A Mixed Methods Study on The *Leader in Me* Process: How Does Fostering Student Leadership Capacity Influence Behavior, Efficacy, and Achievement?

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A Mixed Methods Study on The *Leader in Me* Process: How Does Fostering Student Leadership Capacity Influence Behavior, Efficacy, and Achievement?

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my amazing father, James Cummins, who died of cancer in October 2007 at the age of 62. He had always encouraged me to pursue higher education, telling me that no matter the financial burden incurred, education was an investment in my future. He believed at all times that I was smart enough to keep learning, even during moments when I had extreme doubts. My father always wanted me to pursue a doctorate, so when I contemplated beginning this journey, I felt him urging me. Although he was not physically present to encourage me throughout this process, he was with me every step of the way.

Were it not for my father's belief in me, I would not be writing this dedication. Truly, he embodied for me the Stephen R. Covey definition of leadership that underlies the *Leader in Me* process: Leadership is communicating people's worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves. My father inspired me to see my worth and potential. I feel so very blessed to have the opportunity to pay this leadership forward to children every day. It is because of his belief in me that I felt the need to not

only implement this powerful process for the students at my school, but also to further research its impact and discover just how far I could take this work.

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So many people in my life have helped me to move through this challenging doctoral process. It began with the ultimate inspiration from my father, James Cummins, who felt strongly that I needed to pursue a doctorate. Were it not for him, I would not have begun.

Once in the process, several others along the way have encouraged and supported me. Family has absolutely been there throughout. My mother, Constance Cummins, has been my cheerleader my entire life. She raised six of us, and despite the hefty numbers, she gave personal attention to each and every one. Throughout my coursework and dissertation writing, she has been an ongoing source of positive energy. She reminded me daily of how proud my father would be and how proud she was. My siblings have also been a source of tremendous encouragement, and without them, this process would not have been completed. I feel so blessed to have had the support of an incredible, talented, supportive family.

In addition, the amazing staff members at Martin Petitjean Elementary have supported me throughout this journey. Their heroic work served as the inspiration for this dissertation topic. I saw the incredible impact the Leader in Me made on the school thanks to the incredible dedication of our teachers, so I wanted to share this impact with the world. These teachers have truly transformed children's lives as a result of their great work, and, in addition, they have impacted communities as far away as Mississippi and Texas. Their original goal was to change the lives of children in their classrooms. Not only have they done that, but they have changed an entire region, impacting as many as

20,000 students through their great work. Thanks to them, I had a purpose in my research. In addition to the amazing MPE staff members, I honor the little leaders at MPE. So many students face seemingly insurmountable barriers in their home lives. Despite these challenges, our students excel. They succeed because they believe in themselves, as their teachers have taught them to. I truly believe that because of the love and support these little leaders receive at school each day, they accomplish incredible feats. My success pales in comparison to theirs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

FranklinCovey's *The Leader in Me* (LIM) has become a popular school improvement process used in K-12 schools worldwide. Since its inception in 1999 at A.B. Combs Magnet Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina, LIM has been implemented in 1,790 schools throughout the world (FranklinCovey, 2014). The LIM process has offered to schools a fresh approach to school improvement, featuring "a culture of student empowerment and helps unleash each child's full potential" (FranklinCovey, 2011).

The LIM process was created by one struggling school in an effort to reinvent itself. In 1999, A.B. Combs was a failing school by many standards. The building's capacity was 900 students, but only 350 were enrolled. Given their magnet status, this

was problematic. In addition, Combs was struggling with below-average test scores, low teacher morale, and little parent involvement (FranklinCovey, n.d.b.). The district superintendent called in newly-appointed Principal Murial Summers to tell her that as a result of all of these factors, Combs would lose their magnet status. She pled with him to reconsider, and he agreed to give her one week to restructure the school.

Armed with this challenge, Muriel returned to her staff to brainstorm potential solutions. They determined the best way to identify a new theme would be to ask their key stakeholders, including parents, community, and business leaders, what they wanted in a school. The answers they received surprised them. These stakeholders did not stress the need for high test scores. While they indicated that these were important, they said that more crucial were students who had strong character and a solid work ethic, "a place that would value the whole child and help each one to be successful in life"

(FranklinCovey n.d.b.). Muriel and her staff felt that these needs would best be met through the theme of "Leadership," and thus the LIM was born.

LIM Underlying Beliefs

The LIM model is based on three underlying beliefs (Fonzi & Ritchie, 2011). First, all school community members, including teachers and students, have the potential to be leaders. This belief is based on the work of Stephen Covey, who said that "leadership is a choice, not a position" (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 29). There are two key components of this belief. The first part of this belief focuses on the role of staff members at a LIM school, including both support and teaching staff, as the creators of the process. Through the professional development components of the LIM, the staff designs the implementation plan. The second portion of the belief involves the staff tapping into the

leadership potential in every student. Leadership at a LIM school is for all students, not just those who might fit the traditional version of "leader." At a LIM school, all students are leaders. The staff at that school works with each student to determine their areas of strength that will help them to become leaders in those areas. The LIM model promotes a paradigm shift in the way educators view students, providing them with tools to develop their leadership ability. A.B. Combs Assistant Principal Michael Armstrong says of a LIM school, "This is not a school that is about making nine hundred little business leaders. This is a school about creating a well-rounded student who knows their strengths. We are here to help them find their strengths and unleash their potential to influence others" (Covey, 2008, p. 4).

In addition to viewing leadership differently, the second core belief underlying LIM is that the tenets outlined in Stephen R. Covey's (1989) *7 Habits of Highly Effective*

People (*7 Habits*) can be learned and applied in all lives, including those of students, staff, teachers, and parents. The *7 Habits* are embedded into the school curriculum, traditions, systems, and culture following a ubiquitous approach (FranklinCovey, 2011). The students see the habits not as another subject to learn, but as a part of everything they do, which "will result in students developing skills such as leadership, accountability, adaptability, and problem solving (Fonzi & Ritchie, 2011, p. 4). Through the daily use of these habits, students gain critical life and leadership skills that will help them to be more productive students.

The final underlying belief of LIM centers around the impact of this process on the community at large and a belief that ultimately, this process will take hold in the community outside the school. LIM uses an "inside-out" approach in its implementation.

This approach was developed using the Stephen Covey definition of leadership. "Leadership is communicating people's worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves" (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 30). The school principal recognizes the leadership potential in his/her staff by allowing them to create then orchestrate the LIM process. The staff then guides its students to determine their leadership capabilities. As a result of these key steps, the school culture is changed. Students then bring their leadership into their homes and the community, impacting these structures as well (FranklinCovey, n.d.b.).

LIM Process

LIM is a school-wide process that looks different at every school depending on the plan created by each staff. However, four process components are present in all LIM schools. No matter the process developed by a school staff, all components are tied to the three underlying beliefs of this model.

First, at the root of the entire LIM model is the adoption of a new school vision: All students are leaders (school vision of leadership). Although the staff members do not create this vision, they all agree to adopt this pre-determined vision as a collective group. This vision is steeped in the first underlying belief in which all school stakeholders are viewed as leaders. The vision of any LIM school involves viewing all students as leaders, regardless of their background and academic abilities, honoring "the greatness and potential for leadership in all students" (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 54). For many staff members, this is a major shift in thinking. During the first LIM professional development activity, *Vision Day*, staff members brainstorm words associated with "leadership." Many participants provide words that liken leadership to a title or position such as "principal" or "president." Following this brainstorming activity, participants view a video, "Rethinking Leadership" that introduces a

new vision of leadership put forth by Dr. Covey. “Leadership is a choice, not a position” (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 29). At this time, the staff begins to change their paradigm. They then go on to view Dr. Covey’s definition of leadership. “Leadership is communicating people’s worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves” (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 30). Once the staff views students through a lens of leadership, the rest of the model can be developed.

Once the new vision has been embraced, the second process component of any LIM school is the staff-created implementation process (staff-created implementation). Through this approach, the staff shares in the leadership, working in small groups to develop, refine, and implement the process at their school. This part of the process is aligned with two key underlying beliefs of the LIM. All staff members are leaders who develop the process. In addition, this process develops through an inside-out approach that ultimately reaches the community at large. Through this implementation format, faculty and staff are empowered to lead this process. The process is built to tap into the leadership potential of all school stakeholders, not just students.

Following the vision adoption and staff-created implementation, the third process piece at a LIM school is that all members of the school community engage in the training and daily application of Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Fonzi & Ritchie, 2011). This is tied to the second underlying belief of the LIM process which states that the tenets outlined in the *7 Habits* can be learned and applied in the lives of all school stakeholders. The second step in the LIM implementation model is the staff training in the *7 Habits*. The staff must learn and live these habits first, modeling for students their use. Once the staff has internalized the habits, they teach them to the students through both direct

instruction and application to other subject areas. Finally, students bring these habits home to their families and out into the community. This aligns with the third underlying belief of the LIM process featuring the inside-out approach.

The final process component of the LIM model is student demonstration of leadership through the use of a variety of tools and strategies that allow them to manage their own learning (student leadership). In the LIM process, students are not only told they are leaders,

they are given opportunities to practice leadership. They employ a variety of leadership tools including Leadership Notebooks for data tracking and goal setting. Ultimately, they present their academic progress and goals to parents in annual student-led parent conferences. Through the implantation of these student learning tools, all three core beliefs are realized. All students lead their own learning through the use of these learning tools, thereby fulfilling the first belief that all students are leaders. Students demonstrate the second belief by applying the *7 Habits* to their learning. They are proactive, taking ownership of the learning and beginning with the end in mind through goal setting. Finally, students are bringing this process from school to home by presenting their learning goals and data in student-led conferences with their parents. This practice is aligned with the third belief. **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is three-fold: (1) to identify whether LIM processes promote positive school improvement measures such as attendance, reading, and discipline, (2) to identify teacher perception of the LIM process components and their relative impact on the school, and (3) to identify which of the process components make the greatest impact on school improvement and why. The primary research question guiding this study is, does implementation of the *Leader in Me* yield positive school improvement? Secondary to this

overarching question are two additional questions. What is teacher perception of the four components of the LIM process? Which of the four process components has the greatest positive influence on school improvement and why?

