UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (USBE) STUDENT LEADERSHIP SKILLS GRANT: 2016 EVALUATION

SEPTEMBER 2016

Student Leadership Programs

Leadership skills are critical for student success in both school and career. In their future careers, students will experience the unpredictable and changing work environments of today's global market.[i] To be successful, students need the ability to self-manage, empower others, and find and synthesize various sources of information. Within the field of education, trends have emerged during the last 15 years that support a renewed focus on developing essential leadership outcomes in students. These trends have gained momentum as the emphasis on student accountability for learning has increased.[ii,iii]

Student leadership programs are intended to positively support the learning and growth of students, and have been used as important student development tools in both K-12 and post-secondary education.[iv] Students, schools, and communities can benefit when students are provided with opportunities to engage in leadership development at young ages.[v] Student leadership programs help students develop self-confidence, learn to build positive peer relationships, and improve skills such as collaboration, negotiation, listening, and speaking.[vi] The socio-emotional skills built through leadership programs can positively affect academic achievement as students build skills that can transfer across domains, to literacy and communication.[vii] Research has also shown that student leadership programs implemented with younger students (K-8) can improve behavior in classrooms, reduce incidences of bullying, and create more positive academic environments for all students.[viii]

Research analyzing the impact of student and youth leadership programs distinguish important key components for successful student leadership programs. First, developing leadership skills should be structured to be age appropriate. Programs should be sensitive and adaptive to the learning methods of young people, and include experiential or hands-on learning.[ix] Second, student leadership programs should offer authentic opportunities for students to develop altruistic, service-oriented attitudes and emphasize that leaders work for the betterment of the whole group.[x] Third, programs should ensure that students have the space and time to master leadership concepts and skills[xi] embedded as part of an overall program of study, with regular coaching and guidance provided by teachers.[xii] Key student leadership skills include effective communication in written, verbal, and presentation formats; collaboration with diverse peers; interpersonal development such as awareness of self and others; self-motivation; goal setting and goal achievement; collective problem solving; and harnessing and using creativity.[xiii]

USBE Student Leadership Pilot Program

In 2013, the Utah state legislature passed SB 122, which created the Student Leadership Skills Development Pilot Program, providing funding to the USBE to pilot a student leadership program in Utah elementary schools. The pilot program asked schools to develop programs based on seven key leadership skills. After two years of initial funding, the legislature provided ongoing funding for this program. Schools across the state can apply for grants to implement and sustain student leadership

programs, with up to $10,000 provided per elementary school for the first year, which must be matched by the school (with funds or in-kind contributions). Up to $20,000 is available for subsequent years. Preference is given to Title I schools and schools in need of academic improvement. Schools are expected to participate for a minimum of two years, and must show demonstrated improvement for continued funding. Schools receiving grants are required to set school-wide goals for student leadership skills development, as well as have each student set personal goals. Schools provide information regarding progress toward these goals to the USBE each year, along with information regarding academic results and student behavior such as truancy, student misconduct, or disciplinary actions.

Student Leadership Skills Emphasized in SB 122:
  - ➤ Communication Skills
  - ➤ Teamwork Skills
  - ➤ Interpersonal Skills
  - ➤ Initiative and Self-Motivation
  - ➤ Goal Setting Skills
  - ➤ Problem-Solving Skills
  - ➤ Creativity

Table 1. Number of Schools Funded Annually

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
First year of funding	26	33	7
Second year of funding		13	14
Third year of funding			6

A total of 66 schools across 29 districts have participated in the student leadership grant program. In year 1 (2013-14), 26 schools received grant funding. Of these original pilot schools, thirteen continued to receive funding into year 2 (2014-15), along with 33 new schools. In year 3 (2015-16), 14 schools continued into a second year of funding, six were in their third year of grant funding, and 7 new schools received funding.

Schools could choose what leadership program to implement as long as programs met the pilot program goals to address the seven key leadership skills. Most of the schools (74%) used nationally-recognized leadership programs. The majority (67%) used the *Leader in Me* student leadership program, a whole school leadership program for elementary schools designed by Franklin Covey. Others used *Playworks* (7%), a program designed to increase student leadership through interpersonal skills learned at recess. The remaining schools (18%) designed their own programs. The majority of grant funding was used to buy materials such as curriculum, books, and posters; obtain site licenses; and train teachers to implement the various programs.

