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Character in the Classroom: How The Leader in Me Affects Student Performance

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Dedication

To my husband

for 15 years as my best friend and countless hours of selfless service to me and our new son,

To my parents

for their example and immeasurable never-ending support,

To my colleagues and all educators

who work tirelessly to provide our students the care and education they deserve.

Acknowledgements

I am blessed to love my job. I am an educator because I believe in providing all children with the best education possible so they have every opportunity to be successful in life. Our children are our responsibility and it is a joyful privilege to serve them. I hope one day my students find something they are as passionate about so they too can experience the joy that comes from serving others. I know my students may not remember the math lesson I taught them. But I hope they remember I believed in them. I do not achieve anything in isolation. I owe thanks and gratitude to those individuals who have supported and encouraged me every step of the way.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare students who are proficient in the seven habits to those who are not by measuring the difference in their academic performance and to determine if the difference was statistically significant. This study also focused on the subgroups of gender and status as an English language learner as they pertained to proficiency on the benchmark assessment. The study took place at one elementary school site, located in a San Diego suburb, with an overall student population of approximately 645 students and included all third grade students at this school. The researcher utilized a quantitative methodology approach. Data were collected in the form of a seven habits assessment as well as a Language Arts benchmark assessment. The tests were scored against a rubric and students were categorized as proficient ($\geq 70\%$) or not proficient ($\leq 69\%$) and placed into two sample groups. Sample A consisted of students who scored proficient on the seven habits assessment and Sample B students who scored below proficiency in the habits. A t-test was conducted to compare the sample group mean scores. Based on the results of the t-test and with 95% confidence, the researcher concluded there is a statistically significant difference in benchmark assessment performance between students who are proficient in the seven habits versus those who are not. It was also found that gender affects the mean to a small extent in Sample A and none at all in Sample B. Additionally, higher English proficiency is generally more associated with proficiency in the seven habits and higher benchmark performance. This was an introductory study focused on how a systematic program affects students' academic performance. It is complex topic that needs to be examined in greater detail.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Past studies have shown that systematic school-wide character development programs could be a relatively effective method of transferring character skills into academic success. In his research, John Hattie (2009) prescribed a number to the effectiveness of such programs. The number of 0.28 translated to a low to medium effect on student achievement, which was just below the “zone of desired effects”.

Character and leadership are not new concepts. To the contrary, they are age-old concepts. Then why do we hear educators speak of classroom management and behavior as an obstacle to student achievement? Many teachers today agree that classroom and behavior management are their primary focus for the first month of school so the remainder of the year will flow smoothly. Why is it so important to establish routines and expectations before academic learning can occur?

It appears behavior stems from character and character is not innate, but rather explicitly taught. Stephen Covey said “Leadership is communicating people’s worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves” (Price, 2013). As educators, we do this for our students with the hope that they will ultimately believe in themselves as much as we believe in them, and that this will build into future success.

Background

The Leader in Me (TLIM) is a program based off Stephen Covey’s incredibly successful book by the same title. It encompasses ideas from one of his preceding books *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This original book was first published over 25 years ago and has been utilized by countless private companies worldwide to increase workplace creativity and productivity. The seven habits seek to establish institutional transformation through personal transformation. The purpose of the seven habits is to create change from the inside out. The habits are: be proactive; begin with the end in

mind; put first things first; think win-win; seek first to understand, then to be understood; synergize; and sharpen the saw (Covey, 1989).

The first three habits focus inward. These are habits that involve internal reflection and personal work. These are purposefully the first three habits because it is imperative to work on our own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors before we can successfully engage in meaningful relationships with others. To work from the inside out means to begin where we have control—over ourselves (Covey, 1989).

Be Proactive

To be proactive is to be in charge of oneself. This is the first habit that is introduced because a paradigm shift should begin with analyzing our own behaviors, areas of success, and areas needing improvement. This first habit is a great way to begin with students because even very young children understand the idea of controlling their own thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. They learn at a very early age there are rewards for exhibiting positive behavior and consequences for exhibiting poor behavior.

Covey focused greatly on being in charge of yourself and your emotions. This is the idea that no one makes us do or feel anything. People may do things to us, but we have a choice in how to respond. If we choose to feel sad all day, it will affect our performance, but we have no one else to blame. We are choosing sadness. This is an incredibly important concept to teach young students. Managing relationships with others is one of the greatest challenges we all face, and in the case of children, this often affects their academic performance. Helping students

realize they are in control of themselves helps them feel empowered to make good choices that will ultimately contribute to their academic success.

Begin With the End in Mind

To begin with the end in mind simply means to have a plan. This habit engages students in the idea of their future. It could be a very near future goal, as in tomorrow, or a long-term goal such as planning for college. Whether the goal is in the near future or not, it is imperative to understand the idea of planning ahead to achieve our end result in mind.

This habit falls directly in line with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standards seek to prepare all students for college and career. This preparation requires a plan to achieve this goal. In order to get into college, there are course and Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements that must be met. In order to meet those requirements, students must pass prerequisites and study hard.

By teaching students about the connection between the choices they make now and the opportunities this affords them later, we are empowering them to think about their own dreams and how they will best achieve them.

Put First Things First

Prioritization is a skill even some adults have yet to master. By teaching this skill to students at a young age, they begin to naturally focus on what needs to be done first before moving to the next task. When students learn to distinguish between important and less

important tasks, they begin to understand the affects that flow from their decision-making process (Covey, 1989).

When a student chooses to play video games rather than study for a test, he will likely receive a lower score on the test than if he had studied. A student who chooses to complete her homework before she goes outside to play may realize she has more fun while playing because she does not have the worry of homework weighing on her mind. This idea of intrinsic reward takes time to understand. But, as students become more reliant upon The Habits, they realize the peace of mind that comes from finishing their work before they focus their attention on playing or leisurely activities. This helps students experience the reward and satisfaction that comes from accomplishment which, in turn, allows them to better enjoy their free time without the concern of what tasks they'll need to finish still looming over their head.

Think Win-Win

Thinking win-win is an essential component in managing relationships with others. For this reason, this is the first habit that moves away from only looking inward to now looking outward to analyze how we relate with others.

The habit think win-win can be a challenging concept for children and adults alike. This is the idea that a situation can be mutually beneficial to all parties involved. This is not to be confused with a compromise. In a compromise, each party is willing to concede on a point that is important to them. They make a sacrifice or give something up for the good of all involved. However, to Think Win-Win is to create a situation in which all parties are happy and have their needs fulfilled.

Thinking win-win is to be used in particular situations. These are situations of interdependence. There are times in life when individuals are working in a competitive scenario and win-win is not the appropriate habit to focus on. Individual sports may be a good example of this. However, there are many team sports that require interdependence as a means to succeed. In soccer, one player may personally want to shine and make the winning goal. However, if they think win-win they realize their teammate is in a much better position to score the goal and by passing it to him understands the whole team will shine as they win the game.

As students begin to look at situations with a win-win attitude, their mindset begins to change to one of confidence in what they want, but empathy as well for what others want. In education today students must be able to work both independently and interdependently.

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

This habit moves further into the realm of how we relate to others. To seek first to understand, then to be understood means to listen to others before you speak or jump to conclusions. However, a key tenet to this concept is the idea of being a focused active listener, rather than a passive listener. Many people believe they are listening just because they are not cutting the other person off during conversation. They may be thinking about other things, or formulating their own response while the other person is speaking. This is not active listening.

When we listen to understand we make no judgments but only listen so we can better understand how they other person thinks or feels. This is unselfish listening that is focused entirely on the person who is speaking. This is an incredibly important intrapersonal skill that creates well-respected and empathetic leaders (Covey, 1989).

Synergize

Synergy happens when everyone in the group knows the goal, is personally invested in the goal, and understands exactly what their role is in achieving the goal. This is when goals will actually be achieved. In a classroom setting, students are consistently practicing and learning how to synergize. They work in table groups, homogeneous leveled reading groups, partners, and heterogeneous mixed groups.

Students first become aware of the need to synergize when extrinsic rewards are the motivating factor. For example, table groups must work together to stay on task in order to earn team points. The winning team may win a reward at the end of the week or month. This incentivizes them to work harmoniously rather than independently. They quickly realize it is to everyone's best interest to stay focused, on task, and work together.

Synergy is a positive motivator for young students because they begin to understand that working as a team, where everyone understands their role on the team, and everyone plays an important part on that team, yields rewards for all. This is naturally one of the last habits because students must be capable of controlling themselves, or being proactive, before they can work effectively with a group of their peers.

Sharpen the Saw

The final habit we will focus on is sharpen the saw". This focuses on keeping oneself sharp to continuously improve in life and work. We are human being with a breaking point and cannot keep going if we are not focused on nurturing ourselves. If we burn the candle at both ends, this affects our jobs and relationships will suffer as a result. The body, mind spirit, and

heart need to be taken care of. Many of us don't take care of ourselves because it is not "urgent", until it becomes urgent through physical or mental health manifestation.

In the school setting this is understood by examples of recess, lunch, reading for pleasure, and perhaps preferred activity time (PAT time) where students get to choose a fun activity to enjoy. This is a time teachers will reward the class with when they have been working hard and focusing on their academics.

It is with long-term goals in mind that we understand the importance of having a life-work balance. Work is needed to feel productive and accomplished. Rest and relaxation is needed to fulfill us and keep us going in the work we love. Sharpening the Saw is imperative as we realize that life is a marathon, not a sprint.

The Leader in Me by Stephen Covey applies the original seven habits mentioned above to students in our schools. The habits seek to develop students who are responsible and confident problem-solvers who can reach their highest potential and effectively interact with others. There are a number of schools throughout the world that have embraced *The Leader in Me* and the seven habits. The purpose is to systematically implement the seven habits throughout the school to create a common language and set of goals to which *everyone* is accountable. This accountability extends to every adult and child on campus as well as to his or her family at home. From administrators, to teachers, classified staff, students, and their families; all are included and all are educated in the seven habits.

This research focuses on one of the first districts to implement *The Leader in Me* in all schools district-wide. The district is now in its second year of implementation with the goal of being a Lighthouse District. A Lighthouse District is a school district that has implemented the seven habits to such an extent that they are part of the district's everyday culture.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Many students today are struggling to meet the academic goals for their current grade-level. In addition, they also struggle in interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and teamwork. This can be for a myriad of reasons. For this reason, it is imperative that students develop positive behavior and character skills that will enable them to be successful in their education and their future. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), effective communication and problem-solving skills will be more important than ever for students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge.

Research Questions

My research will be focused on the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the English Language Arts Benchmark 1 mean scores of students who are proficient in Covey's the seven habits and those who are not proficient in the seven habits?
 - If so, does gender or status as an English language learner contribute to this?

Hypothesis

Based on my own observations and past research regarding character development, I have outlined my hypothesis for this study:

Students who demonstrate proficiency in the seven habits will also score proficient on the standardized district assessment (as proficiency in the seven habits increases, so will academic scores).

- The statistical difference will be visible across sub-groups.

Definition of Terms

1. *The Leader in Me* (TLIM)- A book and program created by Stephen Covey. This program is focused on character development and leadership skills. It is based on Stephen Covey's highly successful book entitled *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, but unlike the first book, is centered on students and schools.

2. Lighthouse School/District- A school or district that has successfully implemented The Leader in Me program to such a degree that it is part of the school culture and they act as a leadership model for other schools. All Lighthouse school criteria must have been met and documented.

3. Common Core State Standards (CCSS)- A set of common academic standards that have been adopted by 43 states in the United States. The standards are focused on equipping students to be successful in college, career, and life.

4. English language learner (ELL)- A student who is not communicating at the level of fluency in English, often comes from a non-English-speaking home or background, and who requires modified instruction.

5. English Only Student (EO)- A student who is fluent in English and does not require modified instruction as it pertains to language.

6. Benchmark Testing- testing is administered three times a year (at each trimester) to track student performance and growth.

7. Proficiency- A student has met proficiency in a content area when he/she scores a 70% or higher on the Benchmark assessment.

8. OARS- Online Assessment Reporting System is a web-based database that allows districts to record and analyze assessment results as well as create assessments for student use.

Conclusion

A review of the literature in regards to *The Leader in Me*, skills that contribute to academic success, self-esteem and motivation, leadership, and the systematic implementation of programs will be outlined in Chapter 2.

All students within the third grade will be measured utilizing an assessment to gauge proficiency in the seven habits. These students will be divided into two samples. Sample A will be comprised of students who are proficient in the habits. Sample B will be comprised of students who are not proficient in the habits.

The research will then focus on comparing the two sample means on Benchmark 1, which is the academic assessment that all students take, against each other. By using a t-test of difference, it will be clear whether there is or is not a difference between students who are proficient in the habits scoring higher academically than those who are not proficient in the habits.

In addition, several subgroups within the population will be measured as to their performance in relation to the overall sample outcome. These subgroups will be gender and status as an ELL.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This review of the literature explores varied topics all relating to character and leadership as it pertains to performance. The literature suggests there may be specific prerequisite skills necessary to experience success in an academic setting (Labby, Lunenburg & Slate, 2012). Without first attending to these factors, it becomes very difficult to provide students with a deep and meaningful education. Educators seek to promote academic success and view it as a necessary precursor to life-long success. Students must do well enough in school to graduate high school with life skills that will enable them to be successful in college and career.

In a research article by Labby, Lunenburg, and Slate (2012), certain prerequisite skills were identified as necessary to experience academic success. Some of these skills include intrapersonal abilities, adaptability, and stress management (Labby, Lunenburg & Slate, 2012). When students lack these skills, they may be unsuccessful in their academic experiences. It is imperative to focus on the development of these skills so students can focus their attention to growing and learning in their academic setting.

A thoughtful analysis of programs and models that have attempted to address the concern of poor performance through positive behavior programs, increased motivation, character, and leadership development are explored. As we delve into these topics, The Leader in Me program will be explained in further detail.

The Leader in Me seeks to empower staff, parents, and most importantly, students to become leaders in every facet of life. Each group of “stakeholders” mentioned above is explicitly taught the seven habits. These are habits that Covey focuses on to increase and unlock the

potential in each individual. It is truly about viewing life through a new lens. It is a paradigm shift that will affect every aspect of the way we think, behave, engage, reflect, and respond to the everyday experiences of life.

By teaching the seven habits, The Leader in Me program empowers everyone to be a leader, not just a select few. Students become leaders of themselves, which inspires individual confidence and the desire to inspire others to do the same.

Staff Training

The journey begins with the school staff. All staff members are included in a 2-day training entitled “The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People- Signature Series” that is provided by Franklin Covey. This training provides an in-depth understanding of the seven habits. During this 2-day staff development, a trainer from The Covey Foundation teaches the habits and philosophy of *The Leader in Me* to all staff. Every staff member receives this training including; administrators, teachers, office support staff, grounds crew, workers in health & nutrition services, and playground supervisors. Whether the staff member is a credentialed teacher or classified staff, there must be unity in implementing the program campus wide.

Staff training and support is an important element when implementing a systematic program. Birrell et al. (1998) purport programs such as the seven habits need strong support from all staff on campus to be effective (Birrell et al., 1998). This study found that a shared language and building up of trust within a school community were essential factors to building a successful program. When all adults understood and committed to using this shared language,

there was a shared knowledge of what the terms actually meant. This assisted with teacher commitment, which created a buy-in that had previously been absent.

Just as students experience greater success when they have “bought-in” to an idea, so do adults. The research conducted by Birell et al. (1998) suggests that adults demonstrate greater commitment when they are properly trained and equipped to share the principles of the program with their students. This clearly supports the need to establish trust and clarity in expectations among staff before introducing the seven habits to the students.

Integration Into Environment

After staff members have been exposed to the seven habits, they begin to use the terminology and ideology with each other and around campus. In this manner, the common vocabulary is heard by students and practiced by adults before it is explicitly taught to students. This allows adults to become well versed and comfortable with their new paradigm before bringing it to the students. However, students are beginning to learn the new vocabulary and thought-process by observing adults on campus.

Similarly, Braham (1997) explains how, when utilized within grade-level teams, the seven habits proved to be an effective tool to assist instruction. In this article, the seven habits were introduced to grade level teams as a more productive means of communication. This was an example of the seven habits being implemented school-wide, but with staff rather than students. The seven habits became a “Team Habits” framework that each grade-level team worked within. This allowed all staff to be cohesive in their expectations as well as how they dealt with disagreements within the team.

Grade-level teams began to collaborate more clearly and consistently. They set an example as highly effective teams. Students took note of this example and could look to the adults on campus as a model for positive and collaborative communication. As the team became more cohesive, instruction became stronger and ultimately students benefited from the team dynamic (Braham, 1997).

Explicit Lessons & Integration Into Curriculum

Once the adults have had some time with the habits, they are able to teach them to the students through explicit lessons in the classroom. There are many lesson resources online including Theleaderinme.org which is a website database that can be accessed by schools who are implementing the program. These lessons often integrate the seven habits into the classroom curriculum and align with the CCSS. This allows greater flexibility for the classroom teacher to integrate the habits into the standards and work they are already doing. Additionally, *The Leader in Me Activity Book* is a resource that is given to all teachers at the site. This book includes lessons on each habit that can be done as a class or individually.

As Major (2008) points out, programs such as *The Leader in Me* by Stephen Covey must be implemented in an appropriate manner to achieve success (Major, 2008). Major found that students at different grade levels had varying levels of knowledge regarding the seven habits. This difference in knowledge may have been due to inconsistent exposure to the habits as well as teaching the habits and their related vocabulary at a developmentally appropriate level for all students.

This study highlights the need for consistency and group collaboration to create a successful program (Major, 2008). All adults and students on campus must understand the tenets

of the program and implementation must be uniform across grade levels while allowing enough variance for what is considered developmentally appropriate. It would be unrealistic to expect a kindergarten student and a sixth grade student to have the same level of knowledge regarding the seven habits. However, it seems appropriate to expect them each to have a grade-level appropriate knowledge that reflects where they are with respect to their application of the seven habits.

Staff Lighthouse Team

Next, a group of teacher leaders are chosen to become members of the Staff Lighthouse Team. This is a team that is responsible for supporting the continued implementation of The Leader in Me. The team is comprised of one representative per grade level as well as site administrators. This method of teachers training teachers can be highly successful. In an article published by NBC News, Smith discusses the benefits of colleagues teaching each other. The article highlights the benefits of this approach. It is cost effective and tailored to the teachers needs. Utilizing teachers within the district as coaches also ensures the district is investing within their organization rather than outside (Smith, 2013).