The initial literature review focused on research regarding the LIM process as a whole as well as literature related to the underlying theoretical framework applicable to the four key components of the LIM process. First, there was an examination of the literature

pertaining to the LIM process with regard to student achievement. Following this, the theoretical constructs that form the basis for the four process components of the LIM were examined. The author continued with a review of literature on self-efficacy and the self fulfilling prophecy, key theoretical constructs that comprise the first process component of the LIM, school vision of leadership. Next, Professional Learning Community (PLC) literature provided a link between school success and the PLC approach that forms the theoretical basis of the second LIM process, staff-created implementation. Following this, research on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), was examined. SEL forms the theoretical base for the third process element, *7 Habits*. Finally, there was a review of the research on the final LIM process component, student leadership and its theoretical base of student self regulation of learning. Leadership tools include data tracking, goal setting, and student-led parent conferences, which have been found to yield positive student achievement and school success.

Statement of the Problem

Each year, school and teacher accountability increases while fewer students are arriving at school with the motivation and life skills necessary to be successful in school. The expectations set forth by the state on teachers and school leaders steadily grow. In Louisiana,

the school rating system has steadily grown more challenging, both as the letter grading system grows more difficult and as the state assessments that will yield that letter grade become more rigorous. The state website applauds this increased rigor: “In order to ensure our students are ready for Louisiana’s economy, our state is moving to higher standards” (Louisiana Believes, 2015, “Louisiana’s Transition to Higher Expectations,” para. 3). As the

bar for school success continues to increase, students are arriving at school facing greater challenges than ever before.

As school growth expectations increase and student preparedness for school decreases, school leaders are tasked with the responsibility of finding a process that will build student motivation and character while increasing student achievement. The *Leader in Me* is one such process that has been implemented by over 1,000 schools world-wide. **Rationale for the Study**

The purpose of this study is three-fold: (1) to identify whether LIM processes promote positive school improvement measures such as attendance, reading, and discipline, (2) to identify teacher perception of the LIM process components and their relative impact on the school, and (3) to identify which of the process components make the greatest impact on school improvement and why. The primary research question guiding this study is, does implementation of the *Leader in Me* yield positive school improvement? Secondary to this overarching question are two additional questions. What are teacher perceptions of the four components of the LIM process? Which of the four process components has the greatest positive influence on school improvement and why?

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study is does the implementation of the

Leader in Me yield school improvement? In order to answer this question, seven underlying questions were asked regarding aspects of school improvement.

Quantitative research question 1. Does daily student attendance at a LIM school improve during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 1. Average daily student attendance increases.

Rationale. One of the key contributors to school improvement is student attendance. At one time, this data factored directly into the annual School Performance Score (SPS) in Louisiana. It is no longer a direct data point in the SPS calculation, but it is still an essential focus area for schools as students who are not present cannot learn all they need to be successful on high stakes tests. Therefore, it is fitting to look at data regarding average daily student attendance in order to determine the effectiveness of the LIM process with regard to school improvement. Students who attend LIM schools track daily student attendance. There is a method of tracking full school, grade level, classroom, and individual student daily attendance. In addition, through the teaching of the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* at LIM schools, students develop a skill set that emphasizes good daily practices, including attendance and on time arrival. The researcher hypothesizes that student goal setting along with living the *7 Habits* will improve daily student attendance at LIM schools.

Quantitative research question 2. Do reading assessment scores at a LIM school improve during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 2. Reading assessment scores increase.

Rationale. In order for students to perform successfully on the high stakes exam that makes up the SPS, they must be able to read on level. The DIBELS "are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth

grade" (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2014). One of the primary measures of DIBELS is a one minute fluency timing assessment which measures words per minute read along with percent of accuracy. Students at a LIM school often set reading fluency goals and track their individual, school, classroom, and grade level progress. As a result of this, it would make sense that schools who implement the LIM and use reading fluency as a data tracking

measure would see improved results on their DIBELS Benchmark Assessment scores, which would ultimately improve their SPS scores, yielding school improvement. ***Quantitative research question 3.*** Do student discipline referrals at a LIM school decrease during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 3. The number of discipline referrals decreases.

Rationale. Students who are following classroom and school rules are in class learning. As a result of this, they should fare better on high stakes exams, yielding scores that increase the SPS. Classrooms that have fewer discipline problems allow for greater overall student focus and increased teaching and learning which should yield higher scores on high stakes exams. In addition, fewer discipline referrals mean fewer out of school suspensions resulting in increased classroom attendance and learning. Schools that implement the LIM process often have a system in place for student goal setting and data tracking in individual student, classroom, grade level, and full school behavior. In addition, LIM schools teach students the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, providing them with a set of skills to monitor their own behavior and prevent poor choices. As a result of goal setting and self monitoring processes that takes place through the teaching of the *7 Habits,* it is hypothesized that students at LIM schools have fewer discipline referrals.

Quantitative research question 4. What are teacher perceptions regarding the LIM

process as a whole?

Hypothesis 4. Teachers express positive feelings toward LIM implementation and ***Rationale***. When any new program is put in place at a school, there can be some hesitation from staff members in the beginning. Teachers are tasked with the implementation of a multitude of programs each year, and they implement these programs while trying to

meet the needs of the ever-changing student population. This leads to fear and frustration when it comes time to try something new. Because the teachers who completed the LIM survey are at schools that have been in the LIM process for more than a year, they will not feel the same hesitation as teachers might who are just beginning the process.

***Quantitative research question 5*.** What is teacher perception regarding the relative impact of the four LIM process components on school improvement?

Hypothesis 5. Teachers will indicate that *7 Habits* will be the process component that yields the greatest impact on school improvement.

Rationale. Teachers find that the *7 Habits* form the backbone of the LIM process, and, as a result, all growth that comes from the process is rooted in students learning and living the habits. The first three habits of the *7 Habits* are called "the Private Victory" (Covey, 1989). Students begin at the base level of dependence on others, and as they move through the first three habits, they will arrive at a level of independence. In mastering Habit 1: Be Proactive, students learn to focus on their own behaviors and become aware of the fact that they are completely responsible for their actions. Once students learn and live this habit, students take responsibility for their attendance, learning, and behavior. In Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind, students learn how to set goals and track progress toward their goals. As they do this,

they learn how to establish goals and action plans for attendance, academics, and behavior. In addition, Habits 4-6, that make up the Public Victory, help students to learn to live interdependently. They develop an ability to think win-win, listen with empathy to understand other points of view, and synergize with others. Students who master the *7 Habits* are able to engage in more positive interactions with their peers and with adults thus improving their learning and helping to reduce disciplinary incidents. When students learn

how to live Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw, they learn how to rejuvenate in all personal areas, including health, improving their wellness, and increasing their attendance. ***Quantitative research question 6***. Is there a relationship among the LIM process constructs including school vision of leadership, staff-created implementation, *7 Habits*, and student leadership?

Hypothesis 6. There is a relationship among the constructs.

Rationale. The four process components of the LIM work in concert in the implementation process. Each process component is dependent on the others for full implementation of the LIM to take place. As a result, there will be a correlation between each process component and all of the others.

Qualitative research questions. If school improvement data, including student attendance, reading assessment scores, and student discipline, improves during LIM implementation, does one of the four process components make a greater impact on this growth than the others? If so, which component makes the greatest impact? How do these components impact daily student learning and overall student growth? If one process component seems to have a greater impact on student achievement measures, why does that seem to be so? What is the general perception of the teachers at a LIM school regarding the impact LIM has made on their campus and in the community outside of the school?

There has been a limited amount of direct research done on LIM although there has been much research done on the four process components that comprise it. What does the research say? What do we know about the impact of each of these components individually on student achievement? What is the collective impact of these components when applied in concert through this process? These are the questions prompting this study.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

The initial literature review will begin with an examination of the literature on the LIM process as a whole. Given the limited amount of research on the LIM process in its entirety, the remainder of the review will focus on the theoretical assumptions that underlie the four main process components of LIM (see Figure 1).

Process Component 1: School Vision of Leadership. The primary LIM anchor paradigm of "all students are leaders" begins with the first process component: school vision of leadership. Two theories, self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecy, provide the underlying theory for this process. It is also important to recognize that all other LIM processes are grounded in the belief of "all students are leaders."

Process Component 2: Staff-Created Implementation. Implementation according to LIM is understood to be a self-created process which mirrors the literature of Professional Learning Communities.

Process Component 3: *7 Habits*. The literature on social and emotional learning (SEL) form the theoretical basis for the direct instruction in the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Process Component 4: Student Leadership. Finally, there will be a review of the

literature on student self-regulation of learning as a theoretical basis for the fourth LIM process piece. Student leadership, self-regulation in this study specifically relates to student activities including student use of leadership notebooks, goal setting, and student-led conferences.

The research in all of these areas leads one to anticipate that the implementation of the LIM process will yield school improvement. The small amount of literature featuring the

LIM process in its entirety indicates school improvement in multiple measures, including student test data (Hatch & Andersen, 2014, Ross & Laurenzano, 2012, FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010 and 2011, Westgate Research, 2014). Literature regarding student self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994, Alderman, 1990, Ames, 1992, Pintrich, 2003, Pajares, 1997, Collins, 1982) and self-fulfilling prophecy (Hedstrom & Bearman, 2009, Kohn, 1991), both aligned to the LIM paradigm of all students as leaders, indicates a link between both of these and student achievement. Research regarding PLC implementation indicates student achievement gains (Williams, 2013, Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008, Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000). LIM is implemented through a PLC model. As a result, similar gains should occur in LIM schools. The studies done on SEL competencies indicate a correlation between this and school success in multiple areas, including student achievement (Elias & Weissberg, 2000, Zins & Elias, 2006, O'Brien & Resnik, 2009, Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). The SEL model is followed in the teaching of Covey's *7 Habits,* and, as a result, one would expect to see similar success. Finally, research regarding student self-regulation of their learning indicates this practice leads to school improvement (Ridley, Schutz, Glanz & Winstein, 1992, Schunk & Rice, 1991, Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003, Alderman, 1990, Miller & Kelley, 1994, Bandura, 1993). The LIM process includes this self-regulation when students demonstrate

their leadership through the use of key tools, including student Leadership Notebooks used for student self-monitoring and the presentation of this learning to parents during student-led conferences. As a result of this direct correlation between the research and the LIM practices, one would expect to see school improvement in any LIM school that implements all four process components of this model.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Leader in Me depicts the three underlying beliefs of the LIM process, the four process components of the LIM and the theoretical assumptions that underlie each of these process components.

Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms have been

identified as they relate to the topic:

Self-Efficacy: Albert Bandura (1994) defined perceived self-efficacy as the beliefs individuals have about their ability to accomplish tasks. Within the LIM process, student

self-efficacy is initially established through social persuasion, as the staff instills in them the belief that they are leaders and can set and accomplish goals as a result. *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*: Robert Merton (1948) coined this phrase that has been used to describe classroom situations in which a teacher believes a student to be capable or not capable, and the student lives up to that perception (Hedstrom & Bearman, 2009, p. 296). Within the LIM process, the basic underlying belief that all students are leaders serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy enabling staff to tap into the leadership potential of every child on the campus.

Professional Learning Communities: DuFour (2004), says Professional Learning Communities encompass three "big ideas" that must be present. These include a focus on learning, rather than teaching, a culture of teacher collaboration, and a focus on results in the form of data that contains valuable information.

Social and Emotional Learning: The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines Social and Emotional Learning as "a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness" (CASEL, 2012).

Self-Regulated Learners: Self-regulated learners monitor their own learning through the use of a variety of strategies. Zimmerman (1990) says these learners are "metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally" responsible for their learning (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 4). Through the implementation of key pieces of the LIM process, students regulate their own learning.

Student Leadership Notebooks: Leadership notebooks are binders maintained by students that contain key pieces of student learning. First, students maintain a goal-setting section in which they set short- and long-term learning and personal goals. Second, they track additional data,

graphs and charts that students update regularly tracking their progress in multiple areas that could include weekly test grades, reading fluency, sight word mastery, math fact mastery, attendance, behavior, and health/fitness. "Since the data notebooks represent only a single student's work, students use it only to compare themselves individually against their own goals and previous scores, not someone else's" (Covey, 2008, p. 61). Students present the key features of these notebooks to their parents and other adult visitors through student-led conferences.

Student Goal Setting: LIM students set short- and long- term personal and academic goals in multiple areas throughout the school year. Students track their progress not only in their Leadership Notebooks, but also on classroom scoreboards. Student individual data is averaged for class data tracking, which, in turn, is averaged for grade level and school data tracking. All students recognize that they are part of the full school data tracking and goal setting processes as the goals cascade from school to grade level to classroom to student.

Student-Led Parent Conferences: Students present their Leadership Notebooks to their parents at conferences. Students, not the teacher, lead the individual conferences, highlighting areas of success as well as areas needing improvement.

7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Published in 1989 and written by Stephen R. Covey, the *7 Habits* represent those qualities Covey deemed to be present in all successful people. "These are based on extensive research I conducted while studying highly effective people via interviews and literature on leadership. They are also based upon timeless, universal

principles that have been around for ages" (Covey, 2008, p. 47). These habits are:

- Be Proactive: Students focus on their choices, including those involved in making behavior decisions.

- Begin with the end in mind: Students anticipate the end, creating both short- and long-term goals for themselves.
- Put first things first: Students learn how to plan for each day, each week and each school year. They learn the value of working first, then playing.
- Think win-win: Students learn how to work with one another in a non-competitive way.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood: Students learn how to listen with empathy prior to advancing their own argument.
- Synergize: Students learn how to work as a productive member of a team. They learn that working together can create a better result than working alone.
- Sharpen the saw: Students learn how to create balance in their lives, focusing on improving themselves physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

Assumptions

The context of the current study will be based upon the following assumptions: Due to the reliance of the study on teachers' self-reported perceptions regarding the LIM process components and their impact on school improvement, it is assumed that the teachers will be reasonably honest and forthcoming in their reported assessment. This assumption will be true for not only the teacher surveys completed by those at the four LIM schools but also the focus group answers that are gleaned from the teachers at the one LIM school in which the student data is gathered.

Limitations

Given the multiple factors that impact the learning of students at a school, it is challenging to determine whether or not the LIM process is creating the impetus for school

improvement. As a result, the quantitative student data analysis will be non-experimental using a combination of descriptive and correlational procedures to describe and hypothesize relationships between LIM processes and school improvement. Statistically, these procedures do not imply direct cause and effect. However, from an interpretive stance the results may be used to suggest possible links between LIM and student performance. It will be impossible to determine whether or not the data increases were directly caused by the LIM process. For the same reason, both the quantitative teacher survey data and the qualitative teacher focus group interview data will be descriptive rather than an indication of direct causation. In addition to limitations provided by the multiple confounding variables in this study, there are limitations regarding the data from the teacher surveys and focus group interviews as a result of potential bias in the answer provided. With both of these data gathering instruments, the accuracy with which the teachers answer these questions is based on their honesty. As a result, there is a chance the data gathered in these two processes could be inaccurate if the teacher responses are not completely honest ones.

Significance

A study regarding the impact of the LIM process on school improvement at a time when school leaders are desperately seeking methods to improve schools will serve to inform and assist both school and district leaders in their quest for processes that work. School leaders face a monumental task in achieving annual student learning growth amid multiple barriers. Many students arrive at school lacking not only the basic academic skills but also the

motivation to achieve academically. As a result, school leaders are on the hunt for processes that will yield student achievement growth while providing students with the motivation to continue to grow. The LIM process is one such possible model that is being

implemented world-wide. Not only will this research provide for school leaders greater evidence of success they need to apply this process to their schools, but it will also add to the literature base regarding which of the four process components seem to make the greatest impact on school improvement. Thus far, this research is lacking. If the four process pieces are shown to have differing levels of impact on the student achievement growth, schools can refine their focus on these process components, allowing for a more direct, impactful implementation of the LIM process.

Chapter One Summary

Chapter 1 presented the problem statement, the study purpose, and the study significance. The theoretical framework of the LIM evolved from the literature review in Chapter 2. Research questions and hypotheses are also presented in Chapter 1, guiding the exploration of the relationships among the four LIM process components and school improvement. In addition, these questions and hypotheses directed the methodology of the study. Also included in this chapter were the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

School leaders are faced with the annual challenge of demonstrating school growth compared to the previous year. As a result, the study of school improvement processes continues to grow. The *Leader in Me* is one such school improvement model that is gaining attention as more school leaders world-wide choose to implement this process. An examination of literature related to the LIM process has indicated a relationship between its

implementation and school improvement. This study is guided by the theoretical assumptions related to the LIM process, including those that form the basis for the four process components.

There is a limited number of studies done on the LIM process as a whole due to its recent development, but there is a great deal of research regarding the theoretical assumptions that underlie the four LIM process components. The author will examine all of these areas. First, there are some recent studies directly related to LIM implementation as a whole that suggest a positive link between LIM implementation and school improvement (Hatch & Andersen, 2014; Ross & Laurenzano, 2012; FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010 and 2011; Westgate Research, 2014). Second, studies will be examined regarding student-self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecy, the theoretical underpinning of the first process component, school vision of leadership (Alderman, 1990; Ames, 1992; Bandura, 1994; Collins, 1982; Hedstrom & Bearman, 2009; Kohn, 1991; Pintrich, 2003; Pajares, 1997). The third category of literature considers PLCs and their link to school improvement (Williams, 2013; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008; Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000). PLC research underlies the second LIM process piece, staff-created implementation. Fourth, there will be a review of literature regarding SEL, the theoretical construct that is aligned

with LIM process component three, *7 Habits* (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Zins & Elias, 2006; O'Brien & Resnik, 2009; Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). The final category of literature concerns student self-regulation of learning, which is the theoretical underpinning of the final LIM process component, student leadership (Ridley, Schutz, Glanz & Winstein, 1992; Schunk & Rice, 1991; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Alderman, 1990; Miller & Kelley, 1994, Bandura, 1993).

The *Leader in Me* Studies

Although the LIM is a relatively new process, several studies have been introduced demonstrating the benefits of the LIM on school performance and student achievement. Although a majority of the research on LIM comes from LIM sources rather than peer reviewed scholarly journals, the qualitative and quantitative data published in these pieces demonstrates the success of this process. The LIM process has been linked through this literature to improvements in multiple areas including student achievement, school climate, and student behavior (Hatch & Andersen, 2014; Ross & Laurenzano, 2012; FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010 and 2011; Westgate Research, 2014).

According to research conducted at multiple LIM sites, student achievement, as evidenced by test data, has increased. First, A.B. Combs experienced tremendous test score growth immediately upon implementing the process. During the 1999-2000 school year, Combs piloted the process with one teacher per grade level resulting in an increase of the percentage of students passing end-of-grade tests from 84% to 87%. The following year, the full school adopted the model, and the scores grew to 94% passing. The scores at A.B. Combs remained high for multiple years following, reaching a peak of 97% (Covey, 2008). Like A.B. Combs, John C. Fremont Elementary in Salt Lake City, Utah also saw an increase

in student test scores following LIM implementation (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2011). After just two years of LIM implementation, Fremont Elementary with a student population of 50% receiving free/reduced lunch, saw an immediate increase in fourth grade scores in all subject areas from spring 2009 to spring 2010. Math scores increased from 49% to 78%, Language scores from 31% to 59% and Science from 21% to 62%. In addition to Combs and Fremont, Dewey Elementary School in Quincy, Illinois saw increases in their

Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in both reading and math. Reading scores averaged 64.5% prior to LIM implementation, then grew to 89% in 2007 following just one year of LIM. Math scores also grew from a 79.25% average pre-LIM to 98% after year one (Hatch and Collinwood, 2010). Joseph Welsh Elementary School in Alberta, Canada also found student test score improvements through LIM implementation, also (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010). Prior to LIM implementation, Welsh saw 12% of students not meeting the district's Math standard followed by only 2% of students were not meeting the standard (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010).

While student achievement data for many LIM schools indicate the success of the process, improvements in school culture/climate are also evident. Ross and Laurenzano (2012) reported, "For the teachers and principals, the main contributors to climate changes were improved student behavior and the establishment of a culture, guided by the *7 Habits*, supporting respect and acceptance of others" (p. 64). Joseph Welsh Elementary found similar school climate improvements through LIM implementation (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010). Prior to LIM, only 33% of fourth grade teachers felt the quality of education at the school had improved over the previous year, but after only one year,

100% of fourth grade teachers felt the education had improved (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2010).

Finally, data regarding student behavior has improved at many LIM schools. According to data gathered from English Estates Elementary in Fern Park, Florida, discipline referrals dropped from 225 to 74 after a year of implementation (Hatch & Collinwood, 2010). Fremont Elementary also saw a 60% decrease in disciplinary referrals (FranklinCovey Center for Advanced Research, 2011). In a Westgate Research, Inc. study of 260 LIM schools

throughout the United States and Canada, the top cited improvement noted from LIM was a decrease in discipline referrals (Westgate Research, 2014). Participants attributed improvements in behavior to the increase of "leaders" in the classrooms and also saw a reduction in bullying as a result of LIM implementation (Westgate Research, 2014).