Data Sources for the Student Leadership Pilot Evaluation

All participating schools were asked to complete surveys. Online survey invitations were sent to principals, who were requested to complete the survey and forward the invitation to faculty and staff. The programs represented by the survey respondents were similar to the programs implemented across the state, with 66% from *Leader in M*e schools, 4% from *Playworks*, and the remaining 29% from schools that had designed their own programs.

SAGE scores for participating schools were also analyzed.

Table 2. Data Sources

Data Sources	Number
Total Schools Participating in the Pilot Program	**67**
Total Survey Respondents	**399**
Principal or Vice Principal Respondents	49
Teacher Respondents	298
Other Staff Respondents	52
Total Schools represented in the Survey	**44**

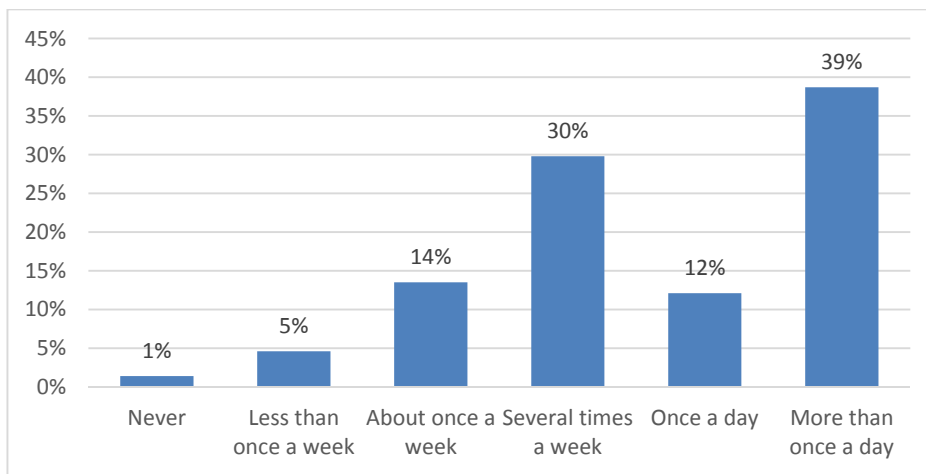# Implementation of Best Practices in the Utah Student Leadership Pilot

Table 3. Teacher Perceptions of Program Use of Best Practices

This leadership program…	Teacher Agreement
Addresses skills that are important for my students.	98%
Is appropriate for the age level of my students.	98%
Involves all students at my school.	98%
Is effective in teaching students new skills.	97%
Provides students with opportunities to actively practice new skills.	94%
Provides students with opportunities to take on leadership positions.	94%
Has hands-on or experiential learning components.	89%
I provide regular coaching or feedback to my students on their use of the leadership skills.	83%

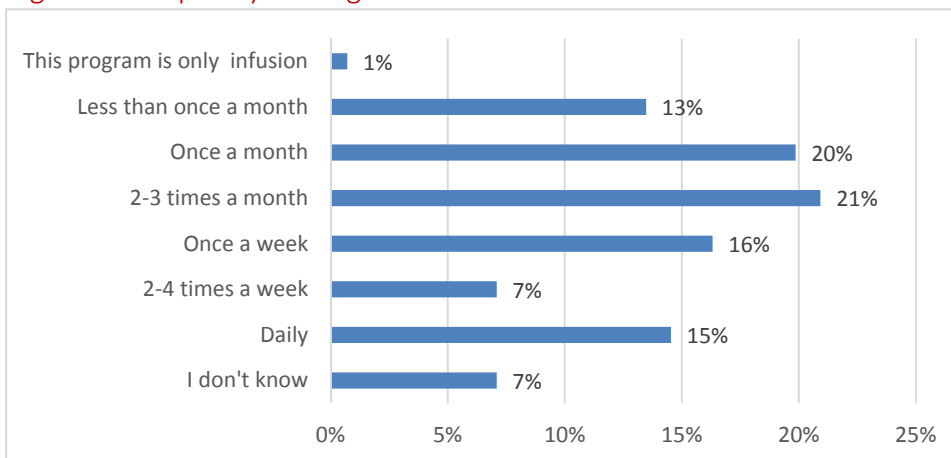Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, I don't know

Teachers indicated that the leadership programs used best practices such as addressing important skills, being age appropriate, providing opportunities to practice skills and leadership roles, and hands-on learning components.

Figure 1. Teacher Reports of Frequency of Program Infusion

Never 1%; Less than once a week 5%; About once a week 14%; Several times a week 30%; Once a day 12%; More than once a day 39%
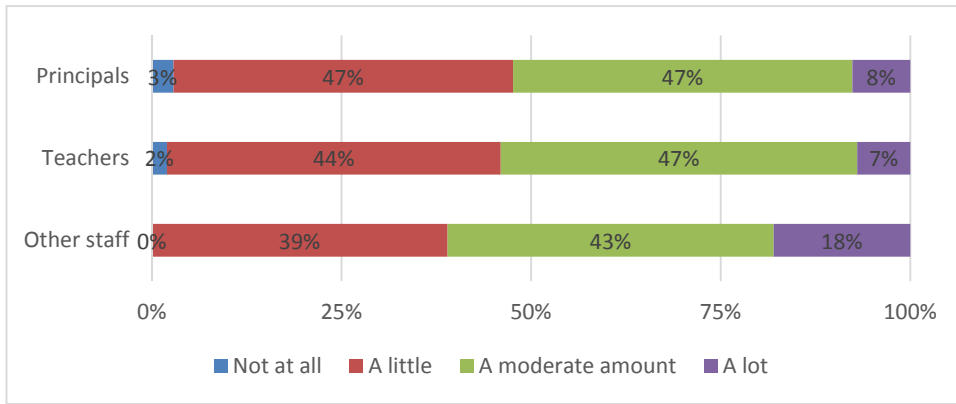
All responding principals and 92% of teachers indicated their school's program was intended to be infused into the curriculum or behavior management strategies. Most teachers (81%) indicated they link concepts from the leadership program into their teaching or behavior management systems several times a week or more. Only 1% indicated they never do this.

Figure 2. Frequency of Program Activities In Addition to Infusion

This program is only infusion 1%; Less than once a month 13%; Once a month 20%; 2-3 times a month 21%; Once a week 16%; 2-4 times a week 7%; Daily 15%; I don't know 7%
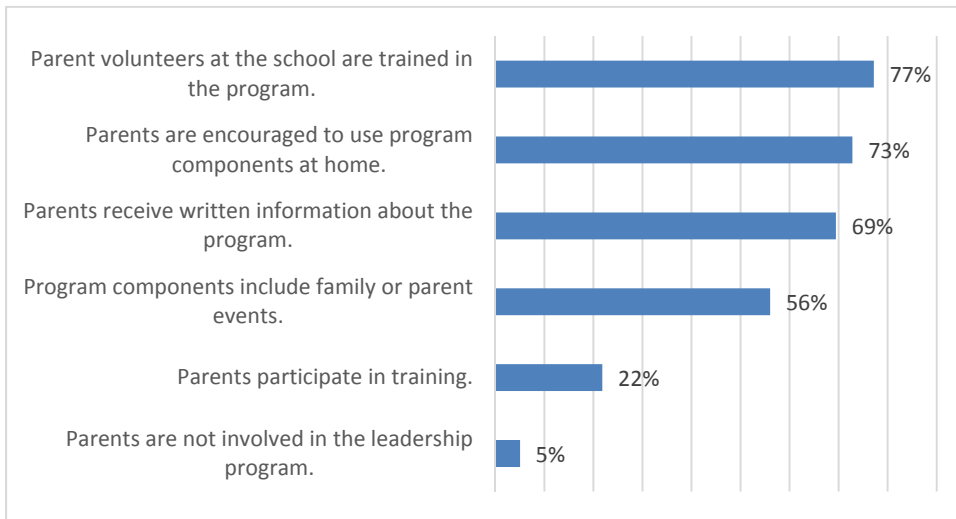
Three quarters of the respondents indicated that students participated in the program (for example, special events, meetings, student councils, or clubs) once a month or more.

Figure 3. Extent of Parental Involvement in Leadership Programs

Role	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot
Principals	3%	47%	47%	8%
Teachers	2%	44%	47%	7%
Other staff	0%	39%	43%	18%

Over half of the respondents indicated that their program included a moderate amount or a lot of parental involvement.

