

## **Leader in Me® Grant Narrative**

*Leader in Me*® is a PreK–Grade 12 evidence-based, comprehensive model that builds leadership and life skills in students, creates a high-trust school culture, and lays the foundation for sustained academic achievement by establishing a supportive learning environment in which students’ social, academic, and emotional needs are met. *Leader in Me* has proven effective with a diverse range of student populations, in a variety of educational settings, including rural, suburban, and urban in the United States and in more than 50 countries around the world. As such, we plan to implement the *Leader in Me* process with fidelity and without modifications.

One of the premises *Leader in Me* is based on is a theory of change known as the See-Do-Get Cycle. When people change the way they See things, it influences what they Do and the results they Get. The *Leader in Me* process begins with a whole new paradigm for education. Educators rediscover their passion through *Leader in Me* as it redirects their focus back to a deeper understanding of student achievement. Instead of focusing on academic measures alone, *Leader in Me* embodies a holistic approach to education, redefining how schools measure success. This approach empowers educators with effective practices and tools to (a) teach LEADERSHIP to every student, (b) create a CULTURE of student empowerment, and (c) align systems to drive results in ACADEMICS.

*Leader in Me* is a 3-year installation process. In Year 1, the full staff learns about The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People® and how to implement *Leader in Me*. Installation includes teaching the 7 Habits through modeling and direct lessons, engaging student voice in developing a mission statement, creating a leadership environment that communicates students’ worth and potential, and engaging with families in developing a leadership school. In Year 2, the staff learns to build students’ skill sets by integrating the highly effective practices of the 7 Habits, using the 4 Disciplines of Execution® to help students achieve academic growth, and implementing a tool to empower students to own their own learning and growth. In Year 3, the full staff learns to empower students to facilitate a student-led conference, inspire student leadership through service learning, and prepare life-ready leaders with The 8th Habit®.

*Leader in Me* meets ESSA Tier 2, moderate evidence—through multiple quasi-experimental design (QED) studies—as defined by What Works Clearinghouse. Additionally, over 80 independent academic research studies have evaluated the effectiveness of *Leader in Me*, including its demonstrated impacts on leadership, culture, and academics.

## **Evidence-Base (by Theme)**

(select one or more sections that apply to your application and include references)

### **If you are using *Leader in Me* for its impact on leadership, include this section**

*Leader in Me* has a demonstrated impact on leadership, as reported through an extensive body of research. *Leader in Me* Schools see improved student behavior, a higher level of teacher and student efficacy, and increased family involvement, as shown in the following sampling of research:

- The rate of behavior referrals dropped from over 200 prior to *Leader in Me* implementation to less than 100 after one year of *Leader in Me*, and to only 26 after the second year (Bergin, et al., 2018).
- A study of suburban Chicago *Leader in Me* schools found an increase in student leadership, student

confidence, opportunities for student voice, student empowerment, citizenship, and problem-solving skills as a result of *Leader in Me* implementation (Danielski, 2019).

- In a study of Title I *Leader in Me* Schools, 92.3% of study participants believe *Leader in Me* positively affected students' leadership abilities (Crews, 2022).
- In a study of urban *Leader in Me* Schools in the Midwest, 95% of participants agreed that participation in *Leader in Me* resulted in the development of leadership skills (Giraldo-García & Orozco, 2022).
- In a study of Florida middle schools, students who had attended a *Leader in Me* elementary school before coming to the middle school had a significantly lower rate of behavior incidents compared to students who came from non-*Leader in Me* elementary schools (Schilling, 2018).
- A study of Hawaiian *Leader in Me* Schools found that schools implementing *Leader in Me* for at least one year saw an increase in positive, proactive parental involvement (Bennett, 2020).
- 100% of principals surveyed in a Georgia Title I *Leader in Me* School survey indicated that *Leader in Me* implementation had a positive impact on student discipline referrals (Bolden, 2019).
- In a study of rural, Title I *Leader in Me* Schools in North Carolina, parent involvement and support for the school increased, despite the school being new and created out of a systemwide redistricting process (Shepard, 2018).
- In a study of *Leader in Me* Schools in the Midwest, parents, and students reported that *Leader in Me* helped students become more independent and conscientious about their work at home and at school (Bergin, et al., 2018).
- In an Arkansas study, 100% of working-class high school students reported that The 7 Habits positively influenced their life choices and future success (Ashley, 2018).
- A study of at-risk high school students in Louisiana found that students of *Leader in Me* High Schools developed the skills and confidence they need to lead their lives effectively and succeed in school and beyond (Steward, 2021).