The research that has been conducted with regard to LIM implementation has yielded positive results overall. According to the Westgate Research study (2014), 99% of those principals interviewed indicated that LIM produced "very positive" or "positive" results in their school. Both qualitative and quantitative data in the areas of student academic achievement, school culture/climate and student behavior indicate that the LIM improves the schools in which the process has been implemented.

LIM and Student Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, Self-Efficacy

A review of the literature indicates that student self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecy improves student learning, regardless of a student's background and innate ability levels (Alderman, 1990; Ames, 1992; Bandura, 1994; Collins, 1982; Hedstrom & Bearman, 2009; Kohn, 1991; Pintrich, 2003; Pajares, 1997). The first LIM belief and subsequent process component, school vision of leadership, is grounded in the vision that ALL students

are leaders. LIM staff members must collectively embrace this vision and then communicate this to the students. This social persuasion, steeped in self-fulfilling prophecy, begins the LIM process at any school (Bandura, 1994). Given this natural alignment between the first LIM process component and the self-fulfilling prophecy and student self-efficacy, it would appear that a review of literature regarding these two theories would apply directly to this first process component.

Self-fulfilling prophecy. It is through social persuasion that self-fulfilling prophecy

builds student self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Both of these self-concepts serve as theoretical underpinning of LIM beliefs and processes. As teachers communicate to students that they are capable of accomplishing challenging goals, students rise to the level of those expectations. “X believes that Y has great ability. X therefore gives Y challenging material and communicates high expectations. Because of this, Y performs well on tests” (Hedstrom & Bearman, 2009, p. 296). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1992) named this relationship theory as the Pygmalion effect and speculated that a teacher’s belief about a child’s potential could impact student academic achievement. These authors also hypothesized that when teachers expect certain children to achieve at higher levels, they will do so, regardless of ability or background. Kohn (1991) determined that this self-fulfilling prophecy impacts not only academics, but also the “actions and values” of a student. The foundation of the LIM process, all students are leaders, is steeped in the self-fulfilling prophecy. Once the staff espouses this vision, they communicate this to all students in the school through both verbal and non verbal means. LIM teachers tell students they are leaders and allow them to take on leadership roles which simultaneously communicates a level of trust. According to the self fulfilling prophecy theory, trust contributes to strong student self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy. Much of the early study of self-efficacy was completed by Bandura (1994) who suggested that perceived self-efficacy is “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 71). Students with strong self-efficacy who believe in their ability to accomplish challenging tasks, choose to take tasks on regardless of the risk of failure. “People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. They set themselves challenging goals and

maintain strong commitment to them" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71).

Bandura (1994) identifies four possible sources of self-efficacy including mastery, social models, social persuasion, and support. First, student mastery experiences lead to perceived self-efficacy. In order for students to set challenging yet attainable goals, individuals must believe they accomplish goals because of their ability rather than by default. Alderman (1990) extends Bandura's belief, "It is not enough that the student achieve success; in order to acquire a high degree of motivation, the student must know that he or she personally contributed to this success" (p. 27). Similarly, students will more actively engage in a task if they believe their efforts can yield success and that failure can be overcome through the use of a different problem-solving approach (Ames, 1992).

Second, students look to social models who have accomplished goals (Bandura, 1994). As they view those with similar characteristics to them achieving, their self-efficacy increases (Bandura, 1994). Third, social persuasion is initiated by individuals who surround and support students instilling the belief that they can achieve. Finally, student self-efficacy improves when the belief in one's abilities to deal with negative situations is reinforced (Bandura, 1994).

With regard to social persuasion, mastery learning experiences should be aligned with the persuasion in order to maximize self-efficacy development (Pajares, 1997). It is essential that those in the position to persuade the learners that they are capable of accomplishing a task must ensure that the task is challenging, yet attainable (Pajares, 1997). These situations are created by efficacy builders to focus not on triumph over others, but rather self-improvement and self-growth, continuously creating new goals, accomplishing them, then moving on to the next (Pajares, 1997). The LIM process emphasizes this goal

setting process in which students set individual goals for the purpose of self-development rather than competition with peers (Covey, 2008).

Self-efficacy and student achievement. Research indicates that when schools cultivate student self-efficacy, student achievement increases (Pintrich, 2003). Research in the area of student motivation has also supported this alignment. For instance, Pintrich (2003) found, "Students who believe they are able and that they can and will do well are much more likely to be motivated in terms of effort, persistence, and behavior than students who believe they are less able and do not expect to succeed" (p. 671).

In order to ensure maximum benefit from building self-efficacy in students, research indicates that teachers should provide specific feedback that is also within context to academic areas they are teaching (Pajares, 1997; Collins, 1982). Pajares (1997) further stresses the importance of linking efficacy beliefs to specific academic tasks as opposed to non-specific, global verbal praise. An example of such specificity comes from Collins (1982) who completed a study of students representing varying math ability levels, identifying them as having either low or high math self-efficacy. He determined that regardless of a child's

ability level, those with high math self-efficacy completed a higher percentage of problems correctly and reworked problems that had been identified as incorrect.

Professional Learning Communities

Once a staff has adopted the belief that all students are leaders, they turn next to the second LIM process component, staff-created implementation. Research regarding the use of PLCs as a professional development system in a school links this approach to school improvement. LIM schools develop the process through staff planning and execution of the process at their school. Collaboratively, faculty and staff determine the components of LIM

and continuously reflect and improve on existing LIM strategies. This is greatly aligned with a PLC process. In order to produce school improvement gains, researchers have identified five integral and interrelated PLC implementation strategies (Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Hord, 1997). A review of the components of the LIM implementation indicates a direct alignment with the five strategies required for successful PLC implementation.

Impact of PLCs on teaching practices and student achievement.

Multiple studies have linked PLC integration to student achievement gains regardless of student demographics and at all grade levels (Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000; Philips, 2003; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008; Williams, 2013). For instance, Williams (2013) conducted a mixed-method study to determine the impact of PLC activities on varying grade level reading achievement scores and student learning. The study showed that while there was some variation among schools, the overall school district's reading scores improved dramatically during the PLC implementation. According to Williams (2013), the variation that may have existed in the data could be due to the extent to which the teachers in the study collaborated using a PLC format.

Just as Williams (2013) focused her work on the impact of PLCs on student academic growth, Vescio et al (2008) completed a literature review of 11 studies to examine how teaching practices change with PLC implementation as well as which specific PLC practices promote change. The eleven studies suggested that PLC implementation changed teaching practices, and five of the studies provided specifics regarding the changes in teaching practices. For example, Dunne et al (2000) found that teachers who participated in a "critical friends group" taught with a more student-centered approach. Vescio et al (2008) studied the impact of flexible teaching practices and classroom arrangements, as well as pacing of

instructions, helped to accommodate varying levels of student mastery. In addition to adjusting teaching practices, four of the eight studies resulted in significant increases in student test data (Vescio et al, 2008). In another study, Berry et al (2005) found that students scoring at or above grade level increased from 50% to 80% over the course of four years using a PLC (Vescio et al, 2008). Like Berry et al (2005), Philips (2003) reported tremendous student achievement gains at a middle school as a result of PLC practices. Within two years, students passing subject area state-wide tests rose from 50% to 90%. Vescio et al (2008) summarized these results by suggesting that student achievement increases as PLCs are implemented (Vescio et al, 2008).

Components of successful PLCs. In order to experience the changes in teacher instructional practices that yield the student achievement gains, researchers recommend key practices in the implementation of PLCs at any school. Hipp and Huffman (2010) recommend five key strategies for successful PLC implementation. These areas, originally put forth by Hord (1997) and modified by Hipp and Huffman (2010), include

shared/supportive leadership, shared values/vision, collective learning/application, shared personal practice, and supportive conditions (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). ***Shared and supportive leadership***. In a successful PLC, it is essential that the school leader not only steer the direction of the school, he/she must also ensure all stakeholders have a sense of shared decision making and responsibility (Hipp and Huffman, 2010; Hord, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008). This comes not only from what the principal says but also in the amount of responsibility he/she shares with the staff. “The principal’s actions, not just his or her words, make believers out of teachers” (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 29). Only through this shared leadership can a true PLC develop, one in which all stakeholders feel a sense of ownership.

Fullan (2005) considers this inclusive leadership to be an essential quality of a sustainable change through the implementation of PLCs. According to Fullan (2005), "The main mark of a school principal at the end of his or her tenure is not just his or her impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but equally on how many good leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further" (p. 220).

Like Hord and Sommers (2008) and Fullan (2005), Mullen and Hutinger (2008) consider the school leader to play an integral role in PLC success. They examine in detail the role of the principal with regard to PLC success and identified five important functions of the principal in the creation and maintenance of a PLC. First, he/she must provide resources, including time, research materials and meeting space, then drive the establishment of the study groups (Linder, Post & Calabrese, 2012). Second, he/she must model data-driven, job embedded learning, and planning (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008). In other words, he/she should work with the teachers to analyze data, develop strategies for improving deficiencies, and examine more data after implementation. Third, the principal may have to serve as problem-

solver and team builder within study groups (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008). Not all faculty/staff will be on board at all times, and like any group that works together, there will be problems from time to time with regard to collaboration. Fourth, a principal in a PLC must be prepared to share leadership responsibilities with teachers (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008).

Shared values and vision. The key to PLC success at any school is full buy-in by all stakeholders whereby all teachers play a role in the development of the school mission and vision that will guide day-to-day decisions at the school (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Newmann, Marks, Louis, Kruse & Gamoran, 1996). According to Hord and Sommers (2008), the values of an organization drive the daily work of that group, so "one basic attribute of the PLC is the

shared mission and goals that the staff see as their common purpose" (p. 8). Newmann et al (1996) consider "shared values and norms" to be one of five key components of successful PLCs. These norms must be developed by the team regarding how children learn, daily scheduling, and school stakeholder responsibilities (Newmann et al, 1996).

Collective learning and application. For a PLC to be effective, staff members must work together in order to examine and analyze data, review student work, and make collective instructional decisions using all evidence provided (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997; Newmann et al, 1996; Williams, 2013). Only through a collective and thorough analysis of all information can this take place. As teachers work in teams analyze student data, identify patterns and areas of concern, and develop solutions to these problem areas, they can "create new conditions for students," resulting in greater student learning (Hord, 1997, p. 3). Similarly, DuFour (2004) considers this collaboration one of the three key core principles that guides the PLC process. Newmann et al (1996) also point to collaboration as one of the top five PLC practices. Williams (2013) determined that this collaborative learning among

the teachers in the study served as a key component of its success, as several participants expressed satisfaction with working in teams rather than in isolation (Williams, 2013).