Each team member is responsible for communicating information and events to her grade level. In addition, each member is the lead on a particular student leadership team. These student leadership teams are created by The Lighthouse Team and all upper grade students (grades 4-6) are invited to sign up to be on one leadership team. The teams vary from site to site. This particular site has a “Creative Leaders”, Student Tutors”, “Community Bucket Fillers”, “Safe School Ambassadors”, “Technology”, “Green”, and a “News” team. Several other teachers from The Lighthouse Team support the lead teacher in managing students and events that each student leadership team creates. These student leadership teams are formed and, at first, are largely adult

facilitated. However, as time goes on and students become more comfortable with The Habits and their role within each team, the dynamic shifts to a more student-facilitated team. This allows students the opportunity to be leaders within their community and to utilize the seven habits through their role.

This Staff Lighthouse Team meets biweekly to check in regarding the activities and progress of each student leadership group.

Student Lighthouse Team

The Student Lighthouse Team is a student-led version of the Staff Lighthouse Team. This team is in the process of being created at this particular school site. It will likely be comprised of at least one student leader from each of the leadership teams mentioned above. These student leaders will have similar responsibilities that the staff leaders have in each of their teams. Student leaders' duties will include; holding regular meetings, collaborating with other Student Lighthouse Team members to coordinate student events on campus, gathering information from and disseminating information to the student body regarding leadership activities, and reporting back to the Student Lighthouse Team.

When students feel valued as leaders, they can be open to experiencing success. Leadership is another critical component to success in any field. The seven habits have been utilized by countless organizations and disciplines worldwide, including nursing. In his article, Frisina (2005) gives an example of the habits showing promise within the nursing community. "Leadership is everything. If that's true, then embedded somewhere in that statement is the concept of *followership*" (2005, p. 1). This idea of "followership" focuses on "effective followers". "Effective followers are both active workers and critical thinkers" (2005, p.1). Frisina notes that nurses who are effective in their duties are good followers who have

internalized Covey's habits (Frisina, 2005). Without active followers, there is essentially no leader, and to be an active follower means to understand and apply leadership qualities independently. So, the two ideas seem interdependent. Good leaders can be good followers and vice versa. The article suggests that active followers play a vital role in an organization's structure.

In an article published by the Huffington Post, Hollingsworth recounts a real-world example of the connection between perceived self-worth and leadership. After implementing Stephen Covey's *The Leader in Me* program, a young boy's attitude and behavior was positively influenced (Hollingsworth, 2013). Teachers and students alike commented on the boy's transformation from one year to the next. Most were impressed by the growth he had made in his level of self-responsibility and the leadership he displayed on a daily basis. The student himself attributed his growth to following the seven habits, which changed his attitude. Once he changed his attitude in the small things, people began to view him differently. This allowed him to shed the previous reputation he had as a troublemaker. He enjoyed being seen in a new light and continued making positive choices. Eventually this new outlook led to an increase in academic achievement.

Parent/Family Training

The parent involvement factor is a crucial element to successful implementation of *The Leader in Me* as well as student academic success. Once the staff has been trained in the seven habits, several teacher leaders are chosen and certified by Franklin Covey as official "Trainer of Trainers". These teachers attend an additional 2-day professional development in which they are

taught how to lead Parent & Family Education Nights entitled “The 7 Habits of Successful Families”.

These education nights allow parents and family members to come to school with their children for an evening of fun activities that incorporate the use of the seven habits at home. In a study conducted by Crimm (1992), parental involvement between kindergarten and third grade had the greatest effect on student academic achievement. Just as classrooms at school create a mission statement, families have the opportunity to create a family mission statement and learn strategies to support productive communication at home that is centered on the habits. “The higher the hopes and expectations of parents with respect to the educational attainment of their child, the higher the student’s own educational expectations and, ultimately, the greater the student’s academic achievement” (Hong & Ho, 2005, p. 40). By engaging the home, family nights contribute to a strong dynamic of support between school and the home.

Systematic Program Implementation

With adult support, systematic programs and interventions can increase motivation and positively affect behavior. Arter’s research (2007) found the Positive Learning Supports System (PALS) highly successful with urban middle school students. The program provided behavior intervention and modifications so students could be more successful in the classroom (Arter, 2007). PALS was implemented with administrators, classroom teachers, and support personnel utilizing the same intervention program school-wide.

This approach paired students who were considered “frequent fliers” in regards to discipline with adult mentors. The mentors would check in with their students several times a week to talk about their academic and social emotional goals. This adult support created a more

“proactive” approach to student discipline rather than a “reactive” one. Students felt understood and were held accountable by their adult mentors. On the other hand, the adults invested time into the students and therefore had a better understanding of some of the things they were dealing with. This school-wide collaboration approach proved to be successful. Students who participated in the program showed significant improvement in the areas of attendance and GPA (Arter, 2007).

In their research, Robinson and Gahagan (2010) found individual coaching and goal setting were critical components that led to increased student success even at the college level (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). When students felt supported, they felt a sense of responsibility, which led to a connection to their campus community. In turn, this positively affected their academic performance and encouraged them to continue setting new goals. “For students, the process of self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting promotes self-authorship and leads to increased buy-in and empowerment” (2010, p. 4).

A study conducted by Shepard et al. (2012) found at-risk students at Sunnyvale High School experienced academic success and graduated on time when they received individual support from adults on campus. “When students felt engaged, encouraged, and supported, they participated more fully and experienced success” (2012, p. 5). The link between self-esteem and performance played an integral role in their success (Shepard et al., 2012). Utilizing a school wide system to provide support creates a sense of community and belonging. The study suggests that students’ academic performance is positively affected when they feel part of a cohesive support structure.

Similarly, research by Shi and Steen (2012) found significant increases in students' self-esteem after implementation of the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) Group Model. Shi and Steen focused on English as a Second Language Students (ESL). Group counseling was provided to students. Services focused on social skills and English language acquisition. Although the researchers believe improvement in GPA for 12 of the students who participated in the group was due to their participation, they were cautious to say this directly impacted academic performance and maintain more thorough research needs to be conducted (Shi & Steen, 2012). This study seems to support the idea that self-esteem is important to students' overall success at school including building and maintaining relationships, but may or may not contribute directly to academic success.

Overall, these studies suggest, when students experience higher self-esteem and a greater connection to their school community, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging (Arter, 2007; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Shepard et al., 2012; Shi & Steen, 2012). This contributes to an increased motivation to do well for themselves as well as help others around them experience the same success. From the research conducted, it seems clear that systematic programs are highly successful in motivating students because they foster a sense of belonging to a group. This sense of cohesiveness makes students feel supported by and accountable to those around them.

Conclusion

Previous research seems to support the idea that a systematic program targeting self-esteem and character further improves student performance (Arter, 2007; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Shepard et al., 2012; Shi & Steen, 2012). Many sources thus far find a link between staff and family training, integrating a program into the environment as well as the curriculum, and

systematic implementation. This is an important factor to consider while analyzing behavior and character development within the classroom.

Methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3. The research will be conducted utilizing a quantitative approach that will focus on assessment results. Chapter 3 of this study will also discuss methodology including setting, participants, procedure, and methods.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

It is possible that adults and students who have experienced The Leader in Me at their school site view it as a positive program that they enjoy. They may state it teaches good philosophy and inspires everyone on campus to be a leader. These are all intended outcomes of the program. However, in the educational environment of today, which is highly focused on assessment results and accountability, do the seven habits have an effect on student academic achievement? This is the question this research study seeks to answer. If so, there is an even stronger pull to integrate this program into our schools. If not, perhaps it can still be beneficial in a behavioral sense. Either way, it is important to understand the purpose and outcome of implementing systematic programs such as these in our schools today.

This study was conducted utilizing a quantitative methodology approach. Quantitative data were collected in the form of a seven habits assessment. Student assessments were scored against a rubric and categorized as proficient or not proficient. Proficiency was based on the standard proficiency percentage for the district; students who scored 70% and above on the assessment were deemed proficient, those who scored 69% and below were considered not proficient. The same measure of proficiency was applied to student Benchmark 1 scores as well. The Benchmark 1 Assessment was scored by scantron machine and uploaded into OARS.

The Benchmark 1 assessment analyzed in this study was an English Language Arts assessment. It was standardized, district-generated, and teacher-created with items chosen from OARS (Online Assessment Data System). OARS is an online database that includes a pool of assessment items from which to select. Benchmark 1 data is collected by each school site and district to track and analyze student academic growth.

This allowed for two samples to emerge from the population, students who demonstrated proficiency in the seven habits and students who were not proficient in the habits. These two groups comprise Sample A and Sample B. At this point the t-test of Difference was applied to the two sample groups to compare the sample means on Benchmark 1 Language Arts assessment against proficiency in the seven habits rubric . This allowed the researcher to analyze whether there was a statistical difference between proficiency in the seven habits and academic achievement through Benchmark 1.

Students were unaware and unaffected by the collection of both data sets. Both the seven habits assessment Assessment as well as the Benchmark 1 data was information that was collected as a regular course of business within our school day.

Setting and Participants

The study took place at one elementary school site, located in a San Diego suburb, with an overall student population of approximately 645 students. The school population was comprised of 72.5 % Hispanic or Latino, 24% Caucasian, 49.8% English Learners, 11% Students with Disabilities, and 73.8 % Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. The study included all third grade students at this school. The only students who were omitted were absent students, as it is not common practice to have students make up the Benchmark if they are absent inside the testing window. Collecting grade-level data allowed for greater insight into differences in outcome for varied subgroups or trends that emerged within the group.