### References for Leadership Section

Ashley, A. K. (2018). Working-class graduates' perceptions of The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective Teens training and its impact on their life choices and future success. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR.

Bennett, C. (2020). Bloom where you're planted: Spreading the seeds of Leader in Me everywhere. Brigham Young University, Laie, HI.

Bergin, C., Hill, S., Prewett, S., Tsai, C., Eli Jones, E., & Murphy, B. (2018). The Leader in Me effectiveness study: Executive summary. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

Bolden, P. (2019). An evaluation of the "Leader in Me" program implementation in a central Georgia elementary school. Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA.

Crews, G. S. (2022). An appreciative inquiry of the Leader in Me: Understanding implementation experiences and program impacts via the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators. Doctoral Dissertation. University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC.

Danielski, D. (2019). Impact of Leader in Me on Social-Emotional Learning of Elementary Students. Doctoral Dissertation. National Louis University, Chicago, IL.

Giraldo-García, R. J., & Orozco, L. E. (2022). New school principals' training experiences and transition to leadership roles in urban education: A mixed-methods approach. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427751221127052>

Schilling, S. (2018). A quasi-experimental study of the effect of The Leader in Me school intervention

on discipline incidents in Florida schools. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Shepard, J. (2018). Program evaluation of the Leader in Me in a rural elementary school with emphasis on Hispanic students. Doctoral Dissertation. Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC.

Steward, A. P. (2021). Best practices for instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools. Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

### **If you are using *Leader in Me* for its impact on school culture, include this section**

Strong school culture is frequently found as an outcome of *Leader in Me* implementation. The outcomes are often shown through increased attendance by students and staff, a supportive school environment, increased student engagement, and staff satisfaction and retention, as supported by the following research:

- Teacher attrition decreased to 1% over a 5-year period, as a result of *Leader in Me* implementation, and educators typically leave only due to retirement or relocation of the spouse (Tench, 2019).
- 89% of teachers at *Leader in Me* Schools in Missouri reported that the implementation of *Leader in Me* resulted in the school feeling safe and providing a welcoming environment (Sainz, 2021).
- In a study of rural, southern *Leader in Me* Schools, teachers attributed *Leader in Me* as a consistent factor in developing schoolwide leadership roles, including through afterschool clubs which allow students and teachers to increase their awareness of culture and diversity, creating a more inclusive environment (Laird-Arnold, 2022).
- *Leader in Me* is associated with increased average attendance. Schools have higher attendance after implementing *Leader in Me* and attendance increases the longer schools implement *Leader in Me* (Bergin, et al., 2018).
- 83% of principals surveyed in a Georgia Title I *Leader in Me* School survey indicated that *Leader in Me* implementation had a positive impact on attendance, parent satisfaction, and parent attendance at conferences (Bolden, 2019).
- In a Kentucky study, students in grades 4-8 at *Leader in Me* Schools scored significantly higher on school engagement constructs than students at non-*Leader in Me* Schools (Goble, et al., 2015).
- Participants of a study of Alabama *Leader in Me* Schools indicated that *Leader in Me* made a significant positive difference in the self-regulation of students, leading to an improved school climate (Gage & Thomas, 2019).
- 95% of participants in a study of suburban Chicago *Leader in Me* Schools reported that *Leader in Me* implementation improved students' relationship skills—specifically that students maintained healthy relationships, resisted inappropriate social pressure, and regularly applied conflict resolution skills (Danielski, 2019).
- Participants of a suburban California study indicated that *Leader in Me* implementation positively impacted school culture and climate, including through improved student-to-student relationships and an increase in the application of conflict resolution strategies (Tuccinardi, 2018).