Figure 4. Types of Parental Involvement in the Leadership Programs

Type	Percentage
Parent volunteers at the school are trained in the program.	77%
Parents are encouraged to use program components at home.	73%
Parents receive written information about the program.	69%
Program components include family or parent events.	56%
Parents participate in training.	22%
Parents are not involved in the leadership program.	5%

The majority of programs train parent volunteers, encourage parents to use program components at home, and send written materials about the program home for parents. Survey respondents indicated that parents are also involved through participation in assemblies, parent committees and teams, and chaperoning activities.

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Principal, Teacher, and Other School Staff Perceptions of Program Outcomes

Table 4. Perceptions of Impact on 7 Program Goals

This program helped my students improve their…	Teacher Agreement	Principal Agreement	Other Staff Agreement
Communication Skills	86%	100%	85%
Teamwork Skills	88%	100%	89%
Interpersonal Skills	89%	100%	92%
Initiative and Self-Motivation	84%	100%	89%
Goal-Setting Skills	88%	96%	92%
Problem-Solving Skills	86%	100%	92%
Creativity	68%	91%	62%

Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, I don't know

Teachers, principals, and other school staff largely agreed that the student leadership programs helped students improve in the seven program goal areas.

Table 5. Teacher Perceptions of Impact on 7 Program Goals

This program helped my students…	Teacher Agreement
Improve their communication skills.	**86%**
Listen to others more patiently.	83%
Express themselves more clearly.	80%
Speak in a group more confidently.	79%
Improve their teamwork skills.	**88%**
Encourage participation from everyone.	89%
Build on the ideas of others.	85%
Accept compromise to deal with conflict.	83%
Avoid using put-downs or blaming others.	80%
Improve their interpersonal skills.	**89%**
Be more polite and respectful to others.	89%
Be more aware of others' emotions.	87%
Be more aware of their own emotions.	84%
Improve their listening skills.	82%
Improve their initiative and self-motivation.	**84%**
Continue a task/activity without being prompted by me.	81%
Undertake new activities without being prompted by me.	80%
Improve their goal setting Skills.	**88%**
Set goals that are attainable.	87%
Set their own goals for learning.	85%
See the importance of setting goals.	85%
Improve their problem-solving skills.	**86%**
Keep trying when a task becomes difficult.	82%
Learn from problem outcomes.	81%
Identify steps needed to solve a problem.	80%
Follow through with identified steps.	78%
Improve their creativity.	**68%**
Make connections between ideas.	77%
Risk failure to try new things.	74%
Respond adaptively to failure.	71%

Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, I don't know

Teachers were asked additional questions about the specific ways that students improved in each target area. Questions were developed according to research-based indicators of each target area.

Responses indicated that teachers felt that students improved in the ways expected for each target area. For example, teachers agreed that the program helped students improve their communication skills, and indicated the program helped them to listen more patiently, express themselves more clearly, and speak in a group more confidently.

Table 6. Perceptions of Impact on Climate and Learning

This leadership program…	Teacher Agreement	Principal Agreement	Other Staff Agreement
Reduced bullying.	67%	100%	75%
Benefitted my students.	95%	100%	94%
Improved the climate of my school.	88%	100%	92%
Improved the climate of my classroom.	87%	n/a	n/a
Enhanced my teaching experience.	86%	n/a	n/a
Improved the learning environment in my class.	86%	n/a	n/a
Improved my students' learning outcomes.	78%	n/a	n/a

Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, I don't know

95% of teachers agreed the program benefitted students.

86% of teachers agreed the program enhanced their teaching and improved the learning environment of their classes.

78% of teachers agreed the program improved their students' learning outcomes.

Table 7. Teachers' Negative Perceptions of the Leadership Programs

This leadership program…	Teacher Agreement
Takes time away from instruction.	25%
Feels like an added burden.	17%
Is not worth it.	7%
Is not a good use of school time.	6%

Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, I don't know

Although a minority of teachers agreed that the programs take time away from instruction or feel like an added burden, very few teachers thought it was not a good use of school time or was not worth it.

Principal, Teacher, and Other School Staff Survey Comments

Survey respondents were asked whether they would recommend the leadership program to other schools, and why they would or would not. A total of 298 respondents provided comments. The majority (85%) indicated they would recommend the program unconditionally. Another 12% indicated they would recommend the program to other schools, but with some reservations (described below). The few comments (3%) that did not recommend the student leadership programs cited similar concerns as those that recommend them with reservations.