Method

The research was conducted utilizing a quantitative approach focused on assessment results. All students within the third grade were assessed utilizing an assessment to gauge proficiency in the seven habits. These students were then divided into two samples. Sample A

was comprised of students who are proficient in the habits. Sample B was comprised of students who are not proficient in the habits.

Next, the research focused on comparing the two sample means on Benchmark 1, which is the academic assessment that all students took. The researcher used a t-test of difference to analyze the two sample means against each other. The question was whether there was or was not a statistically significant difference between students who were proficient in the habits scoring higher academically than those who were not proficient in the habits.

In addition, several subgroups within the population were measured as to their performance in relation to the overall sample outcome. These subgroups were gender and status as an English language learner (ELL).

Benchmark 1 results were collected and analyzed for the entire grade-level. The data was analyzed anonymously, except for the student's gender and status as an ELL. Due to the number of ELL students within the grade-level population, there was no worry of identification based on these factors. No additional identifying factors were collected and all data was destroyed at the conclusion of the research project.

Procedures for collecting data

A seven habits assessment was utilized. In the course of a regular day, this assessment was administered to gain information regarding the students' proficiency in the seven habits. The assessment was scored against a rubric. Students were deemed proficient or not proficient, and sample groups were created.

This study was conducted within the regular course of the school day. Students noticed no change in their instructional environment or academic tasks and structures. Data collection as it pertained to the seven habits assessment Assessment and Benchmark 1 assessment was

anonymous with no identifying factors present apart from student gender and status as an ELL student. Notification to students or parents of the study was not necessary for these data points. Data collection took place over approximately a two-month period. All data was destroyed at the completion of the study.

Summary

A school-wide group of third graders was selected to see if the instructional program *The Leader in Me* improved their academic ability in Language Arts. By utilizing a quantitative methodology approach, the researcher was able to analyze the two sample means in the hopes of finding a statistical difference between proficiency in the seven habits and Benchmark 1. In addition, results are more generalizable to the school population due to the population size included in the study. The upcoming analysis will be focused on the statistical difference between proficiency in the seven habits and proficiency on Benchmark 1.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare students who are proficient in the seven habits to those who are not by measuring the difference in their academic performance and to determine if the difference was statistically significant. This study also focused on whether the results varied greatly or very little within the subgroups of gender and status as an English language learner.

A t-test of difference was used to determine whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between student proficiency in the seven habits and the student academic benchmark assessment results. This quantitative approach allowed the researcher to make conclusions, as well as gain valuable insight into trends and patterns that emerged from the data.

This study focused on answering the following questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the English Language Arts Benchmark 1 mean scores of students who are proficient in Covey's the seven habits and those who are not proficient in the seven habits?
 - If so, does gender or status as an English language learner contribute to this?

All number of students within the third grade level were given the seven habits assessment assessment. After obtaining results from this assessment, two sample groups were created. Sample A was comprised of students who demonstrated proficiency in the seven habits, scoring 70% or higher on the assessment. Sample B constituted students who were not proficient in the habits, scoring 69% or less on the assessment. Once the sample groups were established, the researcher used the t-test of difference to compare the two sample group means on the

standardized English Language Arts district assessment. The data was further analyzed with respect to student gender and status as an ELL.

Results of the t-test, including an explanation of the data, trends, supporting graphs and figures, research analysis, and interpretations will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Data Presentation

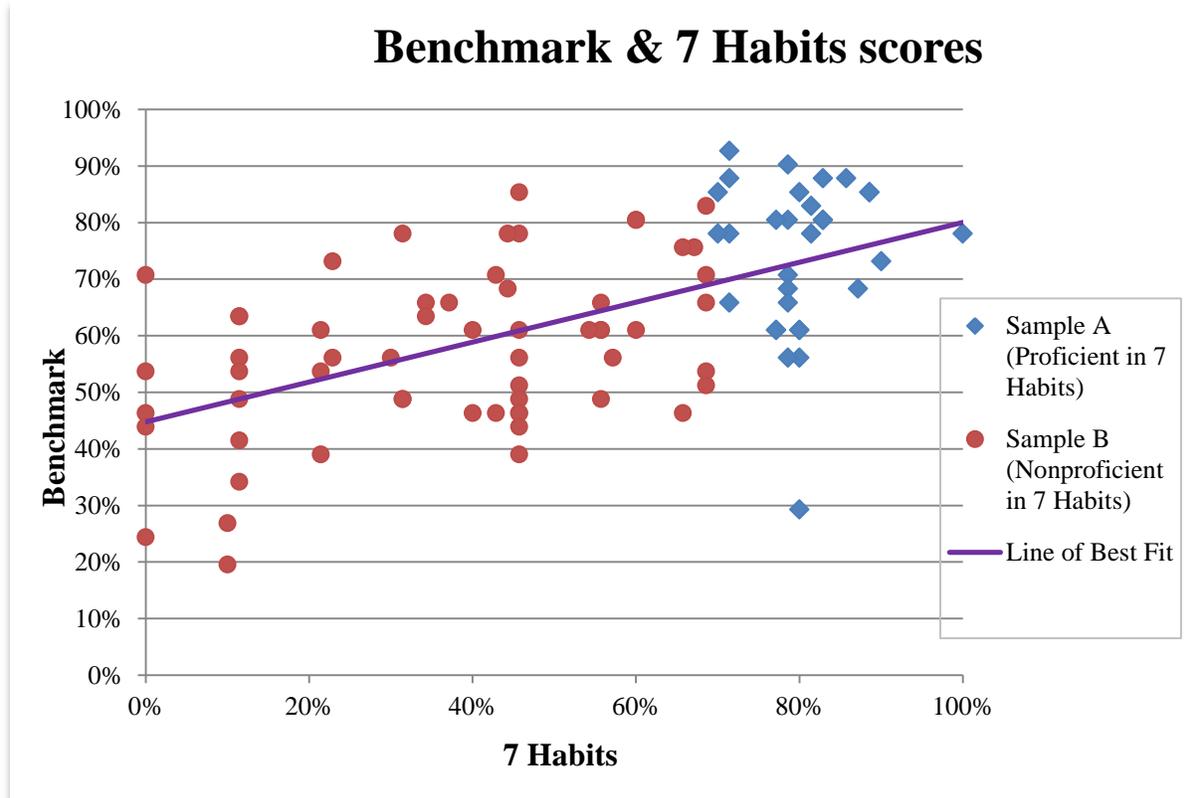


Figure 1. 7 Habits & Benchmark Comparison

The scores of all 91 students’ seven habits and Benchmark Assessments are shown on the above scatter plot graph. Sample Groups A and B are identified by different colors and shapes so that one may quickly observe where each groups’ individual scores lie with respect to one another.

Data points generally trend to the top right of graph indicating a very weak relationship between the two assessments. This can be further understood by observing the purple line,

known as the “line of best fit” and its positive slope as well as the increasing density of data points near said line.

While the data points generally trend toward the top right of the graph, indicating proficiency in one assessment is associated with proficiency in the other, it is difficult to conclusively determine if this holds true. Due to the ambiguity of the above results, the researcher focused specifically on Sample Groups A and B to find more conclusive evidence.

Sample Breakdown of Total Students

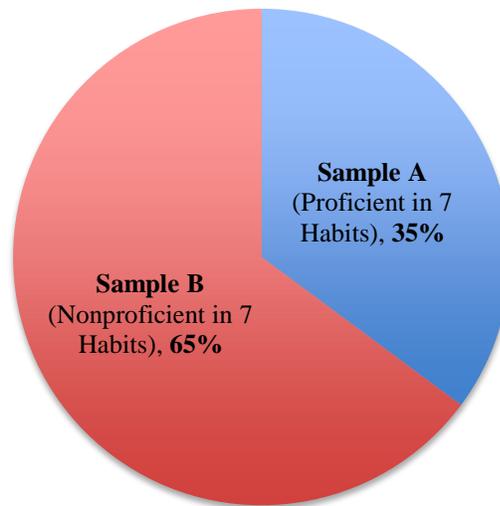


Figure 2. Sample Breakdown of Total Students

The above percentages indicate the sample proportions of the 91 students. The number of Sample A students (students scoring 70% or higher on the seven habits assessment) accounted for just over one-third of the entire sampling set while Sample B students (students scoring less than 70% on the seven habits assessment assessment) amounted to nearly two-thirds of the total.

2- Sample t-test for comparing means

The researcher hypothesized that the mean benchmark scores between Samples A and B would differ as one sample group would have an advantage or disadvantage relative to the other

group. Benchmark scores from Sample A (proficient in the habits, scores $\geq 70\%$ on seven habits assessment) students ranged from 23% to 93% with a mean score of 74% and a median score of 78%. Benchmark scores from Sample B (not proficient in the habits, $< 70\%$ on seven habits assessment) students ranged from 20% to 85% with a mean of 57% and a median of 56%. The researcher decided to use the 2 sample t-test of difference to compare the means between the Sample groups A and B due to the standard deviations of each respective population being unknown.

Group A represents the sample set from Population A (all students within the school who are proficient in the seven habits). Let the mean of Population A be represented by Y_1 . Group B represents the sample set from Population B (all students within the school who are not proficient in the seven habits). Let the mean of Population B be represented by Y_2 .

The researcher's null hypothesis is that the means of populations A and B are the same or $H_0: Y_1 = Y_2$. The alternative hypothesis is that the means are differ or $H_1: Y_1 \neq Y_2$. The researcher chose to use a significance level of 5%. The following formula contains the defined variables. Please reference below.