### **References for School Culture Section**

Bergin, C., Hill, S., Prewett, S., Tsai, C., Eli Jones, E., & Murphy, B. (2018). The Leader in Me effectiveness study: Executive summary. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

Bolden, P. (2019). An evaluation of the “Leader in Me” program implementation in a central Georgia elementary school. Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA.

Danielski, D. (2019). Impact of Leader in Me on Social-Emotional Learning of Elementary Students. Doctoral Dissertation. National Louis University, Chicago, IL.

Gage, C., & Thomas, S. (2019). Elementary teachers' perceptions of social and emotional learning and its effects on school climate, student behavior, and academic achievement. *The Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 6, August 2019.

Goble, B., Zhang, J., Suzuki, K., Norman, T., Houchens, G., Redifer, J., Schroeder, A., Elliott, C., Kyong Chon, K. & Miller, S. (2015). *The impact of the Leader in Me on student engagement and social emotional skills*. Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY.

Laird-Arnold, K. N. (2022). *A case study of cultural awareness integration throughout the elementary education curriculum*. Doctoral Dissertation. Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA.

Sainz, A. J., (2021). *The Leader in Me and its effects on school culture and leadership*. Doctoral Dissertation. Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO.

Tench, P. J. (2019). *FranklinCovey Leader in Me program: The impact on quality of work life and perceived relationship changes between administrators and teachers*. Doctoral Dissertation. Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA.

Tuccinardi, J. (2018). *Administrators and character education: The Leader in Me*. California State University, San Marcos, CA.

### **If you are using *Leader in Me* for its impact on academics, include this section**

The impact of *Leader in Me* on academic achievement is backed by a collection of rigorous research studies. *Leader in Me* Schools teach students important skills they can use throughout their entire life, including in their classrooms. When students apply these skills in pursuit of their academic goals, they enhance their academic growth, as demonstrated by the following research:

- A longitudinal study of Louisiana *Leader in Me* Schools found that 4th grade ELA state test scores increased an average of 6.7% compared with their pre-*Leader in Me* performance (Dick, Burstein, & Bergeron, 2017).
- Reading test scores in Hawaii increased in schools after becoming *Leader in Me* Schools (Bennett, 2020).
- An increase in math proficiency from 36% to 61% after sustained *Leader in Me* implementation in Hawaii (Bennett, 2020).
- Statistically significant increase in math academic achievement among students enrolled in Florida *Leader in Me* Schools (Poteet, 2018).
- In Year 2 of *Leader in Me* implementation, students at Florida *Leader in Me* Schools outperformed students in non-*Leader in Me* Schools in several academic areas (Pascale, Ohlson, & Lee, 2017):
  - Reading:
    - reading proficiency by 9%
    - reading gains by 6%
    - reading gains for students in the bottom quartile by 3%
  - Science: a 5% higher rate of proficiency
  - Math: a 5% higher rate of proficiency
  - Writing: a 4% higher rate of proficiency
- In Year 3 of *Leader in Me* implementation, students at Missouri *Leader in Me* Schools showed an average increase in ELA scores of 6.34% and Math scores by 9.59% (Golmen, 2019).
- Florida *Leader in Me* Schools in this study had over 90% of their students classified as economically needy, and 95% disadvantaged. 18 Math scores at *Leader in Me* Schools were significantly higher than at non-*Leader in Me* Schools (Poteet, 2018).

### **References for Academics Section**

Bennett, C. (2020). Bloom where you're planted: Spreading the seeds of Leader in Me everywhere. Brigham Young University, Laie, HI.

Dick, S. J., Burstein, K., & Bergeron, M. (2017). The Leader in Me evaluation: Phase 1. Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, LA.

Golmen, B. (2019). A causal comparative study of fourth grade achievement and distribution of leadership to students. Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, MO.

Pascale, A. B., Ohlson, M., & Lee, J. W. (2017). The habits of highly effective schools: Analyzing the impact of "Leader in Me" schools in Florida. University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL.

Poteet, N. (2018). The effects of student empowerment through leadership on academic achievement in English language arts and math (Doctoral dissertation). Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA.