioners in a concise manner, so that positive change can be brought about in educational settings within the community and beyond, research further confirms that the simplistic and user-friendly

format of the white paper is an ideal method to utilize. Research confirms that a white paper can encourage dialogue, enhance collaborative discussions among stakeholders, and aid in decision making (Gordon & Gordon, 2003; Stelzner, 2006). For this reason, a white paper summarizing the findings of my research will be the final product of this study.

Project Description

Support for this project comes in the form of interest from teachers and staff at Lane Elementary as well as district office personnel, and other interested parties in the field of education. The purpose behind this research study was to gather information in order to inform my faculty and staff as to the feasibility of implementation of TLIM to address concerns about our students' lack of motivation and negative peer interactions. In addition, my area superintendent has asked me to share the findings from my research with our district when it is finalized. The details of my research, in the form of a white paper (Appendix A), will be disseminated within the larger educational community.

Resources

Resources required to make the white paper available to all interested stakeholders includes the availability to print multiple copies of the document. Since the white paper will be shared within my district, any of the aforementioned resources as well as any others that may come to light can be covered through district funding. The white paper can also be provided to stakeholders through an electronic form.

Barriers and Solutions

A possible barrier might be a lack of response to the findings on the part of the

staff members at Lane Elementary. While the staff has invested time and resources in the search for possible solutions to their concerns about student motivation and peer relationships, acting upon the results of this study require planning and action by school members to bring about positive change. This barrier could be overcome by an intentional focus on ensuring an open line of communication exists between all stakeholders. Staff members will need a lead facilitator to guide them through the process of developing a solid plan of action that includes checkpoints and goals for follow through. My role would be to act as facilitator and guide.

Timetable

The timeline for sharing the white paper with Lane Elementary School personnel and the local district is contingent upon final approval by Walden University. I expect that the white paper will be available for review in early 2017. District Leadership Week, which occurs mid-June in my local district, would be an optimal time for the presentation of findings. Or, the white paper could be shared and distributed at the beginning of 2017. The plan is to present a copy of the white paper to my area superintendent initially and then outline and discuss plans with her for broader dissemination. It is my hope that this white paper will spur professional discussions around the findings and will perpetuate ongoing collaboration between district office and local elementary schools as they endeavor to improve the learning environment for students.

Roles and Responsibilities of Those Involved

This project involved myself as the researcher and voluntary participants from three schools who are currently engaged in full implementation of TLIM. My role was to

ensure that the entire process of the study was bias-free and that findings were reported in a neutral manner. While not stated as such, participants who agreed to take part in the study contributed to the pedagogical body of knowledge available for review by those in the educational field. This information could potentially impact student learning environments and promote student achievement. My Walden doctoral committee contributed greatly to the overall study by providing constructive and scholarly feedback. Additional involvement includes educators who will read the final product of my study (the white paper) and use this information to inform educational practices. There were no students involved in this project.

Project Evaluation Plan

The aim of this study was to provide educators with information about the feasibility of implementing TLIM as a way to address concerns about unmotivated students and students who engage in negative interactions with peers. The outcome of this study can provide interested stakeholders with firsthand perspectives of those involved in the initiative. By sharing this white paper, which summarizes the results of the study, the overall expectation is that changes to the learning environment will be put into place. I will measure successful outcomes by the increased collaborations between key stakeholders which include teachers and staff at Lane Elementary and district office personnel.

My goal is not to sell a product or convince educators to purchase a specific program. Rather, my goal is to report the findings of my research so that interested stakeholders may use the information to make informed decisions about how to increase

student motivation and enhance peer relationships. The ultimate goal of this dissemination of information is that educational environments are improved and student achievement is positively impacted. This white paper can serve as a method for engaging in dialogue, problem solving around current practices that are seemingly ineffective, and using this information provided for improvement. I believe a formative evaluation of the final project would help to refine the white paper to ensure clarity for the readers. Prior to sharing the project within the educational community, the white paper could be provided to three varying stakeholders groups (administrators, teachers, and parents). Their feedback would be used to gather consumer reaction and to obtain suggestions about how to make the white paper more accessible and actionable.

Project Implications

Educational environments that are supportive in nature, that promote collaboration, and focus on self-efficacy in students are vital for students to maintain high levels of motivation and engage in positive peer relationships. If local and national survey data historically shows that students are unmotivated, have little hope, and have low feelings of well-being, then the traditional programs and methods used to address student motivation and positive peer interactions are seemingly ineffective. The summary of interviews conducted within this study explored TLIM and its perceived impact of key aspects of the initiative on student motivation and peer relationships. The findings of this study could serve as a means to bring about positive change to educational environments.

Since the original intent of this study was to make a determination as to the feasibility of implementing this initiative, sharing the findings of the research with those

interested in the outcome is the next step. A white paper that outlines the key aspects of TLIM as they relate to increased student motivation and more positive peer relationships would open up lines of communication among educators and potentially lead to positive change. If the learning environment is enhanced and improved for students, then the likelihood of increased student achievement is greater.

Far-Reaching

Preparing students to be college, career, and life ready is the main goal of educators and the overarching purpose of this research study and final project. The results of this project will promote professional dialogue among educators and hopefully spur them into action as they look for ways to strengthen and improve educational environments for students. As a result of increased motivation in school and a stronger ability to interact positively with peers, students will be successful. And, ultimately, students will leave our schools better equipped to be productive members of society.

This project study will provide other schools facing similar concerns with information about the impact of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships. This data can help them to make informed decisions about the key aspects of the initiative and how to best meet the needs of students. The project can be used by anyone in the field of education who is interested in exploring options for improving student motivation and peer relationships in order to impact student achievement. This information may help to bring about positive change to educational settings, which in turn, would impact students' preparedness to be college, career, and life ready.

Conclusion

The white paper provides the local school and district as well as others in the larger educational community with information to begin discussions on how to improve learning environments. The white paper will open a forum for discussion and collaboration between those interested in the future of education.

Section 4 will include the reflections on the study process and the importance of the work along with implications, application, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This study focused on the perceptions of those school faculty and staff members who were engaged in full implementation of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships. Throughout the process to gather this research data, much was gleaned from the results as well as the process it took to arrive at the point of sharing the findings.

In this section, I will describe the project's strengths and limitations. Additionally, I will discuss scholarship, project development, leadership, and change. Finally, I will reflect upon the importance of the work and on the implications, applications, and directions for future research.