Shared personal practice. Through the PLC process, teachers share their personal practices with one another during meeting times. In addition, they have the opportunity to observe one another and provide feedback. According to Lujan and Day (2010), through this process, a community dedicated to student growth develops in which "teachers begin to refer to 'our curriculum' and 'our students' instead of 'my curriculum' and 'my students'" (p. 11). Similar to Lujan and Day, Newmann et al (1996) identified "reflective dialogue" about instructional and curricular practices as one of the key elements of a successful PLC

(Newmann et al, 1996).

Supportive conditions. In order for any school to be considered a true PLC, strong, trusting, supportive relationships must exist within the staff (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). According to Servage (2008), the PLC model serves not only to provide shared responsibility, it also meets the needs of the staff to develop strong relationships with co workers (Servage, 2008). Feelings of isolation and insecurity are replaced by community and empowerment in a PLC. DuFour (2004) points to the vulnerability staff will feel at various times in the PLC process. "Collaborative conversations call on team members to make public what has traditionally been private—goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results" (DuFour, 2004, p. 10). Within this PLC community, then, he espouses the creation of procedures that include team member roles and responsibilities to ensure team focus and support (DuFour, 2004).

Alignment of PLC best practices with LIM implementation. The literature on PLCs indicates a strong positive relationship between PLC implementation and school

improvement (Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000; Philips, 2003; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008; Williams, 2013). In examining the facilitator guides for LIM professional development, it is clear to see the alignment between PLCs and the second LIM process piece (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Alignment of PLC Best Practices (Hipp and Huffman, 2010) and LIM Implementation Activities (FranklinCovey, n.d.b.)

PLC Best Practice	LIM Alignment
Supportive and shared leadership	Vision Day, Implementation Day, Lighthouse Level I professional

	development trainings
Shared values and vision	Vision Day, Implementation Day, Lighthouse Level I PD trainings
Collective learning and application	Lighthouse training/meetings, action team meetings
Shared personal practice	Lighthouse meetings, action team meetings
Supportive conditions: relationships	*7 Habits* Signature PD training, lighthouse meetings, action team meetings

Social and Emotional Learning

A review of the literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) indicates its link to school improvement. The third process component of LIM, *7 Habits*, is the integration of the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in the school community. This teaching of the *7 Habits* is aligned with the theoretical assumptions of SEL. In this section of the literature review, there will be an overview of the targeted competencies of SEL, the impact of SEL implementation on student achievement, and an examination of the alignment between SEL components and the LIM process.

CASEL, which was founded in 1994 by Daniel Goleman and Eileen Rockefeller Growald, defines Social and Emotional Learning as "a process for helping children and even

adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness" (CASEL, 2012). Zins and Elias (2006) elaborate, calling it the "capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others" (Zins & Elias, 2006, p. 1). O'Brien and Resnik (2009) provide a hands-on definition of SEL skills for practitioners,

calling them daily life skills that "allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices" (O'Brien & Resnik, 2009, p. 1). SEL skills are daily life skills that provide a system by which students can make the multiple decisions they must make each day, paving the way for them to make more and more challenging decisions as adults (CASEL, 2012; O'Brien & Resnik, 2009; Zins & Elias, 2006).

Targeted competencies of SEL programs. CASEL espouses five groups of social and emotional competencies that are representative of any SEL process. These include self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (O'Brien and Resnik, 2009). Students who are self-aware can accurately assess their own feelings, strengths, and interests (CASEL, 2012). Once students demonstrate this self awareness, according to Fonzi and Ritchie (2011), they can then "react most effectively" when faced with potential troublesome situations. Self-management refers to a student's ability to handle times of stress, overcome obstacles, set goals, monitoring progress toward those goals, and expressing emotions in a socially appropriate manner (CASEL, 2012). Socially aware students exhibit empathy, recognize differences among their peers, and are respectful of these differences**.** Through the building of relationship skills in SEL, students establish and successfully maintain healthy relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and the appropriate resolution of conflict (CASEL, 2012). Finally, responsible decision makers

apply decision-making skills to both academic and social situations (CASEL, 2012). Within this, they evaluate and reflect on their options, being mindful of both "personal and ethical responsibility," (Zins and Elias, 2006, p. 3).

Impact of SEL on school improvement. Several researchers (Elias and Weissberg,

2000; Elias, 2006; O'Brien and Resnik, 2009; Zins and Elias, 2006) suggest there is a relationship between SEL and school improvement. According to Elias (2006), when schools implement SEL programs effectively, the school improves in many areas including academic achievement, decreased discipline issues, and climate/culture. In addition, Zins and Elias (2006) noted a variety of positive benefits to SEL including educational outcomes, reduced crime, lowered substance abuse, and decreased teen suicide attempts. Zins, Elias & Greenberg (2003) categorize student success to include improved attitudes, increased self efficacy, positive feelings toward school, motivation, trust of teachers, and acceptance of consequences. Second, results of the study showed improved student behaviors such as increased attendance, reduced discipline referrals, reduced fights, and improved class participation. Finally, students performed better on testing measures, demonstrating improved scores on achievement tests (Zins et al, 2003). In a study by O'Brien and Resnik (2009), improvements in student test scores were also shown as a result of SEL. The impact of SEL on school improvement not only applies to direct use in the regular school day, but also to its impact when used in after-school programs. Durlak et al (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 69 after-school programs that focused on the integration of SEL competencies. They examined the relationships between implementation of SEL in after-school programs on feelings/attitudes, behavioral adjustment, and student performance in school. The results indicated that enrollment in after school programs that contained a

SEL component led to improvement in all areas, including that of student academic achievement. Durlak et al (2010) noted a variety of increases, including "youths' self perceptions, bonding to school, positive social behaviors, school grades, and achievement test scores" (Durlak et al, 2010, p. 302).

Alignment of SEL and LIM**.** The literature on SEL indicates a positive relationship between the implementation of SEL programs and school success. The five components of Social and Emotional Learning programs align directly with Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (see Table 2), a cornerstone of the LIM process (Fonzi & Ritchie, 2011).

Table 2

Alignment of Social and Emotional Learning and the 7 Habits

Social and Emotional Learning Component	**LIM Alignment**
Self-Awareness	Students learn self-awareness through Habit 1: Be proactive (Fonzi and Ritchie, 2011, p. 18). Proactive students learn how to own their behavior through the focus on their "circle of influence," their own behaviors, thoughts, and actions (Covey, 2008).
Self-Management	Self-management skills at LIM schools are taught through both Habit 1: Be Proactive, as students learn to "hit the pause button," controlling the space between event and reaction, and through Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind. In Habit 2, students develop personal mission statements, set goals in academics, behavior, and attendance, then they monitor their progress toward the accomplishment of those goals (Covey, 2008).
Social Awareness	LIM participants learn social awareness through Habit 5: Seek first to understand, and then to be understood. Students learn to listen, then speak through the use of this habit.
Relationship Skills	LIM students acquire these relationship skills through the implementation of Habit 4: Think win-win and Habit 6: Synergize (Fonzi and Ritchie, 2011, p. 17). Win-win thinkers work toward a mutual solution that balances courage and consideration, allowing both sides to feel successful (Covey, 2008). Students who synergize recognize that by working together, they can develop a solution that is better than one they devise on their own (Covey, 2008).

Responsible Decision Making	Students at LIM schools learn these skills through the application of multiple habits, including Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind, Habit 3: Put First Things First, and Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw. Through the application of Habit 2, students examine and evaluate potential outcomes. By implementing Habit 3, they make sound choices based on the "big rocks" or important work and personal responsibilities in their lives. Finally, through the enactment of Habit 7, they provide balance to their daily routine, ensuring they have the physical and emotional capability to make responsible decisions.

Student Self-Regulation of Learning

Research regarding student self-regulation of their learning in school indicates its positive impact on school improvement. The final process component of LIM is student leadership, which is directly aligned with student self-regulation of their learning. Student leadership follows after a staff has embraced the vision of all students as leaders, established the LIM process at a school, begun living and teaching the *7 Habits*, and fulfilling the social emotional learning portion of the process. Zimmerman (1990) described self-regulated learners as those who "approach educational tasks with confidence, diligence, and resourcefulness. Unlike their passive classmates, self-regulated students proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it" (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 4). According to Zimmerman (1990), self-regulated learners are "active participants" in their daily learning.

Researchers have indicated multiple strategies students may use in self-regulation. According to Ridley, Schutz, Glanz & Weinstein (1992), students must engage in three interactive dimensions. Ridley et al (1992) describe these three dimensions as the development of metacognitive awareness, establishing goals and implementing/monitoring these goals (Ridley et al, 1992). Zimmerman (1990) further identified multiple self-regulated

learning strategies such as self-evaluation, organization, goal-setting/planning, information seeking, record keeping, self-monitoring, environmental structuring, providing self consequences, rehearsing, seeking assistance, and reviewing (Zimmerman, 1990). Pintrich (2003) notes that student self-regulation of their learning yields academic achievement in multiple studies. “This research has shown that students who are self-regulating, in other words those who set goals or plans, and try to monitor and control their own cognition, motivation, and behavior in line with these goals are more likely to do well in school” (p. 677).

In the LIM process, student leadership occurs in two key ways, regardless of the design of the LIM process at a school. First, students monitor their progress, setting goals in key academic areas, through the use of Leadership Notebooks (Covey, 2008). Second, students present their academic victories and goals to parents in annual student-led parent conferences (Covey, 2008). These processes feature several of the self-regulated learning strategies identified by Zimmerman (1990).

The impact of student data management/goal setting on student achievement. Qualitative and quantitative research over the last three decades indicates that students of all ages can successfully track data and set goals and ownership of the learning positively impacts student learning (Alderman, 1990; Miller & Kelley, 1994; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Ridley et al, 1992; Schunk & Rice, 1991). Student management of learning through the use of individual data notebooks and academic goal setting form the backbone of the LIM process.

Student Leadership Notebooks and goal setting include development of metacognitive awareness, establishing goals and implementing/monitoring these goals, the

three processes described by Ridley et al (1992). Furthering Zimmerman's work, Ridley et al (1992), found that students reach metacognitive awareness when they identify their "person, task, and strategy knowledge in a given context" (Ridley et al, 1992, p. 294). When students track their data in all academic areas, they develop this metacognitive awareness of their demonstrated skill in all subjects. Students then reach the motivational level when they establish goals in each of the subject areas. Finally, students act on these goals by monitoring their ongoing performance and setting new goals as they reach previous ones (Ridley et al, 1992).