Satisfaction and Enthusiasm Expressed in the Survey Comments

The majority of respondents reported positive perceptions about the influence of the student leadership program. These comments illustrate the various ways in which students, teachers, and schools benefit from participation. A sample of representative comments are provided below.

Teachers see students developing important skills, including academics.

- *Yes, I definitely would [recommend the program]. I believe the Leadership program gives students the soft skills they need to have to function well in society.*
- *Yes, because I see students learning how to be great leaders.*
- *Yes, because it teaches children life skills they will use as a successful adult.*

- *This is one of the best things to improve education. Students learn to communicate with adults and peers, develop problem-solving skills, and take responsibility for their own learning.*
- *I believe the Leader In Me model is one of the most powerful resources we have to help children take initiative to manage their lives. The habits and principles are easy to understand and implement. I really believe if all children were intentionally schooled in the habits K-6 it would set a foundation for greatness and success for each child. The leadership principles help students to see their own responsibilities, their accountability, create SMART goals, look more closely at balancing their lives, priorities, and their skills in relationships. Further, I think it is important for each child to see that they have leadership potential- and that is not about being in charge of others, but being in better charge of ourselves and our choices.*

Teacher satisfaction has improved.

- *Absolutely [would recommend the program]. Our school climate and environment has continued to improve each year. Our teacher retention rate is fabulous - the only teachers we lost this year were teachers that moved due to a spouse getting a job out of state. Our students are happy and use the 7 habits language as part of their vocabulary. Bullying is not a word that is even discussed at our school since students know what Win-Win means and know how to make Win-Win agreements when they have a disagreement with another student. Parents report using the 7 Habits in their families and LOVE this program. We find the leadership program to be very effective and we could not train/provide professional development/ buy needed supplies without the leadership grant monies we have received.*
- *Not only does it encourage students to be their best, I think it also creates a more positive atmosphere to work in as teachers!*
- *Absolutely. This program has changed our entire school and community culture. Students take greater responsibility for their own learning and see the purpose of it. They set meaningful goals and work to attain them. They feel that they belong at our school and have a purpose. It makes my job easier and I enjoy coming to work each day. The behavior problems at our school have been greatly reduced because students truly care for one another.*
- *YES! The way the program teaches kids and adults to work together makes my life so much easier.*

School climate has improved.

- *ABSOLUTELY [would recommend the program]- The Leader In Me has transformed our school. Our faculty is united and the students are learning how to lead, set goals and work together.*
- *Absolutely! This program has helped to create and maintain a very positive teaching/ learning environment.*
- *Absolutely! This is a wonderful leadership program for our school. This has changed the feel of the school especially when you walk down the hallways.*
- *Yes, we have seen great things come from the Leader in Me at our school. Behavior problems have dropped dramatically and academics are going up.*
- *Yes. It has helped prevent so many unnecessary bad behaviors and has helped the students learn how to know how to conduct themselves in almost every single situation as a future adult.*
- *Yes, because creating a positive behavioral environment is a must-have for any school.*

Teachers have applied the skills to their own lives.

- *Yes, I have learned so much from the Leader in Me program. It has not only helped me become a better teacher but also a better person. I love using the program in my classroom and implementing it into my lessons that I teach. It helps make my classroom a positive, safe and uplifting place to be.*
- *I love this program. I think that every child in every school should be required to learn it. It has helped me teach and communicate with students, parents, colleagues, and everyone else I meet. It is a wonderful program whose ideas and concepts are needed in everyone situation and in every home.*
- *I would DEFINITELY recommend this leadership program. I can see how it has changed lives (including my own).*
- *We have seen results from teachers to students.*

The program has increased parent engagement.

- *Yes, the leader in me program has changed the atmosphere in our school. Parents and teachers love the program because they see how the program has changed the lives of the students at our school*
- *Yes, I love the student-led conferences. The students set goals and track them, then present them to their parents at parent teacher conferences. This helps the students with accountability to their parents and teachers. They take responsibility for their own learning. Parents love it also.*
- *Yes, it has completely change the entire feeling in our school. The program implementation has made outstanding improvements to our school, teachers and also the parents.*

The program helps struggling students.