The use of a qualitative case study design as the choice for conducting the research was the most effective way to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of those individuals who had firsthand knowledge of TLIM. Participants were able to freely share their opinions and perspectives which supported the goal of the research methodology chosen (Stake, 1995). In turn, using the final project study format of the white paper allowed me to share these findings in the most efficient manner possible.

The white paper explored the findings of the perceived impact of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships. Results further highlighted the potential to educate and persuade administrators, teachers, and stakeholders, to open a dialogue around how this information could be used to inform educational practices. The project was designed to concisely and efficiently identify and provide an understanding of strategies and educational practices that favorably impact student motivation and peer

relationships in elementary school students. The overarching goal of the final project was that administrators, teacher, and stakeholders engage in discussions and develop a plan of action to bring about positive change in the educational setting.

Project Limitations

The findings reported in this white paper project were based on interview data collected from a relatively small number of participants. While the case study methodology is grounded in research that supports gaining a thick description of participants' unique perspectives (Stake, 1995 & Creswell, 2012), some consumers of research might question basing findings on only 18 interviews. Sample populations that are kept small may hinder ability to generalize data.

Moreover, the data gathered for this white paper came from only one school district. One could argue that the trends and themes noted may be based on the cultural norms or aspects of that geographical area or on the policies unique to that district. Again, with this limited view, one might question the validity of generalizing the results.

An additional limitation of the final project could be based on the demographic focus of the research. Data was gathered from only Title 1 schools. Perhaps the ability to strengthen the generalizability of the data would be better served if both Title 1 and Non-Title 1 schools were included. This comparison could prove enlightening. However, for the purpose of my research, these limitations were not an issue.

Finally, the white paper as a form of communicating results is limited by the stakeholders' level of commitment to read and engage in dialogue about the topic. In order to glean information from the white paper and use it to inform practice,

stakeholders must be willing to put forth a concerted effort to read, synthesize, and act upon the findings.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

While the case study methodology proved successful in answering my research question about the effect of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships, other types of research methods could have also yielded useful information. For example, conducting observations in the actual learning environments where TLIM was being implemented would have certainly given me a different perspective on the initiative's effect on motivation and peer relationships. This would have required being immersed in the culture of the school(s) where long-term access would have been possible (Lodico et al. 2010).

Similarly, a quantitative study that compares student achievement data before and after implementation of the initiative may have answered questions related to the academic impact as determined by assessment data. Academic gains are indeed one part of the overall picture of the effectiveness of TLIM. Moreover, if a comparison would have been made to student attendance and referral data and student achievement data pre/post implementation, one might have surmised that TLIM had an effect on attendance and referral rates which, in turn, impacted student achievement and peer relationships.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As a self-proclaimed life-long learner, scholarship for me was strengthened considerably through participation in Walden's doctoral level program of study. Through the diverse and comprehensive core curriculum Walden University provided, I developed

the intellectual foundation necessary to make connections between the coursework and real-world application. Through coursework as well as the professional dialogue I engaged in with fellow students and professors through discussion boards, I gained knowledge and skills that strengthened my ability as a scholar. I developed skills in discerning credible sources from ones that were questionable while also learning to identify and synthesize professional literature. As a consumer and now producer of professional research, Walden coursework strengthened my ability to write in a scholarly manner as well. This led to conducting my own research and all that was involved with my project study. My scholarship developed as I became more knowledgeable about the process of conducting research and I gained expertise in the areas of student motivation, social-emotional learning environments, and effective schools.

Throughout my development as a scholar, I depended greatly on the expertise of committee members to guide me through this process. The doctoral committee served as a source of support and confidence building as they critiqued my work and coached me toward refining my thinking as a scholar. Additionally, instructors and peers contributed to my growth as a scholarly thinker by offering direction, support, and feedback.

As a practitioner, the extensive research that I conducted in the area of motivation, social-emotional learning environments, character education, and effective schools, has enhanced my ability to lead others in my school and district. My learning was extremely relevant to my role as an administrator and educator. The skills that I gained through this degree program as well as through the process of completing a research study, will serve me well in my role as a practitioner as I continue to seek out

ways to improve my educational environment.

Additionally, the skills and knowledge that I have gained as a project developer, will help me to further refine, improve, and add to the pedagogical body of knowledge as a whole as I continue to seek out ways to improve and enhance learning for students. I have strengthened my ability to think critically about educational issues and I am more confident about finding solutions in order to bring about positive change through research, inquiry, and action.

Through Walden's program and the resulting research that I engaged in through this final project study, my roles as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer became interwoven and intertwined. Rather than thinking in terms of these roles as separate entities, I see them as cyclical and integrated. The work completed through this final project has allowed me to take the knowledge I gained as a scholar and imbed it in real-world application through my role as a practitioner. This integration has led to the culmination of myself as a project developer through the project study that I conducted based on TLIM.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As an educator, my focus is always on providing the best learning environment possible for students. This endeavor requires a continual focus on keeping abreast of what research tells us about best practice. I am constantly seeking out new information through research, professional discussions, and action research. I recognize the vital importance of constantly honing my pedagogical craft if I am to do what is best for students.

As a school-based leader, I am also tasked with helping the educators in my

building to do what is best for students. Through coaching and modeling as an instructional leader, I must continue to be a learner myself in order to meet this challenge. Through the doctoral program at Walden and the research that I have engaged in, I have spent countless hours reviewing information, reflecting on educational practices, consulting with colleagues, and using research to synthesize my own understanding into new learning. Throughout this journey of discovery and learning, I my committed to learning even more. This journey has led me to pose a question and engage in the complex, challenging, and rewarding work of conducting my own research.

Through my research, I was able to confirm that TLIM initiative has indeed positively impacted student motivation and peer relationships. However, I want to learn more. As exhausting as these past few years have been, I find myself wanting to visit more Lighthouse schools, interview even more participants, and further investigate other practices and initiatives that may have the potential to increase student achievement. I endeavor to better prepare the students I serve with the ability to be productive members of an ever evolving, global society. My desire is to continuously develop and change as a learner and educator so that I can contribute to the betterment of the organization in which I work, as well as society in general.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings of the literature review conducted for this study imply that educational environments that are supportive in nature, that promote collaboration, and focus on self-efficacy in students are vital for students to maintain high levels of motivation and encourage positive peer relationships. If local and national survey data

historically shows that students are unmotivated, have little hope, and have low feelings of well-being, then the traditional programs and methods used to address student motivation and positive peer interactions are seemingly ineffective. Constantly looking for new and innovative ways to improve educational environments is what prompted me to engage in research around TLIM. This inquiry must continue as students and their educational needs continue to change. As educators, we must all endeavor to explore new research and revise current knowledge on our journey to continuously revise and seek out new information.