Schunk and Rice (1991) studied the impact of goal-setting on remedial readers, finding a positive effect when students set long- and short-term learning goals. In this study, students set an initial goal, learned an instructional strategy to accomplish this goal, then reflected on their progress before continuing with that strategy or selecting another. By following this process, students demonstrated motivation, learned a method of improving their achievement and explained how the strategy they selected improved their achievement (Schunk & Rice, 1991). They determined that due to student control over the process, this goal-setting/feedback/strategy instruction cycle led to student achievement. Palmer and Wehmeyer (2003) studied the impact of goal setting on very young students with learning difficulties. They examined the use of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000), with children with disabilities in the early elementary grades (K-3). This model includes a variety of steps based on student self-directed learning and problem solving (Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003). The researchers determined that students as young as Kindergarten were able to successfully

use this model of self-regulated learning, data tracking, and goal setting with teacher support (Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003).

Alderman (1990) studied motivation for at-risk students, focusing on strategies teachers could use to get students to own their learning, yielding greater efforts and ultimately classroom success. She identified four "links" to success. The first of these links is student personal goal setting, which she considered to be the "mechanism for self assessment" that is beneficial to both students and teachers (Alderman, 1990, p. 28). In addition to studies regarding the impact of goal setting and self-monitoring on students with learning difficulties, there has been a great deal of research on goal setting and its impact on all learners. For instance, Miller and Kelley (1994) studied the impact of goal setting and contingency contracting on student homework completion. This was a small study with only four students involved, but each of the four had distinctive characteristics that prevented homework from being completed. For example, one of the four, an 11-year old sixth grader, often failed to bring home books or homework pages required for homework completion. The results of the study were positive in that the use of goal-setting led to increased accurately completed homework assignments (Miller & Kelly, 1994). Bandura (1993) identified three "cognitive motivators," including casual attributions, outcome expectancies, and cognized goals in his study of self-efficacy and self-regulation of motivation. This goal-setting is directly tied to student self-regulation and the LIM goal setting process. According to Bandura, when learners attach feelings of satisfaction to fulfilling their goals, it provides motivation to work toward those goals until they are accomplished, prompting them "to intensify their efforts by discontent with substandard performances" (Bandura, 1993, p. 130).

Schunk (2003) also unpacked the research behind self-efficacy and its impact on classroom instruction. Within this analysis, he points to student goal-setting and self regulation of progress as two of the key factors yielding success in the establishment of self efficacy (Schunk, 2003). Schunk encourages teachers to develop in their students goal-setting and self-regulation/evaluation skills in order to increase self-efficacy and, ultimately, student achievement. These skills must be taught if students are to implement them with success. "Direct instruction on goal setting may be necessary until students can set realistic goals for themselves" (Schunk, 2003, p. 170).

In summary, the literature indicates that students who track their data and set goals demonstrate academic gains.

Impact of student-led parent-Teacher Conferences on student achievement. How do student-led parent conferences impact student achievement? How does this impact parent participation in the conferences? What are the best practices involved in successful student led conferences? Taking student leadership demonstration via self-regulation to the next level, students explain their progress in reaching their academic and personal goals to their parents in annual conferences. Students in LIM schools also present their data notebooks to their parents at student-led parent-teacher conferences. During these conferences, students, rather than teachers, demonstrate their current classroom progress as well as short- and long term goals through their work samples.

Research indicates that student-led conferences have proven to be successful for all school stakeholders. For instance, Tuinstra and Hiatt-Michael (2003) conducted a study focusing on the benefits and difficulties associated with the implementation of student-led conferences at four middle schools across four states (California, Oregon, Texas, and

Washington). These researchers administered student and parent surveys, conducted teacher and site administrator interviews and observed the student-led conferences on site. The results reported by all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators, were positive. According to Tuinstra and Hiatt-Michael (2003), these conferences improved communication among all of those involved and even helped to "diffuse parent-teacher conflicts." Although the results indicated that all stakeholders responded positively to the student-led conferences, two areas presented difficulty. These included the streamlining of paperwork and finding time to prepare for the conferences (Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2003). Sagor (1996) lists student-led parent conferences as a key practice schools can implement in order to build resiliency in their students. He defines resilience as "the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life" (Sagor, 1996, p. 38). In order to help students to reach the stage of resilience, schools must put in place daily practices to foster "feelings of competence, belonging, usefulness, potency, and optimism" (Sagor, 1996, p. 39). Sagor (1996) cites student-led conferences as a practice yielding potency, a key trait within the building of resilience in students. Through this practice, a school would "build an internal locus of control" (Sagor, 1996).

Like Sagor (1996) and Tuinstra and Hiatt-Michael (2003), Hackmann (1997) finds multiple benefits of student-led parent conferences. Hackmann cites increased parent participation, improved student self-confidence and reduced teacher stress before and during the conferences. He notes that although the practice may look differently at various schools, at the base level, the student runs the conference with the teacher serving as a discussion

facilitator only when needed, moving the student from a passive to an active role (Hackmann, 1997).

The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) (2009) identified multiple benefits for students, parents, and teachers in the use of student-led parent conferences. Among those for students are the accountability for their learning, improved self-confidence, use of communication/critical thinking skills, and active student involvement. The parent benefits include active participation in their child's learning, increased amount of information provided and an opportunity to help their child to set goals. Finally, the teacher benefits greatly through this process as well as they feel less stress in the preparation, positive energy during the conferences, and increased parent participation in the event. To summarize the research, student-led parent conferences provide multiple benefits to schools and classrooms, especially in the areas of student achievement and parent participation.

Best practices for student-led conferences. The researchers agree that in order to ensure student-led conference success, standard practices should be in place (Hackmann, 1997; Le Countryman & Shroeder, 1996; Sagor, 1996; Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2003). Overall, researchers agree on a three stage process. First, there should be a preparation/practice phase. Second, schools need implementation of the conferences. Finally, there should be a multi-stakeholder evaluation stage should be in place to lead to successful implementation (Hackmann, 1997; Le Countryman & Shroeder, 1996; Sagor, 1996; Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2003). Although most researchers agree on the three stages, what comprises each of these stages differs slightly.

Tuinstra and Hiatt-Michael (2003) recommend key practices. First, it is crucial that school

staff receive training in best practices for student-led conferences. Also, it is recommended that teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their learning prior to the student-led conference. In addition, students should engage in regular goal-setting and reflection in academic areas. In order for students to effectively reflect on their progress, teachers must make clear the expectations for high-quality work through the use of rubrics. They must teach students how to apply these rubrics to their work and to the work of their peers. Finally, the researchers recommend parent workshops prior to the student led conferences, so parents know what to expect (Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2003).

In order to maximize conference effectiveness, Sagor (1996) recommends two slightly different practices than those espoused by Tuinstra and Hiatt-Michael (2003). First, ensure all students feel supported in both the preparation for and completion of the student led conferences. Second, ascertain whether or not students developed feelings of potency through the use of the process (Sagor, 1996). This can be done through a short survey following the student-led conferences.

Hackmann (1997) recommends the use of a three-pronged model for successful implementation of these conferences. First, teachers should engage both students and parents in preparation activities. Given the dramatic difference between a student-led and traditional teacher-led parent conference, it should not be assumed that students will have the presentation skills necessary to carry the conversation (Hackmann, 1997). Prior to the event, teachers should help students practice assembling the information they will present. Parents should be notified of the use of the student-led conference format and encouraged to practice with their children at home through the provision of sample preparation questions they can

ask. Subsequently, students should be given opportunities to reflect on their progress and

teachers should continue to show them how to interpret and explain data to others. Hackmann (1997) describes the second stage, the actual conference, as different at different schools. One of the key differences among schools is the presence of the teacher. Some schools deem that faculty attendance is unnecessary as the student is carrying the conference (Hackmann, 1997). He also recommends that the conference not focus entirely on grades. Instead, students should present work samples, other data sources including attendance and homework completion, and action plans for improvement in all areas. Hackmann's (1997) follow up evaluation phase features parents, teacher, and student surveys; the results should then be used to improve the system for the years to come.

KPIRC (2009) espouses a variety of practices to maximize the benefits of LIM conference including early teacher, school, and student preparation. Teachers should collect student work samples, prepare and send home parent invitations, have students complete a pre-conference self-evaluation, and help students to set long- and short-term goals. KPIRC recommends that students prepare scripts and practice with peers. Parents should be reminded of the student-led format; a forum for teacher idea-sharing is recommended. Schools are encouraged to engage in follow-up activities including a program evaluation process and plans for students whose parents did not attend.

Le Countryman and Schroeder (1996) described the model of student-led conferences they put in place at their middle school in response to teacher frustration following traditional conferences. These authors suggest a three-phase implementation process that allows students to lead the conference and they get to self-assess and own their learning. During the preparation stage, students prepare a script that they practiced with a peer prior to the event

and assemble a portfolio highlighting work they felt best represented their learning. In

addition, students prepare a hand-written personal invitation to their parent explaining the new process. During stage two, conference day, students are given a 15 minute time slot to present their information to their parents. Parents are asked to write questions on an index card so that students could answer these at the end, time permitting. During the final evaluation phase, the school asked for feedback from parents, students, and teachers. All three groups felt positively about the student-led conference format, although the parents expressed some reservation about being able to speak freely to the teacher regarding their child (Le Countryman & Schroeder, 1996).

In summary, the literature indicates a set of best practices in order to maximize the effectiveness of student-led parent conferences. If best practices are in place, these student led conferences often lead to school success both in terms of student achievement measures and parent participation/satisfaction. These conferences, along with student data management/goal setting, fall under the umbrella of student self-regulation of learning which parallel LIM process strategies. The research indicates key practices, along with the general practice of student self-regulation, lead to school improvement.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature on the LIM as a whole, and the theoretical components that make up the four process components that underlie it. These components include school vision of leadership featuring an examination of literature on self efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecy, staff-created implementation steeped in literature on PLCs, *7 Habits* with the aligned theoretical base of SEL, and student leadership based on literature related to student management of the learning process. The information presented

in Chapter 2 supports the development of the LIM conceptual model presented in Chapter

one and the measurement framework presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter comprehensively describes the study's location, sample, instruments, data collection, and analysis methods. The purpose of this study was three-fold: (1) to identify whether LIM processes promote positive school improvement measures such as attendance, reading, and discipline, (2) to identify teacher perception of the LIM process as a whole along with the process components and their relative impact on the school, and (3) to identify which of the process components make the greatest impact on school improvement and why. The primary research question guiding this study was, does implementation of the *Leader in Me* yield positive school improvement? Secondary to this overarching question are two additional questions. What is teacher perception of the four components of the LIM process? Which of the four process components has the greatest positive influence on school improvement and why?