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 - \Delta}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

$\bar{x}_1 = 30.38$ [Sample A mean]

means]

$\bar{x}_2 = 23.49$ [Sample B mean]

$s_1 = 5.50$ [Standard deviation of Sample A]

$\Delta = 0$ [the hypothesized difference between the population means, 0 if testing for equal

$s_2 = 5.99$ [Standard deviation of Sample B]

$n_1 = 32$ [sample size of Sample A]

$n_2 = 59$ [sample size of Sample B]

Degrees of Freedom = 31

[smaller of $n_1 - 1$, $n_2 - 1$]

Null hypothesis: $H_0: Y_1 = Y_2$

Y_1 = Population A mean

Y_2 = Population B mean

Alternative hypothesis: $H_1: Y_1 \neq Y_2$

When the inputs above are factored in, the result is a t-value of **5.53**, when rounded to two significant digits. Due to the researcher looking for a difference in means, the significance level must be divided by 2 when referring to the t-value table. The t-critical value table using a significance level of 2.5% with 31 degrees of freedom yields a value **2.0395**.

The t-value of 5.53 is greater than a t-critical value of 2.04 therefore the null hypothesis must be rejected as this test has provided evidence that there is a statistically significant difference in benchmark assessment performance between students who are proficient in the seven habits versus those who are not. With 95% confidence, the researcher can say that the alternative hypothesis, $H_1: Y_1 \neq Y_2$, cannot be rejected.

Benchmark Proficiency by Sample Group

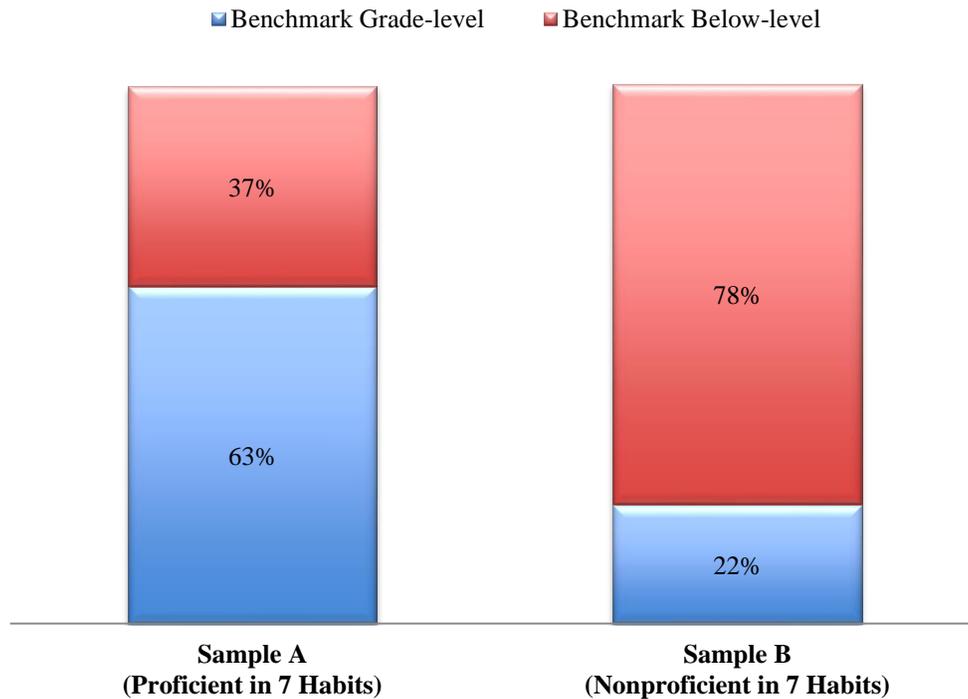


Figure 3. Benchmark Proficiency by Sample Group

The bar graph above shows the Benchmark Assessment composition of Sample Groups A and B. “Benchmark Grade-level” denotes a score of 70% or higher while any score less than 70% is classified as a “Benchmark Below-level” score.

Of students within Sample A, 63% scored at or above Benchmark Grade-level versus Sample B’s students where only 22% scored at or above Benchmark Grade-level, a 186% difference. Of students within Sample A, 37% scored below Benchmark level versus Sample B’s students where 78% scored below Benchmark level, a 110% difference.

The fact that students in Sample A are proficient in the seven habits and that the proportion of these Sample A students who scored at or above Benchmark Grade-level versus Sample B students was 186% larger, one could argue that being proficient in the seven habits increases the likelihood that a student would score at or above Benchmark Grade-level.

Breakdown of Benchmark Scores by Sample Group

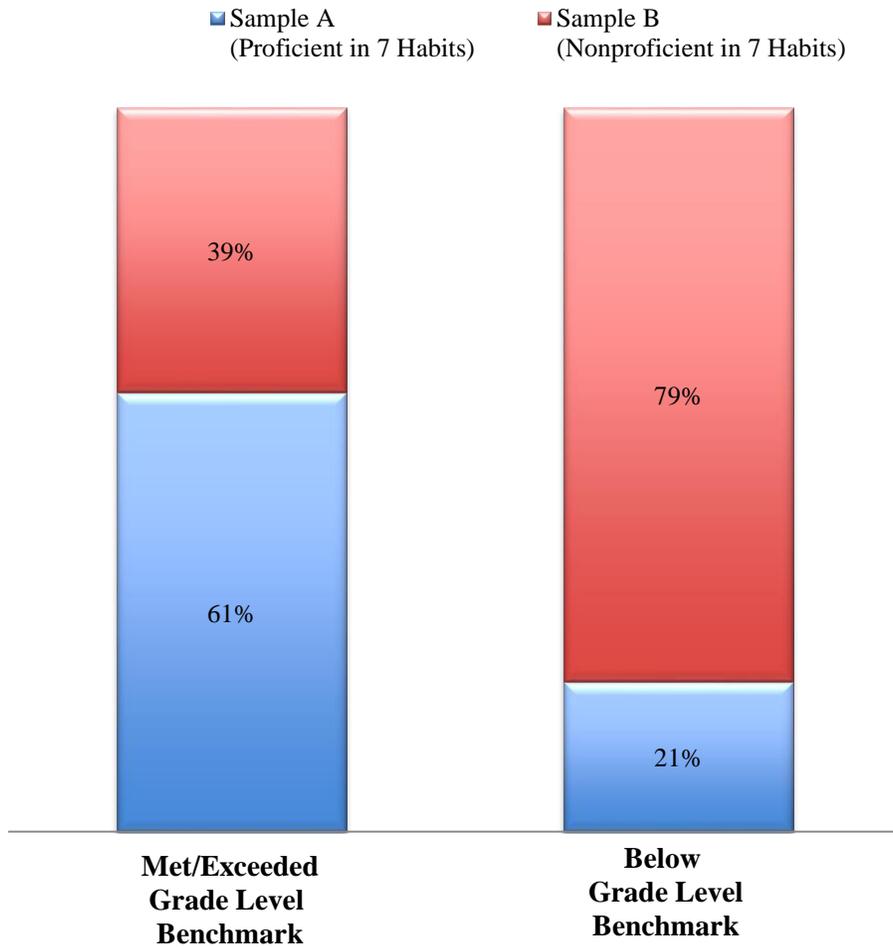


Figure 4. Breakdown of Benchmark Scores by Sample Group

All scores of students who performed at or above grade level were separated from those who performed below grade level. Sample composition is shown to indicate proportionately how well each group performed.

Fifty-six percent more students who were proficient in the seven habits (Sample A) exceeded grade level scoring in the benchmark exam than students who were not proficient in the seven habits (Sample B). 276% more students who, $[(79\% - 21\%) / 21\%]$ who were not

proficient in the seven habits performed below grade level in the benchmark exam than those who were proficient in the seven habits (Sample A’s).

Another way to verify that the previous (Figure 3) is an accurate depiction of performance is to evaluate the sample composition of the students who met/exceeded grade level and those who did not. The above figure displays this exactly. Notice the similarity and consistency between the Figure 3 and the Figure 4 as Sample A students (proficient in the seven habits) in both figures proportionately dominate in performing at or above grade level benchmark while Sample B students (not proficient in the seven habits) proportionately are performing below grade level.