Goals for future research should include ongoing progress monitoring of the needs of students, especially in the areas of motivation and school connectedness. Through this process of monitoring, educators should engage in ongoing collaborative discussions, driven by student data, to determine the direction for new topics to research. A constant desire to create new knowledge dedicated to the improvement of social conditions and to positively impact society by putting that knowledge into practice, is vital. Once systems are put into place that have a positive effect on student motivation and peer relationships, future research should be conducted to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies in order to revise and refine as needed.

Conclusion

Many schools, including my own, struggle with students who are unmotivated and who often interact negatively with peers. Section 1 of this study showed the pervasiveness of this issue. The theoretical framework behind student motivation, character education, social-emotional learning, and classroom climate and effective

schools confirmed that a caring, emotionally stable environment, is crucial to the success of students as they prepare to be college, career, and life ready. The findings of this research can serve as yet another tool to help teachers make informed decisions about how to create positive social change within their schools.

The project that resulted from this study (white paper) provided an educational summary of the research that was conducted in an effort to help stakeholders engage in relevant discussions and action planning around how to bring similar results to their own educational settings. The implications of the potential impact of TLIM, or at the very least, the conversation that this study will perpetuate between school staff, students, parents, and community members about motivating students to succeed and about finding ways to promote positive peer interactions, could help to improve the lives of students.

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Appendix A: The Project

LIM: Improving Student Motivation and Peer Relationships

Perceptions of Staff at Three
LIM Lighthouse Schools

Walden University
A White Paper by Charlene Tidd
October 2016

Background

This white paper was prepared for the faculty and staff of Lane Elementary, district office personnel, and others in the educational community who are interested in reviewing the findings of the project study that I conducted related to the perceived

effects of The Leader In Me on student motivation and peer relationships. The project study was completed as part of the requirements for the doctoral degree program at Walden University.

Teacher and student data sources at Lane Elementary School, a Title 1 school in the southeastern region of the United States, reported ongoing concerns with students' overall lack of motivation to complete assignments and inability to interact cooperatively with peers. Despite the implementation of school wide expectations and positive behavior recognitions and incentives, staff members at Lane Elementary School have found that students lack the motivation to complete class work, and consistently engage in negative interactions with peers. Teachers reported that students lack the necessary skills to self-regulate behaviors and to positively connect with others.

Concerns raised by teachers locally mirror similar concerns in the larger educational setting across the country as indicated by national Gallup Poll results showing that across the United States, only 53% of students in grades 5-12 (no survey data gathered for lower grades) feel hopeful, 63% are engaged, and 70% feel a sense of well-being (2014). This data shows the pervasive nature of these issues across the country.

Lane Elementary teachers endeavored to find ways to address these concerns at their local school site in order to positively impact the students they serve. Past attempts to increase student motivation and foster positive peer relationships have focused on building motivation through incentives and positive recognition programs or by targeting specific character traits that were intended to enhance pro-social skills. Lane Elementary

School had not utilized a comprehensive approach to address motivation and positive peer relationships simultaneously.

As a result, the faculty and staff of the school planned to implement an initiative called TLIM based on the work of Stephen Covey (2005) in an attempt to help students develop skills that will positively impact their motivation and peer relationships. The staff believed that the implementation of TLIM initiative may result in a different outcome than previous attempts due to its inclusiveness.

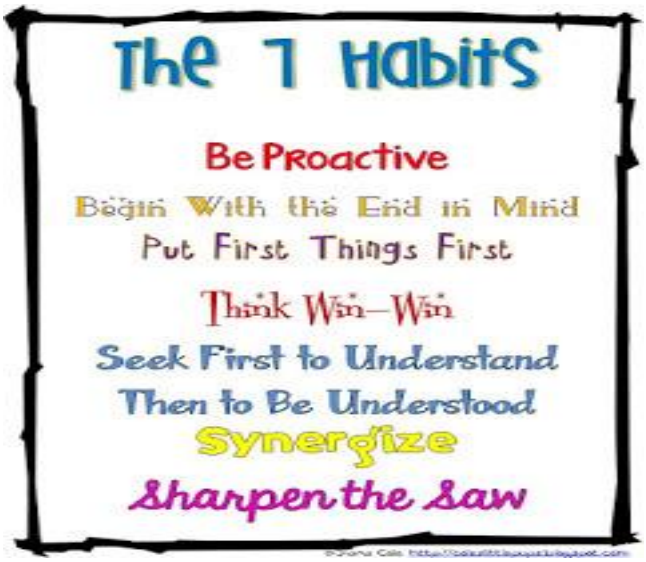
This white paper summarizes the impact of TLIM on student motivation and peer relationships as perceived by school personnel who have fully implemented the initiative. Interviews were conducted with a combined total of 18 teachers, administrators, and other staff members from three school sites in a large district in the southeastern region of the United States where the initiative TLIM is being fully implemented. The results of this study confirm that key elements of TLIM, including: a) a common understanding and pervasive use of seven habits language, b) student goal setting and data tracking, c) leadership opportunities for students, and d) a school culture that promotes student ownership of learning do indeed favorably impact student motivation and promote positive peer interactions.

The Leader In Me

The Leader In Me came about when an elementary school principal named Muriel Summers attended a Seven Habits training in 1999. This training inspired her to take the concepts and ideas she learned through the training and teach them to her elementary school students and staff. Her work evolved into a school-based initiative designed to

incorporate the Seven Habits into the day-to-day routines of the school day so that student engagement and motivation to achieve increased (Covey, 2005). The vision behind TLIM is to "inspire greatness, one child at a time" (Covey, 2008). This initiative, which is called the Leader In Me, is based on Stephen Covey's book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989). Covey himself defined the gist of the book as a "holistic, integrated approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness" (p. 3). The seven habits are:

"Inspire greatness, one child at a time."
Covey, 2008



TLIM a teacher and child-friendly version of the seven habits principles. From a student perspective, the first three habits help students to recognize the importance of being proactive, putting first things first, and beginning with the end in mind by stressing independence, responsibility for one's actions and attitude, and doing the right thing without being asked. Habits four through six promote positive relationships with others by thinking win-win, seeking first to understand then to be

understood, and synergizing (working together cooperatively). The last habit is related to caring for one's self holistically (mind, body, and soul) by being healthy and by giving to others (Covey, 2005).

Through the integration of the habits within the context of the school day, TLIM initiative strives to ensure that the principles behind the habits are ingrained in the students and staff members, and will thereby lead to a successful school experience as well as a better quality of life beyond school for students (Covey, 2005). Staff members, along with students, are also introduced to the habits during the course of the initiative. It is an expectation of the initiative that the adults in the building also learn and live the habits. In order for students to embrace the initiative, all stakeholders must be well versed in and a model of the habits and what they stand for (Covey, 2005). By integrating the habits into one's daily life, attributes such as self-efficacy, self-responsibility, collaboration with others, and leadership abilities are developed and enhanced.

Summary of Research and Findings

For this research, a qualitative case study was conducted. My goal was to gain a deep understanding of how those individuals involved with TLIM perceive its impact on student motivation and peer relationships. One-on-one interviews were conducted with voluntary participants including teachers, administrators, and non-classroom personnel such as guidance counselors, instructional assistants, and intervention teachers at schools where TLIM was fully implemented. Six participants from each of the three schools (two from each of the three sub-categories of classroom teacher, administrator, and non-classroom based personnel) were interviewed. Dates and times were arranged via email

to visit each campus to conduct the interviews.

A standardized set of questions was asked of each of the 18 participants. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Trends, themes, key words, and patterns were notated and summarized. The actual data analysis method used was a manual three step coding process as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). The first step was to simply read the text. Next, the transcriptions of the interviews were transferred onto a two-column matrix. Key phrases were notated. This step was repeated three times to ensure the analysis was thorough (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data was then condensed into major categories or themes that came to light during analysis as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: *Effect of LIM on Student Motivation and Peer Relationships*

	What participants noticed about the Effect of the LIM on Student Motivation	**What participants noticed about the Effect of the LIM on Peer Relationships**
Administrators	Students set and track their own learning goals. Students "own" their learning. Students are actively engaged. Students take pride in their school. Students embrace leadership roles. Increased attendance. Decreased discipline issues.	Decreased bullying. Decreased arguing. More synergizing. Mentor/mentee partnerships between students. More harmonious relationships.
Classroom Teachers	Self-tracking of progress keeps students focused. More on task behaviors. Students verbalize seven habits and remind peers to work first then play. Students are more respectful. Less student disruptions.	Less bullying incidences. More collaboration. Less teacher intervention needed. Students problem solve own issues. Students are more in control of selves.
Non-Classroom Based Personnel	Students take pride in sharing data. Student ownership/pride of school. Students embrace learning. Students on task more often.	Students help one another. Students remind others of expectations. Cafeteria is calmer.

	Students know what is expected (seven habits). Increased student confidence.	Students get along. Less disrespect toward peers.

The participants' perceptions indicate that TLIM did positively impact student motivation and peer relationships. The how behind this belief can be condensed into four themes or categories: a) seven habits principles/common language, b) student goal setting and tracking, c) student leadership roles, and d) student focused school culture.

A summary of the descriptive phrases participants used along with the correlating category is shown in Table 2. A detailed explanation of these results is included in the accompanying narrative discussion.

Table 2: *Commonalities of descriptive phrases and correlating categories of the "how" behind increased student motivation and positive peer relationships related to TLIM according to participant groups (Administrators, classroom teachers, non-classroom* personnel).

Sub Groups	Seven habits Principles and Common Language	Student Goal Setting and Data Tracking	Student Leadership Roles	School Culture

Admin. Teachers Non-Class-room	Students are more verbal. Students look you in the eye. Common language. Teachers use the language-model it. Students use of seven habits. Seven habits language embedded in everything. Students own choices. Using language as a preventative. Students trust each other.	Students have leadership notebooks. Students lead parent conferences. Students own learning. Students set their own goals. Students graph their own data. Expectations for academics, behavior-no excuses. Student owed data.	Students run the assemblies. Students give tours. Students pitch ideas. Students are empowered. Students take responsibility. Students take on roles formally owned by the adults. Students are in charge around here. Students are role models. Attendance is up, misbehaviors, down.	This seems like a different place. This isn't a program. Teachers don't stop at 2:30 to do LIM. It's part of our culture. It's who we are and what we believe. The students are in on everything we do. Students tell others, "we don't act like that here." It's very powerful here. Students love to be here. It's in our DNA. Common mindset.

Theme One: Seven Habits and Common Expectations

All 18 participants interviewed shared the belief that the use and ingrained knowledge of seven habits language, pervasive across campus and all stakeholder groups, has made a huge impact on students' motivation and ability to take charge of their own learning and behavior. Participants report that a deep understanding and ability to conceptualize the principles behind the seven habits by everyone in their buildings has made a significant impact on student motivation and peer relationships.

"I DON'T THINK ANYONE HAD EVER TAUGHT THEM TO PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST BEFORE, JUST BASICALLY TO PRIORITIZE THEIR LIVES."
RESOURCE TEACHER, SCHOOL # 1.

All 18 participants emphasized the importance of the seven habits being an integrated part of the day, a way of thinking infused within everything else that goes on, rather than being used as an add-on, character education type of curriculum. Several participants stated how vitally important it was for the adults in the building to be role models in action of the seven habits in order for the habits to carry over to the students and become simply a way of life.

Research by Agboola and Tsai (2012) and Durlak (2011) support this premise that character education is best actualized when it is embedded in everyday life and enables

students to practice good virtues that will extend into life beyond school. Further, research conducted by Elias (2014) found that an emphasis on social-emotional and/or character education is best conceptualized if it is systematic, continuous, and integrated.

This viewpoint is also supported by Marshall (2011), who found that "rather than being a bag of virtues designed to control student behavior, integrated character education is a school and community process for educating the whole child in a healthy, caring environment" (p. 53). He further supported this premise by saying that:

> A school of character is a community that begins by establishing social conventions within community traditions and continues with moral development through role modeling, student, home and community interactions, student discussion and reflection, and students' active involvement in their own learning. Thus, character development is integrated into all aspects of students' learning experiences. (p. 53)

One of the principals interviewed illustrated how pervasive the use of a common language and set of expectations is at her school when she talked about how she had received a complaint from a parent about a negative comment that a teacher had allegedly made to her child. The parent demanded to know why a staff member at a Leader In Me school would not be modeling the seven habits at all times if that was the expectation. The administrator's point was that at her school, parents will call out staff members who are not modeling the.

The first three habits have to do with taking charge of one's self by putting first things first, beginning with the end in mind, and being proactive. These habits teach students about taking responsibility for one's own learning and behavior. When students follow these three habits, they truly own their own academic progress and can make appropriate choices when it comes to behavior. Participants report that students who live these habits, epitomize the statement, "I am in charge of me." Administrators, classroom teachers, and support personnel all report that this belief by students seems to be at the heart of what has increased motivation in the students. Kindergarten teachers interviewed at two of the schools pointed out that this ownership begins early as evidenced by the increase they have noticed of students taking

"I am in charge of me."

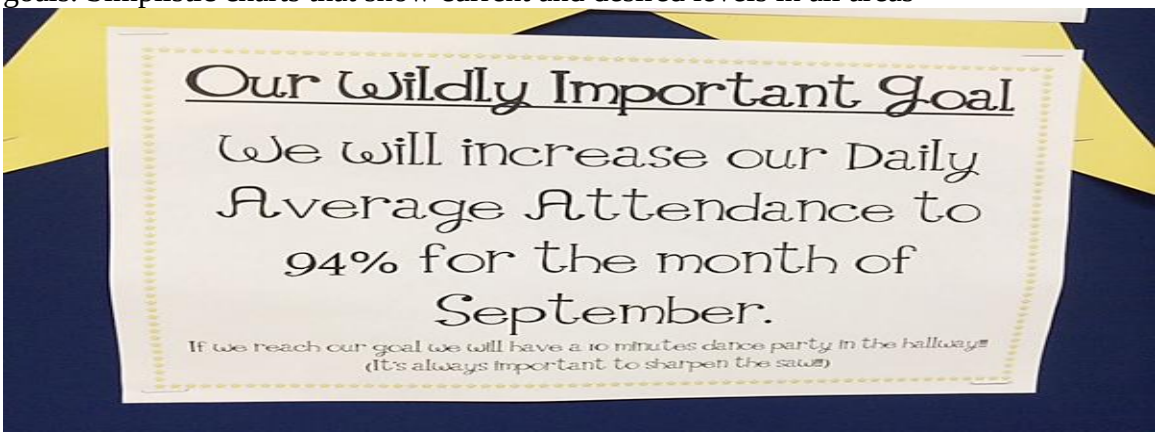
responsibility for themselves in their classrooms since implementation of the LIM.

Habits four through six are relational in nature and emphasize the importance of working cooperatively with others by seeking first to understand before being understood, thinking win-win, and synergizing. The conceptual understanding of these three habits is what leads to more positive peer relationships according to participants. Administrators at all three schools reported incidences of being called out to handle disputes between students only to arrive upon the scene to find students problem solving and working through the issue themselves using habit language.

Moreover, all participants report that this common set of principles has become the norm as well as an expectation on their campuses. One principal explained that students will often handle any potential disruptions by telling students new to the school that "we don't do that around here." When there is a common language and universal set of guidelines, it makes it easier for students to understand what is expected of them and act accordingly.

Theme Two: Student Goal Setting and Data Tracking

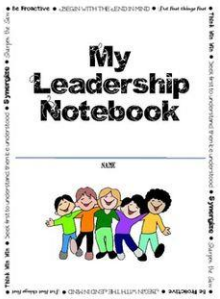
One of the main components of TLIM (and that participants point out stems from a deep understanding of the first three habits) has to do with school-wide and individual student goal setting and progress monitoring. According to participants, goals are posted throughout the school and in the classrooms. These goals are related to academic achievement and are tied directly to school improvement plan goals. Each school-wide goal is the basis for similar grade level goals and individual classroom goals. These goals are further broken down to individual student level goals. Students create attainable academic goals based on the overall school, grade level, and classroom goals that are tied to their own individual skill level. By understanding that the school-wide goals for increasing achievement have to do with how each individual student makes progress toward their own learning, participants report that students thereby own their learning. A big part of the goal setting process is the actual tracking of progress toward meeting these goals. Simplistic charts that show current and desired levels in all areas



of reading, math, science, and even attendance and discipline referrals at the school level are posted throughout the campuses according to the administrators interviewed. Grade level specific and related goals are posted outside classrooms while individual class goals

are posted in prominent places in each classroom. This data tracking is a part of the school culture and is a school wide expectation.

Students track their own individual progress toward goals in their Leadership Notebook. Each student is provided with a two-inch binder in which to keep all pertinent data related to goal setting and monitoring. Students not only record incremental steps toward meeting these goals in their binders, but report out about their progress to teachers, other adults in the school, and fellow classmates. During parent conferences about progress, students lead the meetings and share the contents of their Leadership Notebooks with parents as well. Participants believe that this focus on achievement and on holding students accountable for their own progress is a motivator for students.



Incremental steps toward achieving school-wide, grade level, class, and individual goals and making academic growth are celebrated with students. Each school reported various ways that they acknowledge student progress toward reaching these goals from school-wide pep rallies to individual recognition in the form of certificates or even verbal praise. One of the sections in the Leadership Notebooks is called "celebrations" and allows students to choose artifacts to display such as charts, graded tests, or photographs illustrating their progress toward goals. Research participants reported that students showed pride at these accomplishments, which also increased motivation in all students.

Research by Newman (2012), supports the belief that goal setting and self-monitoring by students is an essential part of the learning process.
When students are able to articulate how their own learning goals and how they connect to the educational goals of the school, then everyone in the building is speaking the same

"Goal setting is a first step not the last in transforming the teaching and learning occur for students" (p. 13).

language and the responsibility for learning is shared by all stakeholders (Newman, 2012).

Theme Three: Student Leadership Roles

Another important component of TLIM as reported by research participants, is the concept of putting students in leadership roles within the school (and within the community). Research participants talked in great length about how students develop a deep sense of responsibility when given roles at school. Leadership roles are more than just school or class "jobs." Leadership roles are not assigned, but instead, students themselves decide where and how their help is needed and take on the roles themselves. In some instances, students must apply for positions, and justify why they are a good fit for a particular role.

Leadership roles for students often include tasks that were normally done by the adults in the building. Students assume tasks such as answering phones, making sure the morning announcements are turned on, and logging into the teacher's computer to take attendance.

THE STUDENTS ARE IN CHARGE

One principal explained that one of her students is currently making scarves for the school's Relay for Life team. The student was on the announcements that morning doing a commercial about these scarves. Any proceeds earned through the sale would be donated to the school's Relay for Life Team. The principal said that students would make appointments to see her with the secretary and come in to pitch their ideas about fundraisers, or other school events that they want to see happening. The students at these school sites manage recycling and coordinate awards ceremonies, food drives, and similar activities.

Study participants indicated that students feel a strong sense that the adults in the building trust them to help the school run efficiently and effectively. Students truly feel that they own the school. This perpetuates a sense of pride and respect of their school. This encourages students to keep the grounds clean, participate in various campus beautification projects, and proudly conduct campus tours for visitors pointing out all of the positive attributes of their schools.

Research conducted by Hughes and Pickeral (2013) found that a school climate of shared leadership for all stakeholders creates safer and more engaging schools for students. They further defined shared leadership as all stakeholders, including students, working in partnership to develop the school's purpose and sharing the duties and responsibilities of actually running the school. Accountability and empowerment are key components of shared leadership. This seems to be the common theme and message coming from staff members at TLIM schools that I visited.

Moreover, Cardillo (2013) reports that when the adults and students in a building share leadership, you will find a "student-focused school" (p.1). He also stated that "consistently and deliberately supporting students to be engaged as co-leaders is an essential requirement for successful school climate improvement" (p.1). He further explains that school should be working toward creating leaders today, not just simply for life beyond school. Finally, Cardillo says that "we need to consciously engage them (students) in our work, not as an afterthought but as a fundamental part of the initial process to transform our schools into the places we want them to be" (p.3).

A positive side effect from students having leadership roles and a sense of ownership of their school is increased attendance. Administrators report that student absenteeism has decreased. Students understand that others are depending on them to be at school to take care of certain tasks and they do not want to let others down. They take their responsibility very seriously.

Increased confidence in students who are in leadership roles was another common theme found in research participants' responses. A resource teacher at one of the schools spoke about her own autistic son who had been a part of TLIM initiative since kindergarten. As a current fourth grader, he is now one of the school's ambassadors. As a school leader, he conducts campus tours and speaks at public events about the initiative to groups both large and small. For a student who began his school career often afraid in unfamiliar situations and nervous about talking to strangers, she has seen her son blossom into an eloquent and confident public speaker. She attributes this to the leadership roles he has been encouraged to undertake through this initiative.

Additionally, having students in leadership roles has positively impacted incidences of off task behaviors. Administrators report discipline issues have decreased significantly because students have assumed these leadership roles. The school-wide expectation is that students in leadership roles must also serve as role models. They are often mentors for younger students as well and recognize the importance of setting a good example. One administrator summed it up best when she surmised that students in leadership roles have such a sense of pride about their school and the responsibility that they have undertaken, they simply want to do the right thing when it comes to behavior.

Increased attendance, increased confidence, decreased off task behaviors.

In addition to school-based leadership roles, research participants also spoke of habit seven which has to do with taking care of one's self physically, emotionally, and spiritually while also thinking of the needs of others. As a result, student involvement in altruistic types of community service projects is encouraged. Each grade level undertakes a community based project designed to give back to the local community in some way. Participants explained that the students themselves often are able to identify a need out in the community and come up with plans to address this need. All three schools reported having student leaders involved with food drives for local organizations. The students are in charge of coordinating these events from start to finish. According to research participants, these service projects have opened up students' eyes and hearts as to the sometimes unfortunate circumstances of others. This has made them more tolerant, caring, and understanding citizens.

Theme Four: Student Focused School Culture

Throughout the interview process with study participants, a common reference that seemed to be prevalent was that of the culture of the school. Participants maintain that the focus is always on the students. School staff make sure that students are involved in all aspects of running the school, that students work alongside the adults in the building as leaders, and that the learning that goes on is being controlled by the students. Letting go of control was hard for some staff members according to the research participants, but once the students were in charge, student achievement took care of itself.

Once students were in charge, student achievement took care of itself.

Over time, the administrators interviewed said they noticed staff members often meeting with students during their own lunch times, staff members mentoring students without being asked, and staff members stepping up to take on additional leadership roles themselves for the betterment of the learning environment. One participant said this type of dedication and focus on the culture is just how "we do business around here." Another participant said simply, "It's just in our DNA." Participants say that their schools "feel different" compared to other schools they have worked at that were not Leader In Me schools.

Research conducted by Ashley (2015), Henderson (2013), and Pederson et, al., (2012), reported that schools with a student-focused culture foster supportive relationships, high levels of trust, and high expectations for all. This substantiates

Participants report that *Leader In Me* schools feel different than other schools.

participants' perceptions of how TLIM perpetuates a culture that "feels different" from other schools. This student-focused culture was very evident as I entered each building. The walls were covered with examples of student work and photographs, plaques, and other displays highlighting the students' academic achievement, civic involvement, leadership roles, and altruistic contributions. A principal at one of the sites talked about her school's Leadership Wall. She talked about the pride students feel each time they pass the wall and see their names written or photograph displayed there. Along with student information, bios of community leaders and inspirational leadership quotes are also posted for students to read. The actual physical environment of each building confirmed that the focus of that school was on highlighting student leadership and celebrating student accomplishments.

One of the research participants, a cafeteria manager, said she has seen a huge change in the climate of the school, especially the cafeteria, over the time that TLIM has been in place. Students running, shouting, and playing has been replaced with students acting in a more respectful manner. The day of our interview, she reported noticing at a fifth grader assisting a kindergartener during breakfast. This fifth grader, in years past, would have been more apt to tease the younger child. Instead, he was going out of his way to be very helpful. These are the kinds of things she reported she had noticed about the changes in student behavior. She summed it up with the following statement: "The kids are nicer now and there just seems to be this culture of caring."

"The kids are nicer and now there just seems to be this culture of caring."
Cafeteria Manager
School # 3.

Participants attribute the current success of the initiative to staff buy-in from inception. Staff members have to be committed to the process and to living the seven habits themselves before students internalize the principles. Moreover, the adults in the building must be dedicated to keeping the initial commitment alive. Participants report a feeling of excitement and high expectations in their buildings due to this commitment, which has led to their student focused, positive school culture.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that TLIM initiative positively impacted student motivation and peer relationships. Further analysis of the data gathered revealed that participant' descriptions of how TLIM motivated students and improved peer relationships fell within four basic categories or themes.

The last interview question asked of participants was whether or not they thought any one aspect of TLIM had been the most impactful as far as the initiative's effect on student motivation and peer relationships. Interestingly, their responses were pretty evenly distributed between the pervasive use of: a) seven habits language, b) having the students be responsible for setting goals and tracking their own progress, c) making sure kids are empowered through leadership roles, and d) the overall student focused school culture. One would then surmise that all four aspects working in conjunction as an integrated approach clearly are what impacts student motivation and peer relationships.

The instruction and modeling of a common language used pervasively throughout the schools visited had become the norm. Goal setting and monitoring by everyone in these buildings brought this common language to life by using the habits as the basis for the setting of both academic and personal goals. Students were then given opportunities to put what they had learned from the common language and set of expectations into practice and to achieve the goals they had set for themselves by taking on leadership roles within the school. Finally, these leadership roles led to students actually taking charge and responsibility for themselves, the day-to-day operation of their schools, and progressed to altruistic community involvement.

This evolution from unmotivated students to self-actualized leaders became evident through the identification of a common phrase that came up repeatedly. Whether participants were talking about student motivation, student completion of tasks, student behavior, peer relationships, leadership roles, or the climate or feel of the school, the term **"student owned"** was used repeatedly. Students who feel a sense of ownership over their own academic performance and behavior choices, are motivated to attend school more often, engage academically, and connect with others in more positive ways. This sense of ownership is fostered by teachers who model expectations, provide students with opportunities to lead, and establish a student-focused school culture where students are entrusted to work alongside adults to make meaningful differences within the school and the community.

An evolution from unmotivated students to self-actualized leaders.

The information offered within this white paper can be used as a resource for educators for the purpose of engaging in professional dialogue regarding the improvement of student motivation and peer relationships within their schools. The findings of this research can serve as yet another tool to help teachers make informed decisions about how to create positive social change within their schools.

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Appendix B: Sample Transcript

SCHOOL # 1 ADMIN # 1

Just a couple more questions. Instructional strategies-have you noticed a difference in like the types of instructional strategies the staff use?

I would say that that is a combination of many things. So the instructional strategies that I see are just including the seven habits language in everything we do. Whether it's personal. Whether it's academic, but that's it utilizing –like on the homework sheet, saying put first things first, list your spelling words first. Before you sit down, follow these procedures, you get a piece of cotton for your bucket because you filled someone's bucket-you gave a compliment to somebody. And a lot of teachers hand out necklaces that say "I filled someone's bucket today" or "Ask me how I sharpened the say today" or "how I was synergizing." So, they have done something well in the classroom—it's about academics but it's also about good behavior.

Is there any one thing that you could attribute to the change in motivation with students?

I would say an improvement in attendance because our attendance went from about 95% to 97% and our discipline went down 60%. It was absolutely amazing. We tracked our attendance one year and we had 9,545-something like that I don't know- I'm rounding, but we added another 150 kids because XXXXX Elementary was being rebuilt, so we took their students and our discipline still decreased and our attendance improved- we dropped to 4000 and something- we cut it in half and we attributed that to our 4th graders and our 5th graders being mentors-and safety patrols. They had jobs to do. And our little ones were coming because they were helping with Environmental Defenders and/or they had big buddies coming to their classrooms to read with them, it's just changed the culture. You know, one of the biggest telling piece is with my para-pros. When they say to me, "XXX, look out into the cafeteria right now. What do you see? All the new kids don't know what we do here. Our kids know how to be leaders, they lead by example. The other kids are trying to catch somebody's eye or trying to goof off and the rest of the kids are saying "we don't do that here." Even now, the kids who are coming up to TST or the kids that are coming up for behavior issues are all brand new students. They are not our students-you can walk down the hallway and see the difference in behavior- because our boys and girls know we are leading by example. One of the biggest compliments I ever got was somebody who was a reading coach at this school and at another school. And I said to her, "What would you say the biggest difference is between our school and your other school?" It was a very successful school as well. And she said, "You have a common language in your school. And you say boys and girls show me what a positive XXX looks like and those boys and girls, you put your thumbs up and 100% of them do exactly what you ask them to at that moment." And she said, "We don't have a common language at my other school." And you know what is interesting to me that I have heard a lot about? Franklin Covey, when they come to your school to do your final evaluation, like your Lighthouse look around… I knew, my rep at that time, XXXXX, he's is now in Texas because that was where he was from, and it has exploded in Texas- So, on fire, I

mean everywhere, they are calling all trainers to come and tackle this. So, he says to me "You know, XXXX, I know the moment I walk in the front door of a school whether they are capable of becoming a lighthouse school." And I said, "Well, how do you know that?" And he said, "It's just a feeling you get when you walk in-it just screams great culture, the kids are excited, they're learning, they want to be in school." But that is hard to measure. It's like that empirical data that is hard –show me the proof. I had a man once, I should probably share that article with you-it was written by XXXX Weekly and he was kind of like that. You know he said, "Tell me what's improved, you know, I need data." And so, he gave us like a three-page spread. It was really fantastic. So, good information.

SCHOOL #2 ADMIN # 1

Tell me about the implementation process:

This is what's kind of interesting. I had gone down to a meeting at county office-I can't remember who had set it up, but it was for any principal that wanted to hear about LIM. There were some folks there from Franklin-Covey talking about the book and the gentleman who was in charge of staff development at the time had said "I have a whole bunch of these books-if anyone is interested in them, let me know." So I put something out on the info board in May and you know how teachers are in May-they just want to go home and not do anything. So I said I have this book if you want it for summer reading, and believe it or not, half the staff came and said they wanted the book. So that Fall when we came back, we always to a big Retreat on the first day, off site, and we do some professional development and we always include everybody so it's not just the teachers, it's the paras, the office staff, the kitchen staff, the custodial staff, everybody. That particular year, we started off with visioning. What did we want to have, what do we want to do, what do we want to be. So enough people had read the book over the summer that really were intrigued and thought this would be really cool if we could do some of these things, so we ended up after charting all of these things, and I ended up pulling a visioning team-one person from each grade level, one person from the office, the whole lot, so for that year we met every month for about a half a day and we looked at all that data and we sifted through it and talked about some things that we just can't do-like we are not going to have a gym on campus that we can all work out, it's just not feasible. But what can we do, what can't we do, and what did most people want to do. So that is where we kind of started off with ok well this is what we want to do. We want everyone who hasn't read the book to read it and give them a copy so that they can read it. We started making some gradual shifts. We sent some people up to English Estates in Fern Park to visit on one of their Leadership Days and that following year, so that would have been the summer they read the book, so that following year we had our Retreat that year, we shared

Leadership Notebooks, that were called Data Notebooks at that time, and just some little bits and pieces and we started off very gently with the collation of the willing and we dabbled for a bit and then the following year it was ok now we are all on board, so this is the direction that we are moving in. It really wasn't very hard because once the teachers saw the difference and even substitutes would come in and say wow this seems like a different place than it was last year and it just has really just snowballed and grown. We have been a Lighthouse school now for a couple of years but we are not done. We are always on that path and on that journey, but we really try to look at what are we doing that our kids could do. And that's how we make that shift and it really has been wonderful. It used to be that when parents wanted to come and visit the school I'd go take them on a tour and tromp all around campus. Now I have kids from the Student Lighthouse Team and they do it. And they really do a much better job that I ever would and it's cool because it's from their perspective. So generally what I do is say it's a second grade student and family then I will find a second grade student from the Lighthouse Team and probably pair them up with a fifth grade student who has been here for a long time and they will take them around campus and the second grade student will share their Leadership Notebooks and they can see a little bit about that and nine times out of ten when we sit down afterwards and they introduce the people to me and I ask if they have any questions for me and they never really have any. And then we have a cute little video about the seven habits that the Lighthouse Students put together, so the end of the tour is them usually sitting in the conference room watching the four-minute video of the habits and all the leadership groups. And one of the other changes we made was to the awards ceremonies. It used to be that the teachers would come up and announce their names then I would shake their hands. Now the kids run the whole assembly. I'll still stand up there and shake hands, but the kids run the whole assembly. They do all the talking, they announce all of the names, and what is really funny about it is that we used to have, not a problem, but when the teacher was up on stage, then her kids would be talking to each other. They are so much more attentive when it's their peers up there speaking! And even our little guys, because we do standards based report cards for k-2, they don't have the Honor Roll or anything like that, but every quarter we do 3rd, 4h, and 5th, but at the end of the year, everyone has an awards ceremony. I get chills just thinking about it our kindergartners get up there in a line, they choose their own award, and they'll say " I am a leader in science because I like bugs" and then they'll pass it to the next kid. Just to see them at five years old standing up there is just so cool. We always give some scholarship to some graduating kids that come to mind that are now at the high school in our area so at our 5th grade

graduation ceremony we always invite them back to speak and it's always so funny to watch how nervous those big kids are compared to our little guys and I'm waiting for that point where our kids have done LIM with us and see if they still have that poise. It's just so cool to see these little kids coming up with these ideas, and even ideas for clubs and all kinds of things. I have a little girl who is just now starting to make scarves for Relay For Life –there was a commercial on the news this morning that she put together. So they'll make an appointment with my secretary and come in and sit down and pitch whatever their idea is and it's just really neat! We've just kind of-it was kind of hard in the beginning for teachers to kind of release that stuff but it's so much better! You don't have to remember to turn on the tv for the news in the morning because you have somebody that is the audio/visual or whatever it is. You don't have to answer your phone when it rings in your classroom, because you have a child who is designated to answer the phone. Which is also cool too because when you think about it-I've got three kids two older ones and a little guy in third grade. And it's so funny because my little guy doesn't have any telephone skills because we don't have a house phone anymore. Remember those days when you used to answer the phone and say "XXXXX residence, XXXX speaking, how may I help you?" Kids don't know. He's on the phone with his older brother at college and he doesn't even want to talk because he doesn't have any concept of answering the phone- when you think about it everyone has their own cell phone now-the times have really changed! Kids see a typewriter and ask what's that big keyboard for? So it's really done a lot of great things for our school. And it's really been kind of sad because the economy is turning around and the district itself has been paying a lot for the LIM training and paying for the materials, and now they are starting to kind of shift those funds to some other things so what's happening is that a few of the schools don't have the money themselves and they're kind of backing off a bit, but I can't stop- I really can't, but luckily we run our own before and after school program and that's where we get a lot of our funds to do things that we wouldn't be able to do otherwise so I'm ok there. It's kind of sad to me because I see the girl who was my assistant who now has her own school and she had really bought into it because we did a lot of this stuff together and she has had to say you know I really just can't keep doing it because I just don't have the money and I know she doesn't, but there really just isn't anything I can do to help her. It's just kind of sad because it has made such a difference in the culture and its kind of like what came first the chicken or the egg but I have seen our scores go up, I've seen our bullying and discipline incidences go down, we've got those two study carrels over there and those were for our kids when they were naughty to come and sit and do a reflection on how could I have been proactive,

you know we put all the words in there. But, we rarely have anybody up here. I almost feel like we should take them away, but I almost feel like the minute we do, you know what I mean. So we just keep them there. But it really has just been a great process for us.

SCHOOL # 1 NON-CLASSROOM PERSONNEL # 2
So what have you noticed about kids' completion of work, completion of classroom assignments?
I think that the LIM teaching the seven habits. So where the completion of work comes in is begin with the end in mind and also put first things first. The students who are following those habits-just knowing- I don't think anyone had ever taught them before to put first things first. Like to prioritize your life. You have to make sure your work is done first before you go and play. And before the LIM was implemented, I think that students didn't realize that until high school. They had all that homework and they had those projects. They don't realize. And so, just implementing the habits helped to make our students more successful because they see- "oh I need to put this first before I go to soccer practice" "I need to make sure my priorities are in line."

How about their motivation? What have you noticed?
I think children, especially from a leadership standpoint, the expectation of adults versus children, like we expect them to behave as leaders now. And because we expect that, I think the expectation all around has risen. They're more likely to meet your expectation- we expect more of them now, so they are more likely to step up and become leaders, to step up and get their work done. They know that because they are leaders, they are going to be rewarded for what they are doing. I think that is a big part of it-just being part of the leadership team, not even on the team, but knowing that is the atmosphere, those are the expectations at our school and that you have to meet them.

What about behavior in class?
They behave better. I think the common language from kindergarten to fifth grade is helpful with behavior. You know when I say something like "Are you being proactive?" They know they're not being proactive and they fix it and I think that has helped with behavior. So, I think that the behavior aspect is very important in k and 1-really teaching the habits, what they are really about, really teaching the principles because most of them have never been taught proper behavior before coming to school. And so, I do see a change in the behaviors, our data shows that the trend for office referrals have gone down tremendously over the years since implementing LIM- we see it. We see just having goals/WIGS. Having WIGS, you know we all have to get to those goals and what a difference that makes in behavior especially when one of our goals is based on behavior.