A mixed-methods approach was selected in order to fully answer the research questions guiding the overall study. Quantitative procedures were used to examine student data, including longitudinal daily student attendance frequencies, reading assessment scores (DIBELS), and discipline data over four years at Seven Habits Elementary (SHE), a rural LIM school servicing first through third grade students. This data is generated and reported annually to the state and school board in the school improvement plan independent of the study. In addition, quantitative survey design procedures were used to collect and analyze the results of the "LIM Survey" which were administered to teachers at four LIM schools regarding the implementation of the LIM process at their school. This quantitative data review allowed the researcher to identify trends in school improvement indicators as well as teacher perceptions of LIM processes. The quantitative data were triangulated to understand

the relationship between LIM processes and school improvement data indicators. Qualitative methods, in the form of a case study of SHE, were used to conduct focus group interviews with SHE teachers who have been at the school at least five years, one year prior to LIM implementation and all years during. Focus group questions captured teacher perception regarding the relative impact of the LIM beliefs and process components on student quantitative data.

Key features of this mixed-methods study were the triangulation of student school improvement data measures, teacher surveys, and focus group interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative methods worked in concert, allowing the researcher to explore the connection between the LIM process and school improvement.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study is does the implementation of the *Leader in Me* yield school improvement? In order to answer this question, seven underlying questions were asked regarding aspects of school improvement.

Quantitative research question 1. Does daily student attendance at a LIM school improve during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 1. Average daily student attendance increases.

***Quantitative research question 2*.** Do reading assessment scores at a LIM school improve during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 2. Reading assessment scores increase.

Quantitative research question 3. Do student discipline referrals at a LIM school decrease during LIM implementation?

Hypothesis 3. The number of discipline referrals decreases.

Quantitative research question 4. What are teacher perceptions regarding the LIM process as a whole?

Hypothesis 4. Teachers express positive feelings toward LIM implementation.

Quantitative research question 5. What is teacher perception regarding the relative impact of the four LIM process components on school improvement? ***Hypothesis 5***. Teachers will indicate that 7 Habits will be the process component that yields the greatest impact on school improvement.

Quantitative research question 6. Is there a relationship among the LIM process constructs including school vision of leadership, staff-created implementation, *7 Habits,* and student leadership?

Hypothesis 6. There is a relationship among the constructs.

Qualitative research questions. If school improvement data, including student attendance, reading assessment scores, and student discipline, improves during LIM implementation, does one of the four process components make a greater impact on this growth than the others? If so, which component makes the greatest impact? How do these components impact daily student learning and overall student growth? If one process component seems to have a greater impact on student achievement measures, why does that seem to be so? What is the general perception of the teachers at a LIM school regarding the impact LIM has made on their campus and in the community outside of the school?

There has been a limited amount of direct research done on LIM although there has been much research done on the four process components that comprise it. What does the research say? What do we know about the impact of each of these components individually

on student achievement? What is the collective impact of these components when applied in concert through this process? These are the questions prompting this study. **Research Design and Rationale**

Mixed methods. The study employed the use of a mixed-methods research approach in order to combine both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for the purpose of researching the impact of the LIM on school improvement. Through the use of a mixed-method design, a researcher can reap the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative designs, allowing for richer analysis of an event, process, or phenomenon (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), a mixed method approach can provide "richer insights and raise more interesting questions for future research than if only one set of studies is considered" (p. 32). In order to understand the impact of the LIM on school improvement, it is crucial to analyze quantitative student and teacher data as well as teacher focus group qualitative data.

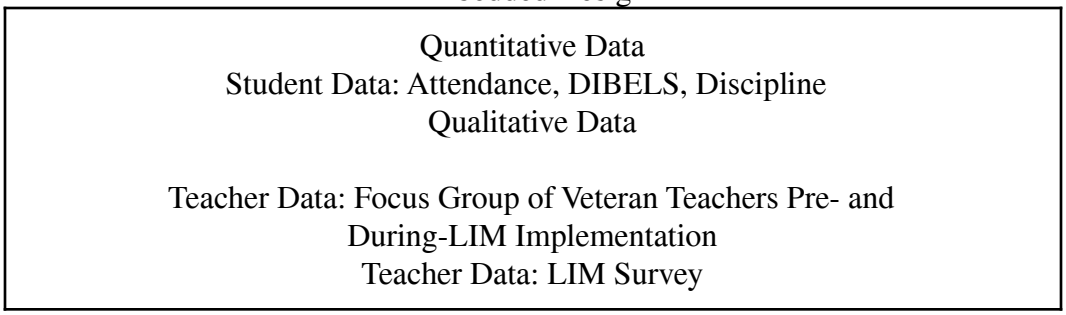
A review of the literature on mixed-methods research indicates that this is becoming a third research paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), mixed-methods research goes beyond the gathering and presentation of qualitative and quantitative data as separate entities. It involves the incorporation of both data sets using any one of several designs, in order to allow the data to work together to provide more in-depth answers to the research questions.

Within the mixed-methods approach, there are multiple potential study designs. Caracelli and Greene (1997) propose three component designs. These include triangulation, in which different methods are used to assess the same research question with a goal of convergence; complementary, a method featuring a dominant approach allowing the other

method to enhance the dominant data; expansion, different methods are used for distinct research questions (p. 23). In addition, Caracelli and Greene (1997) identify four integrated designs. First, they describe the iterative design which features an ongoing interaction between the qualitative and quantitative approaches resulting in a spiraling effect. Second, they refer to the embedded methodology featuring the nesting of one of the two approaches within the other, yielding "creative tension." Third, there is the holistic approach which focuses on the interdependence of the two methodologies. Finally, there is the transformative approach, which espouses the full use of each approach, allowing both to be completely experienced with little interaction between the two (p. 23).

In order to provide the most thorough answers to the research questions in this study, the author chose an embedded approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) provide a similar explanation of this approach to that of Caracelli and Greene (1997), indicating that the qualitative and quantitative data analysis runs concurrently and sequentially. This allows one type of data to be embedded within the other, so that the one can use the other in order to better inform the analysis. The author embedded the qualitative data within the larger context of quantitative data, further explaining the quantitative results.

Embedded Design



Analysis of Findings

*Figure 2***.** LIM and School Improvement Mixed Methods Embedded Design

Quantitative Research Design

Quantitative research is steeped in the notion of observable, objective behaviors that translate into numerical data sets (Gall et al, 2007). Quantitative research can be either experimental or non-experimental in design. For the quantitative portion of this study, the researcher used a non-experimental approach. According to Gall et al (2007), non experimental quantitative design is most useful when the researcher intends to study "phenomena as they exist" (p. 299). That is true for this particular study. The three types of non-experimental approaches include descriptive, causal-comparative, and correlational (Gall et al, 2007). The researcher employed longitudinal descriptive research for the student quantitative data portion of the study.

The first three quantitative variables included student attendance frequency, reading DIBELS scores, and discipline referral data at SHE elementary over a four year time period. The researcher described these three sets of school improvement data as they existed during the implementation of the LIM process at SHE. Descriptive statistical analysis is most impactful when describing a phenomenon as it exists at the time it is happening (Gall et al, 2007). Each variable was collected over a four year period (2010-2014) in which the LIM

process has been in place at SHE. A longitudinal design allows a researcher the ability to examine and possibly discover trends over time. Given that the student population over the course of the four years changed, this approach is a trend study (Gall et al, 2007). The constant within the four years of data was the LIM implementation. Approximately one third of the student population at SHE changed within each year of gathered data as the school

services students in grades one, two, and three.

For the second quantitative section of this study, the researcher utilized both descriptive and correlational approaches to the analysis of teacher survey data gathered from four LIM schools. According to Gall et al (2007), the purpose of correlational research is the discovery of "relationships between variables through the use of correlational statistics" (p. 332). Through the use of both descriptive and correlational statistical analysis, the researcher was able to not only describe the LIM implementation from the perspective of teachers, but she was also able to determine the relationships that exist among the four process components of LIM implementation.

Given that the purpose of this portion of the study is to identify teacher perception of LIM implementation, survey research was most useful. Yin (2009) says that survey research can best answer questions regarding who, what, where, how many, and how much while focusing on events as they are occurring. Gall et al (2007) consider survey research a best practice when the goal is the collection of data that can be applied to a much larger population. As such, the use of survey research for this particular study was most effective. The researcher was hoping to generalize the results gleaned from this survey to the population of LIM teachers world-wide.

Sampling. For both quantitative portions of the study, the researcher employed a convenience sampling strategy. In order to facilitate the completion of a study in a timely fashion, many researchers use the convenience sampling method. According to Gall et al (2007), the sample can be considered convenient for many reasons, including location of the sample, ability to gain permission more easily from the school leader, and familiarity of the researcher with the school from which the sample will come. With regard to this study, all

three reasons apply.

Student sample. A convenience sampling strategy for selecting study participants included a target population of students at schools that have implemented the LIM with excellence, as indicated by earning Lighthouse Status, and over at least four years. Given this target population, only two schools in the state in which the researcher lives, and only one within 200 miles of where she lives, fit this description. As a result, students who attended SHE over the four years of LIM implementation, from fall 2010 to spring 2014, served as the sample for this study. These students took the state-required DIBELS reading assessment every semester of those four years. Their daily attendance and behavior referral data was logged in the district data system. The data generated regarding these students yields no identifiable information on them. This was group data that is reported annually for purposes of writing the school improvement plan (SIP) that is submitted to the district and state.

Teacher samples from four LIM schools. A convenience sampling strategy for selecting study participants included teachers from four area schools implementing the LIM process. School A, SHE Elementary, is also the site for the qualitative phase of the study. SHE Elementary fully implemented the LIM process in summer 2010, and as a LIM Lighthouse School, the information the teachers from SHE provided was very insightful.

Comparing survey results with the qualitative focus group interviews data provided great insight into the research questions that propelled this study. SHE is a rural first to third grade school with 412 students of which seven percent receive Special Education (SPED) services and 82% receive free or reduced lunch. The sample population at School A includes 18 homeroom teachers in the first through third grades, one special education (SPED) teacher, one librarian, one counselor, one physical education (PE) teacher, one Response to

Intervention (RTI) teacher, and one disciplinarian for a total of 24 teachers.