Benchmark Deciles with Sample Composition

9 students per decile

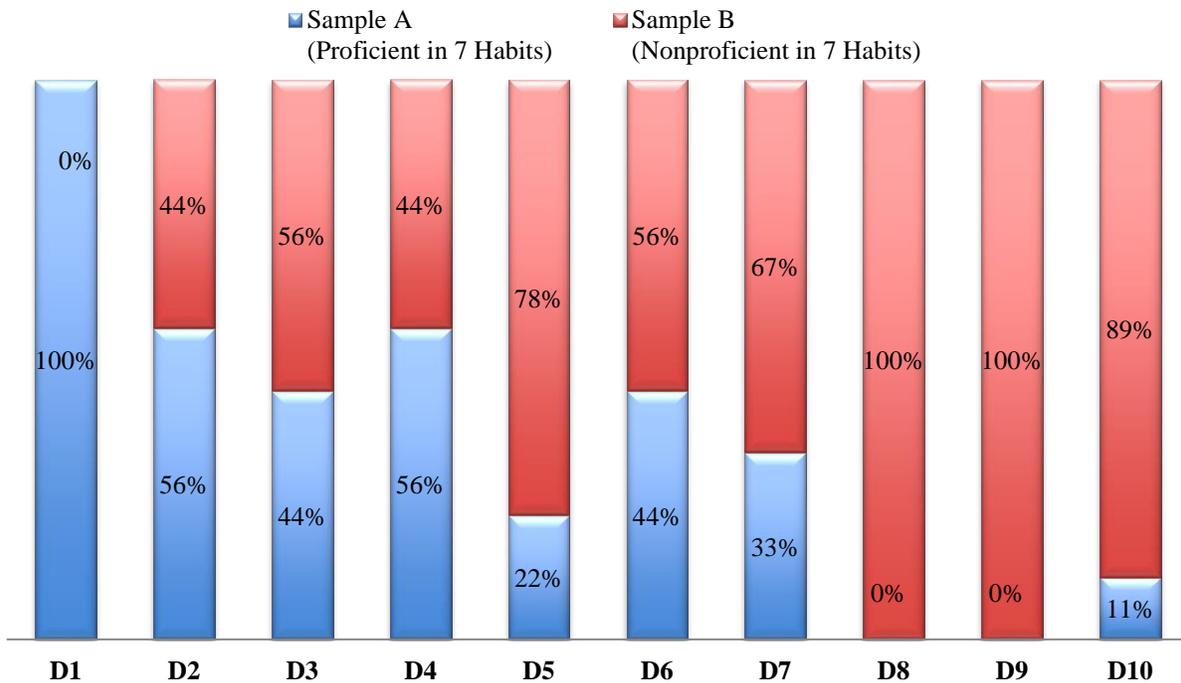


Figure 5. Benchmark Deciles with Sample Composition

Ninety of the 91 students' benchmark scores were used to comprise the Figure 5. One student (the lowest score) was omitted from the data for the purpose of evaluating the scores via 10 deciles with an equal 9 students per decile. Decile 1 (D1) are the highest 9 benchmark scores while D2 is comprised of the following or next 9 highest scores. D3 through D10 follow the identical logic. Each decile contains composition of sample groups indicated by color.

The researcher observed first that D1 is comprised entirely of Sample A students. The top 10% of the benchmark scores belong to students who are proficient in the seven habits. Of the top 20% of the scores, 78% (14 of 18) of these are Sample A students and 22% (4 of 18) of the students are from Sample B.

By dividing scores by rank as a whole, one can objectively view where the sample groups proportionately lie. Observing the trend of diminishing Sample A composition from left to right with an increasing composition of Sample B in the same direction indicates that Sample A student's scored higher than Sample B students. Though the trend is not absolute, evidenced by Sample A's 11% composition in D10, a general trend is obvious. One possible explanation for Sample A's fluctuating rate of decline from left to right in the above figure could be attributed to the lack of data points. Perhaps with 3 to 4 times the amount of data points, one might see a smoother or more consistent rate of decline than what is shown above.

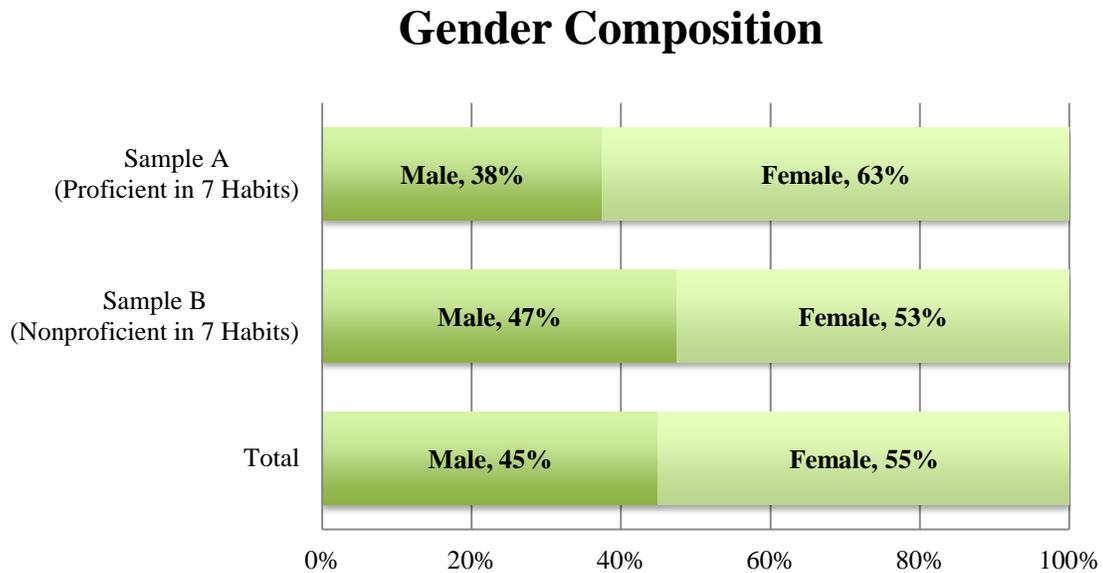


Figure 6. Gender Composition

All 91 students in each sample group were identified by gender and the above Figure 6 displays the results.

Sample A is comprised of 38% male versus Sample B's male composition of 47%. This is a difference of 9 percentage points or in other words, there were 24% less males in Sample A versus Sample B. Sample A's male composition was 18% less than the aggregate male composition. Sample A's female composition was 19% higher than that of Sample B's female composition and 15% higher than the aggregate female composition. Clearly, Sample A contained less male students versus Sample B, as well as versus the total composition. Also, female composition for Sample A was clearly larger relative to Sample B and relative to the total/aggregate composition values as well.

Sample B's male composition was 5% larger than the total composition value and the female composition was 4% smaller than the total composition female value. Sample B had the highest concentration of male students as well as the lowest concentration of female students.

Given that Sample A contained the least amount of males and the most amount of females proportionately versus Sample B, one could draw the conclusion that out of the students who are proficient in the seven habits the majority are female. In order to derive how gender within each sample group relates to performance, the researcher compiled and compared average benchmark scores. The results are shown in the following figure.

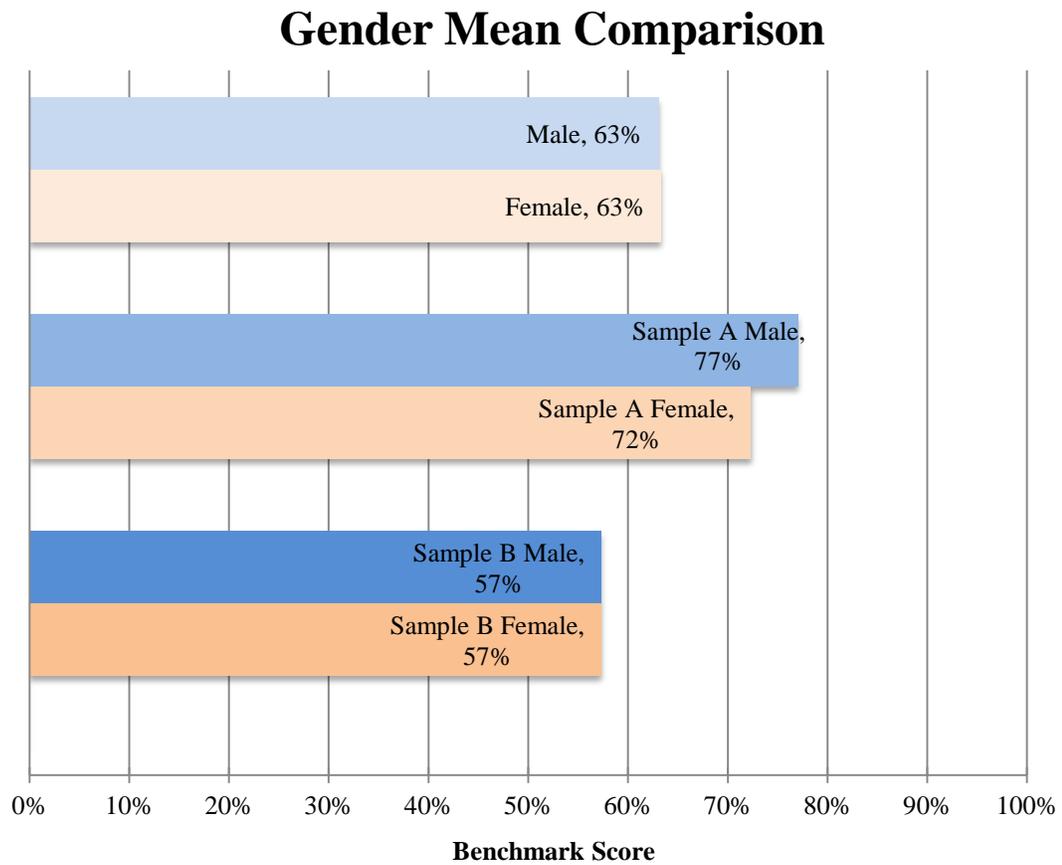


Figure 7. Gender Mean Comparison

Mean benchmark scores are charted above by gender for Sample groups A and B combined as well as for each group separately.

Sample A’s male benchmark mean was 35% $[77\% - 57\% / 57\%]$ higher than Sample B’s male benchmark mean. Sample A’s female benchmark mean was 26% $[72\% - 57\% / 57\%]$ higher

than Sample B's female benchmark mean. Within Sample A, the male benchmark mean was 5 percentage points higher than the female mean. Within Sample B, male and female means are nearly identical (rounding error accounts for value not being exact).

Within Sample A, male students accounted for only 38% of the group (figure 6) but their benchmark mean was 5 percentage points higher than the female benchmark mean, one might conclude that the male gender is associated with higher benchmark scores. However, this finding holds true solely within Sample group A. After observing the nearly identical mean benchmark scores of males and females within Sample group B and again the nearly identical mean scores of the groups combined, the researcher did not find conclusive evidence regarding a relationship between gender and benchmark performance.

Language Designation Composition

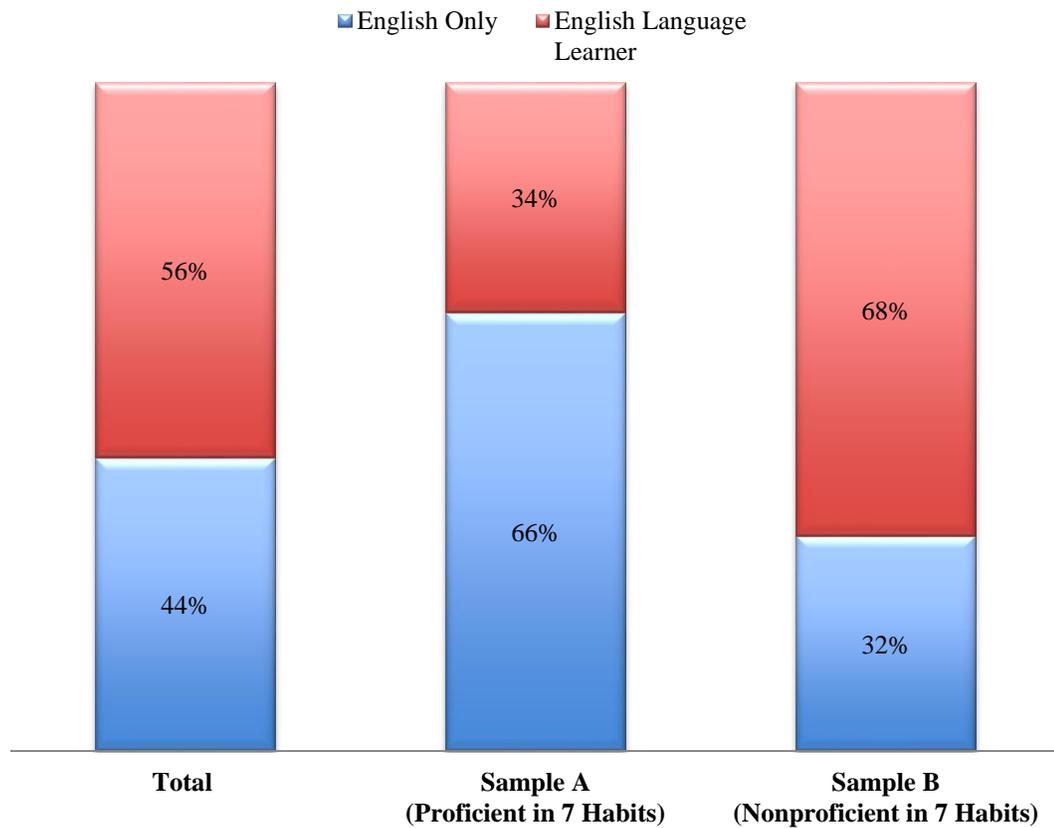


Figure 8. Language Designation Composition

Each of the 91 tested students is assigned a language designation, that fall into two categories -- English Only (EO) or English language learner (ELL). EO students display higher English language proficiency than do students deemed ELL's. The above chart gives the language designation breakdown of the total student population as well as Sample groups A and B.

Overall, the total number of EO versus ELL students is slightly weighted towards ELL's. Within Sample A, the number of EO students accounts for nearly twice that of ELL students. In other words, the number of ELL students would need to increase 94% in order to reach the

current level of EO students. 32% of Sample B's students are designated as EOs while 68% are ELL's. There are more than twice as many ELL's than there are EOs within Sample B.

EO students accounted for 34% more of Sample A versus Sample B while ELL students account for 34% more of Sample B versus Sample A. Sample A is more heavily weighted with EO versus Sample B and the total and Sample B is more heavily weighted with ELL versus Sample A and the total.

Given that EO students are more proficient in English than ELL students, one would expect EO students to possess an advantage when taking assessments and therefore score higher on the seven habits assessment than ELL students. Perhaps this advantage accounts for the larger proportion of EO versus ELL students found in Sample A. This logic holds true when evaluating Sample B as the EO proportion is less than half of the ELL proportion and is also less than half of Sample A's EO proportion. These findings, of nearly inverse proportions of EO vs. ELL students between Samples A and B, were drastic as they provided strong evidence that language proficiency is associated with seven habits proficiency. In order to determine how language proficiency related to benchmark assessment scores, the researcher evaluated the mean scores of total EO and ELL students as well as the mean scores by sample group. The findings are presented in the figure below.

Language Designation Mean Comparison

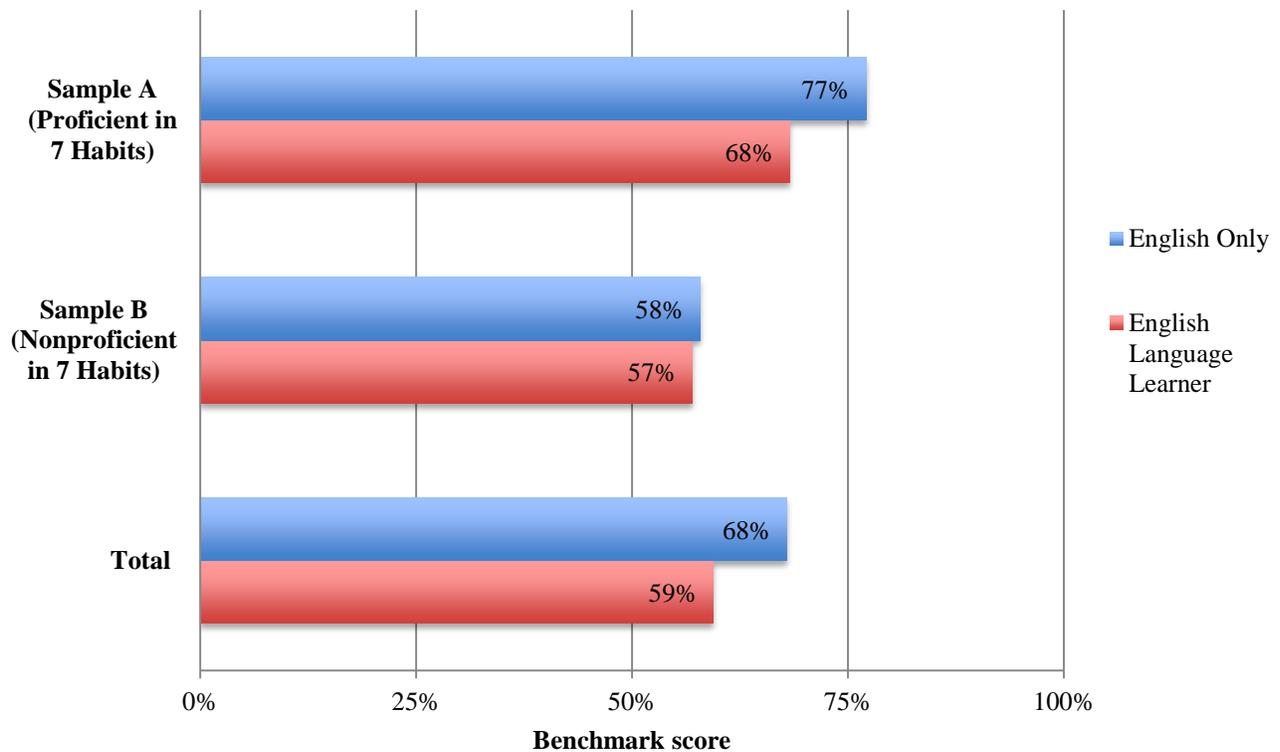


Figure 9. Language Designation Mean Comparison

The mean benchmark score for each language designation within Samples A and B, as well as for the total were compiled using all 91 students' data.

EO students, indicated by the blue bar, demonstrated the highest benchmark mean in both sample groups. Within Sample A, EO students' mean was 9% higher than that of the ELL's. Within Sample B, EO students' mean was only 1% higher than that of the ELL's. Sample A's EO mean was 19% [77%-58%] higher than Sample B's EO benchmark mean, while Sample A's ELL mean was 11% [68%-57%] higher than Sample B's ELL benchmark mean. Total EO students' mean was 9% higher than that of total ELL students' mean.

The fact that EO students' mean benchmark scores were higher in all categories indicates that increased language proficiency is associated with higher benchmark scores on average. This makes sense as EO's are able to read and understand English at a higher level therefore giving them an advantage when taking the benchmark assessment. The argument seems to hold true when evaluating Sample A, as EO students' mean is 9% higher than ELL's benchmark mean; however, when assessing EO and ELL students' means within Sample B the difference of 1% is marginal at best. While increased English proficiency is associated with higher benchmark scores versus less English proficient students on average, the most impactful difference was observed at the average to above average benchmark levels.

Though the association of increased English proficiency with higher benchmark scores can be observed, stating that the former is the sole driver of the latter would be inaccurate. Notice that Sample A's ELL benchmark mean score of 68% is a drastic 10% larger than Sample B's EO mean score. This 10% difference is larger than the 9% difference between EO students in Samples A and B.

From the above figure, one can deduce that while increased proficiency in English is generally associated with higher benchmark scores evidenced by EO students' mean score being the highest in every category, an equally valid argument can be made that English proficiency alone does not account for higher benchmark scores evidenced by Sample A's ELL mean score being 10% larger than Sample B's EO mean score.

Further analysis of language proficiency and benchmark performance was required to determine the extent of this relationship. The following chart was prepared to evaluate performance in a decile setting.

Language Designation Within Deciles

9 students per decile

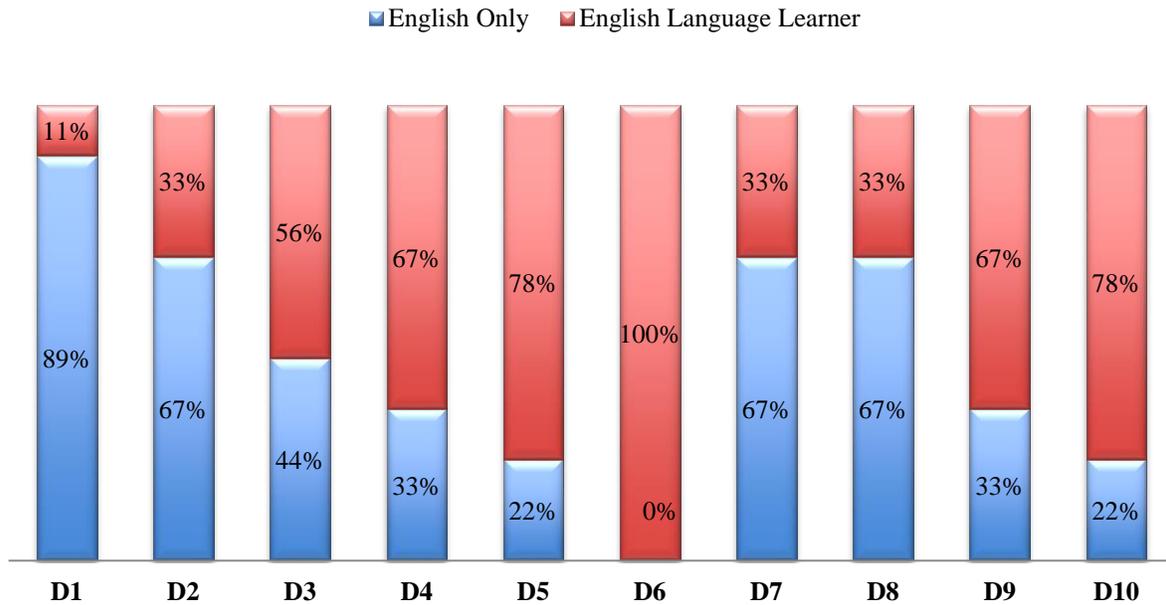


Figure 10. Language Designation Within Deciles

From the total 91 students assessed, 90 students were used to compile the above column chart. 1 student was omitted in order to create 10 equal groups of 9 students. The student omitted had the lowest benchmark score and would have been considered a Sample B constituent. As the number of participants in Sample B is nearly twice that of Sample A, excluding one participant from Sample B minimally skewed the above results. Decile 1 (D1) is comprised of the highest 9 benchmark assessment scores. D2 is comprised of the next 9 highest benchmark scores. D3 through D10 follow the same logic. The blue indicates the proportion of EO students while red denotes the proportion of ELL students.

Observing deciles 1 through 6, a clear trend is the declining English Only or blue column. The rate of decline is fairly constant, a roughly 22% reduction per decile until D3 at which point the rate of decline slows to roughly 11% until D5 and ending in D6 with a 22% decline. The identical proportion of EO students within D7 and D8 is interesting as nowhere else in the data do we see identical proportions. Looking at the further most deciles, D1 and D10, there is a greater proportion of EO students in the top 10% of benchmark scores versus ELL students and the inverse proportion at the bottom 10% of benchmark scores with ELL students constituting the vast majority of the lowest scores.

The researcher considers the trend from D1 to D6, of declining EO versus ELL students, strong evidence that higher proficiency is associated with higher benchmark performance. The consistency of the decline displays a higher degree of accuracy similar to what one would expect of much larger data sets. In addition, the duration of the consistency, over 6 deciles, indicates a reduced likelihood that the trend occurred by chance.

From the above figure, the researcher draws the conclusion that higher English proficiency is generally more associated with higher benchmark performance, the fact that it is also associated with lower benchmark performance cannot be negated as evidenced by D7 and D8 where EO students constitute the majority of these lower decile scores.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the data collected as well as visuals in support of the data. An overview of the interpretations and analysis was also presented. Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare students who are proficient in the seven habits to those who are not by measuring the difference in their academic performance and to determine if the difference was statistically significant. This study also focused on whether the results varied greatly or very little within the subgroups of gender and status as an English language learner. This quantitative study utilized assessment results and a t-test of difference to analyze the data. This chapter will summarize findings and suggest further research on the topic.

Summary of Findings

This study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the English Language Arts Benchmark 1 mean scores of students who are proficient in Covey's the seven habits and those who are not proficient in the seven habits?
 - If so, does gender or status as an English language learner contribute to this?

Based on the results of the t-test and with 95% confidence, there is a statistically significant difference in benchmark assessment performance between students who are proficient in the seven habits versus those who are not.

Given the differences in male versus female benchmark means displayed in Figure 7 were 5% for Sample A (students proficient in the seven habits) and 0% for Sample B (students not proficient in the seven habits), gender affects the mean to a small extent in Sample A and none at all in Sample B. The difference between total Sample A and Sample B

benchmark means being an overall 17% is substantial in comparison to the minimal difference in gender.

The findings provide evidence that language proficiency may be associated with seven habits proficiency. Figure 10 displays that higher English proficiency is generally more associated with higher benchmark performance, and lower English proficiency is associated with lower benchmark performance.

Findings in Context

The findings are consistent with previous studies. Arter (2007) found systematic implementation of Positive Learning Supports System (PALS), which provided behavior intervention, to aid students in academic success. The interventions and modifications the students learned were successfully transferred to the classroom and translated into increased academic success. Similarly, this study seems to point to positive behavior and the seven habits translating into skills that allowed students to experience greater academic success on Benchmark 1.

This study is also supported by previous research conducted by Shepard et al. (2012) who found engagement, participation, and support were factors that contributed to an increase in student grades and the graduation rate. This idea is echoed in the current research study. Since the seven habits were implemented school-wide, the community support and involvement is evident. This shared experience allows students to feel they belong and are valued as a member of the community and results in increased academic success.

Research by Shi and Steen (2012) found increases in GPA for a number of students who participated in the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) Group Model. Students received social

skills and English language acquisition interventions. Although the researchers believe improvement in GPA was attributed to their participation, they were unable to say conclusively that ASE directly impacted academic performance and maintain more research needs to be conducted (Shi & Steen, 2012).

Implications

The results of this study suggest The Leader in Me, and specifically the seven habits, could have a positive effect on academic proficiency. The habits may benefit student academic performance if the skills they have learned through the seven habits transfer into test-taking as well. For example, those students who are proficient in the seven habits may be more proactive during test-taking. They may take their time, be thorough (be proactive), and have a solid plan (begin with the end in mind) as they tackle the test. Students who are not proficient may not approach the test with a plan, may not persevere, and may rush through the assessment.

English only students performed better than English language learner students. This is likely due to their language skills. English only students have command of the English language, which results in a higher ability to read, understand, and respond to the questions being asked on the assessment. By contrast, their English language learner counterparts do not have command of the English language, therefore it is more challenging for these students to read, understand, and respond to the questions on the assessment.

Gender was found to be irrelevant as it relates to academic performance. Males within Sample A had a higher mean while female and male means in Sample B were identical. If gender was relevant there would likely be consistency in means within the sample groups. For example, one might expect males to have a higher mean in both sample groups.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher must also acknowledge there are various factors, other than the seven habits, that may have contributed to student proficiency.

This study was conducted at one school site in a district that has implemented the use of the seven habits district-wide. It would be advantageous to conduct a study to compare results between a district that has implemented the seven habits to a district that has not had exposure to the habits as well. This would give the researcher a more accurate depiction regarding the effect of the habits as they pertain to academic proficiency.

Due to time constraints the researcher analyzed student results only on Benchmark 1. A longer study conducted over the course of one school year would be beneficial. This would allow for a more thorough analysis of all three benchmark assessments that are given throughout the course of the school year, rather than being limited to Benchmark 1.

There are numerous internal and external variables that may have contributed to the outcomes of this study. With respect to English language learners, language itself is likely a barrier to student proficiency in the seven habits as well as proficiency on the benchmark assessment.

An English language learner may have difficulty answering the open-ended questions on the seven habits assessment, therefore receiving a non-proficient score resulting in an over-representation of ELL's in Sample B.

In addition, an English language learner may possess a higher level of problem-solving skills, but be unable to demonstrate this due to an inability to understand the question in English. The student may utilize more time per question than their English only counterparts. In this

example, an English language learner would use more time to read and understand the question, resulting in less time to solve and respond to the question.

Conclusion

As educators, it is imperative to teach character and leadership to our students. These are concepts and skills that carry a practical application to our students' future. Not only will these skills be helpful to students in the future, this research suggests it may also benefit students' academic achievement in the present. Overall it seems a systematic program that involves everyone on campus, as well as the students' family, is a win-win as it results in thoughtful and reflective students who translate these skills into academic success.

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