The other three schools are from a district near SHE. The common denominator for each of the schools was their timeline with regard to implementation of the LIM process. All three began the process in summer 2013, completed the first full year of implementation in May 2014 and were currently engaged in the second full year of the LIM during the study, having completed all required professional development components in summer 2014. School B is an urban Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) to grade four school with 612 students of which 10% receive Special Education (SPED) services and 50% receive free or reduced lunch. This sample population at School B includes 25 homeroom teachers in the Pre-K through fourth grades, six SPED teachers, six Gifted and Talented (GT) teachers, three specialty teachers, one librarian, two counselors, two physical education teachers, and two administrators for a total of 47 teachers. School C is a suburban Pre-K to grade five school with 1075 students including nine percent who receive SPED services and 44% who receive free or reduced lunch. The sample population at School C includes 41 homeroom teachers in Pre-K through fifth grades, 10 SPED teachers, one GT teacher, five specialty teachers, two librarians, four PE teachers, three counselors, and four administrators for a total of 70 teachers. School D is a rural Pre-Kindergarten to grade five school with 556 students of

which seven percent receive SPED services and 91% receive free or reduced lunch. The sample population at School D includes 26 homeroom teachers in Pre-K through fifth grades, three SPED teachers, five English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, four specialty teachers, one librarian, three PE teachers, three counselors, and three administrators for a total of 48 teachers.

All teachers who currently teach at each of the four schools were invited to participate

in the survey, but they have the option to decide to opt out of the study. **Quantitative student data collection**. Three types of student data sets from SHE were analyzed over four years, from fall 2010 to spring 2014, including attendance, DIBELS, and discipline. These data sets are downloaded annually for the purposes of school improvement planning and school/district/state analysis. None of these data sets identify individual students, but rather they represent mass data sets. All three sets of data were in existence prior to the development of this study, and all of these numerical values inform each school about their movement toward school improvement growth. First, the researcher analyzed year-ending Daily Average Student Attendance data from all four years. The district uses a software program called WebPams, and within this system, each school can calculate this average daily attendance statistic for each school year. Second, spring DIBELS Benchmark Assessment scores for students at SHE were analyzed. The DIBELS "are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade" (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2014). Students fall into one of three categories during each DIBELS Benchmark testing including core, strategic, and intensive. Students who fall into the core category are identified as on- or above-level readers for their grade level. The researcher identified the percentage of students

in each of the three grades who scored "core." Finally, year-end data regarding raw numbers of discipline referrals were analyzed using descriptive methods. The WebPams system allows schools to track this data for the purposes of school improvement planning. Data from the 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 school year were gathered and analyzed.

Quantitative teacher survey data collection. The second group of quantitative data sets were gleaned from anonymous closed-ended question teacher surveys completed by

teachers at four LIM schools. One of these schools will be SHE, and the other three schools began the LIM process in fall 2013. Teachers from these four schools were invited to participate in this survey using the web-based survey software Survey Monkey system. The use of this software ensured an anonymous, confidential format for acquiring data from research participants. Survey Monkey features a variety of data gathering advantages including the ability to integrate the results directly into SPSS, generate custom reports and filter/cross-tab (Survey Monkey, 2014). Once the researcher created the Survey Monkey version of the LIM Survey, the selected sample of teachers received the link to take the survey via email, allowing them to immediately enter their answers upon clicking the link. The researcher received the results in real time, as the respondents took the survey. Wright (2005) identifies multiple advantages to using online survey data collection methods, including access to participants at multiple locations as well as the ability to use automated data collection, saving the researcher both time and effort. In addition, online survey methods provide for greater anonymity than would be possible if they were administered face-to-face. One disadvantage to online survey methods could be sampling issues if the sample population were to have been selected using email lists generated from previously administered online surveys (Wright, 2005). In order to offset this potential problem, the

researcher sent the survey link only to those teachers who have been selected from the four schools for the purpose of the study.

Survey instrumentation. The questions on this survey were developed by the researcher based on the four LIM process components (Appendix A). As presented in the literature review, these components and their underlying theoretical assumptions include school vision of leadership (self-fulfilling prophecy/student self-efficacy), staff-created

implementation (PLCs), *7 Habits* (SEL), and student leadership (student self-regulation of learning). Within the survey instrument, teachers at these schools were asked to rate the relative influence of the four process components on school improvement growth. Following this question, teachers were asked a series of questions regarding the implementation of these four process components.

All schools except SHE completed a pilot pre-process survey in summer 2013 prior to their initial LIM training sessions. The pilot surveys were used for the purpose of assessing survey item validity and reliability. The pilot surveys were markedly different than the survey used in this study. The feedback gathered from pilot survey participants provided information that allowed the researcher to better develop questions for the study survey. ***LIM Survey Section 1: Demographics***

The LIM survey included both demographic and perceptual questions (see Table 3). Teacher demographic information including their role in the school, years of experience in K-12 education, and years of experience with the LIM process at that school will be collected to understand the faculty of each school. Question four asked participants to rate their level of excitement about the LIM process. Question five was a rating scale whereby participants ordered the relative impact of each LIM component on school improvement.

Table 3

LIM Survey Section 1: Teacher Demographics

School Name: _____

1. Please select your primary role at your school from the list below. If you hold multiple positions, rank the top 3 roles in the order of importance:

____ Administrator ____ Counselor ____ Classroom teacher ____ Specialty teacher
____ Other _____

2. Please indicate your years of experience in K-12 education:
____ 0-3 ____ 4-9 ____ 10-15 ____ 16 +

3. Please indicate your years of experience with the *Leader in Me* at this school:
____ during or before summer 2013-present ____ Jan 2014-present ____ summer 2014-present ____ Jan 2015 or after-present

4. About *Leader in Me* process at our school, I feel:
____*Not at all excited* ____*unsure* ____*excited* ____*very excited*

5. Please rank the following four LIM process components in order of their relative impact on school improvement (1 being the MOST impactful, 4 being the LEAST):
____ School Vision: ALL students are leaders.
____ Staff-Created Implementation Plan
____ *7 Habits* Instruction
____ Student Demonstration of Leadership (Leadership Notebooks, Goal Setting, Student-Led Conferences)

The remaining four sections of the survey were directly related to the four process components. The researcher aligned the questions in each of these sections with key features of each of the four LIM process components.

LIM Survey Section 2: Vision

The first process section includes questions related to the first process component, school vision of leadership (see Table 4). These questions were developed using key concepts from the first LIM training, *Vision Day*, in which the school staff agrees to view all

students in the school as leaders, accepting that leadership is a choice rather than a position (FranklinCovey, n.d.b., p. 54). The first two questions in this section asked the respondent to identify whether or not they and other staff members believe all students are leaders. Questions three and four required respondents to define leadership either as a position or a choice. Questions five, six, and seven asked respondents to identify whether or not they

believe students can carry out the leadership demonstration required of the LIM process.

Table 4

LIM Survey Section 2

	Please answer the following questions regarding the *Leader in Me* Vision of Leadership on the following scale:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	All students at this school are leaders.				
2.	All staff members at this school believe that all students are leaders.				
3.	Leadership is only a position with a title (example: principal).				
4.	Leadership is a choice (leaders choose to become leaders through actions rather than through a job assignment).				
5.	All students at this school can achieve at a high level.				
6.	All students at this school can successfully maintain leadership roles in the classroom.				
7.	All students at this school can successfully maintain leadership roles in the school.				

LIM Survey Section 3: Implementation

The second process section featured seven questions regarding the staff-created implementation (see Table 5). The first four questions asked respondents procedural information regarding the amount in which the staff created and currently maintains the implementation plan for the LIM process. The final three questions are related to the culture

of sharing and support shown by the staff at the school. The answers to these three questions

indicated whether or not the answers to the first four questions are accurate. In developing these seven questions, the researcher was mindful of the need for faculty/staff empowerment, which is aligned with two of the key underlying beliefs of the LIM process: All staff members are leaders who develop the process, and the process develops through an inside out approach. The LIM process is built to tap into the leadership potential of all school stakeholders, not just students. The answers to these questions yielded information regarding whether or not this is truly happening in the school.

Table 5

LIM Survey Section 3: Implementation

	Please answer the following questions regarding staff implementation of the *Leader in Me* on the following scale:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	The staff at this school created the *Leader in Me* implementation plan.				
2.	There are regularly scheduled *Leader in Me* Action Team meetings in which implementation ideas are put created and developed.				
3.	The *Leader in Me* Lighthouse Team sets the action items that will be completed by the action teams.				
4.	All faculty/staff at this school have input regarding the continued implementation of the *Leader in Me* process.				
5.	All faculty/staff work toward a common vision of ALL students as leaders.				
6.	All faculty/staff support each other				

	at this school.				
7.	All faculty/staff share *Leader in Me* classroom implementation ideas with one another.				

LIM Survey Section 4: 7 Habits

The next section of the survey was aligned with the third process component of the LIM, *7 Habits* (see Figure 6). All 13 questions in this section were directly aligned with student use of the habits. Questions one and two were related to Habit 1: Be proactive. Questions three and four were tied to Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind. Questions five and six inquired about student application of Habit 3: Put first things first. Questions seven and eight relate to Habit 4: Think win-win. Questions nine and 10 were aligned with Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Questions 11 and 12 were tied to Habit 6: Synergize. Finally, question 13 asked about student use of Habit 7: Sharpen the saw. The researcher developed these questions in order to gain insight into teacher perception of the impact the teaching of these habits has made on students.

Table 6

LIM Survey Section 4: *7 Habits*

	Please answer the following questions regarding student use of the *7 Habits* on the following scale:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	Students at this school maintain self control, even in difficult or emotional circumstances.				

2.	Students at this school accept responsibility for their actions rather than making excuses.				
3.	Students at this school begin each day knowing what they will accomplish by the end of it.				
4.	Students at this school have a sense of direction in their lives.				
5.	Students at this school plan carefully, so they can avoid falling into crisis mode.				

6.	Students at this school maintain a planning system that includes all areas of their lives (work and personal).				
7.	Students at this school do what is best for the whole group, not just their own interests.				
8.	Students at this school are not competitive and are happy for others who win.				
9.	Students at this school listen without interrupting.				
10.	Students at this school attempt to fully understand problems before attempting to solve them.				
11.	Students at this school are flexible and open-minded in trying new ideas.				
12.	Students at this school like to work as a member of a team.				
13.	Students at this school take time to relax and rejuvenate.				

LIM Survey Section 5: Student Leadership

The final section of the survey (see Table 7) sought information regarding student leadership, process component four, at the school. Question one was aligned with student use of Leadership Notebooks. Questions two and three requested information regarding student goal setting. The final question sought information regarding student-led conferences at the school. The researcher specifically chose questions regarding these pieces in order to determine whether or not students have been provided opportunities to demonstrate leadership at the school, the final process component of the LIM.