- *I work with struggling learners and the goal setting aspects were priceless.*
- *Yes. I've seen changes that are very good in students that have learning disabilities that have implemented the habits and have made leaps in their reading and math levels.*
- *I like having the students be in charge of everything they are capable of doing. Some of the at-risk students have had great opportunities to lead. I think it has helped the students be better citizens.*
- *I have loved it. I think it united the staff and has empowered the students in their own learning and to take on responsibility in their personal lives. To quote one of my students, "The 7 habits makes your life not be a mess."---From the mouths of babes--That came from a second grade student who struggles with academics.*
- *Absolutely!! This really isn't a program it is a way of doing things. It helps in ALL aspects of life not just in academics or behavior. It is immersive and gives students at all levels an opportunity to lead.*

Reservations Expressed in the Survey Comments

Although only a minority of respondents expressed reservations, the comments they provided are important for understanding some of the perceived drawbacks of the programs. Example comments are provided below. These comments should not be interpreted as representing the views of all respondents.

Financial costs are high.

- *I like having the students be in charge of everything they are capable of doing. Some of the at-risk students have had great opportunities to lead. I think it has helped the students be better citizens. It is very expensive, so a school would have to look carefully at the price before jumping on board. Cost aside, I would definitely recommend this program.*
- *I think it is a great program, but excessively, almost restrictively expensive.*
- *The program itself is a good program. I have seen improvements in student thinking and behavior. I feel like the program has become too commercialized and TOO EXPENSIVE! ($14,000 for next year). Money can be better spent for the outcome.*
- *I feel that the money invested in this program could be better used in other areas. The Leader in Me program feels like a money making scheme by Franklin Covey.*

Time and effort costs are high.

- *I would [recommend the program], however I wouldn't suggest adding the leadership program in the same year as becoming Title I. It has been a lot to try and implement in one year.*
- *Maybe. I really like the concepts it teaches, but doing the whole program with the grant put a lot of extra burden on the teachers and gave us a lot of extra work. There are also a lot of hoops to jump through with getting the different levels of the program. Overall, I think it is a good program, but I don't think they should be telling schools that it isn't more work like they told us. They say "It isn't more work, just a better way of doing things you are already doing." That may be the case after the program has been implemented for a few years, but it is definitely more work to begin with. I think other schools should know what they are getting into before they begin.*
- *Yes and no. I love the program, but it takes a lot of time, and it requires a lot from teachers. They claim it isn't "extra", but it is. On the other hand, it has been great for our students. They are more confident and goal-oriented.*
- *I think they ask way too much volunteer time. I am busy with personal things after work hours and it is expected of me to spend at least an hour (sometimes up to 6 hours) every week towards Leader in Me on a "volunteer" basis.*

Consistency and commitment are required.

- *I think this program is a way to supplement good teaching, but it's not a fix-all. Programs like this one require strong leadership at an administrative level as well as a lot of parent support and if everyone isn't on the same page, it collapses very easily. I think leadership skills are an important value for kids and I see a lot of solid components in this program, but I don't think it works well without consistency.*
- *I would recommend it with the caveat that the staff needs to truly be on board for full implementation. We have been fortunate that we grew it slowly over a year before we officially started into the full TLIM program. This program takes a significant time commitment, particularly in the first few years, and it is important that a team is aware of that and willing to do it. It also takes a significant amount of money that a team has to commit they will find/raise in order to continually run the program. Would I recommend it, absolutely! We love it and fully recognize all that we have gained by doing it. However, I would recommend it to other schools with those pieces in mind.*

- *If you do this program, you have to go all in. Halfway won't really have any kind of benefit. If you have other things going on, adding this to it is difficult.*
- *Yes. It has a lot of good elements, but the benefits will vary greatly based on the implementation of the teachers. Some use it effectively, some don't use it all, and many are struggling to learn how to use it. This last group is trying to balance the leadership program that they may or may not understand clearly, with all their other responsibilities at the school. My limited experience has been that it takes a couple years for a teacher to "figure out" and even then is depends greatly on their personal skill level and motivation whether they will actually implement it to create real change.*

The principles are valuable but the full program is not needed.
- *I would recommend The Leader in Me program in its basic components, but trying to become a "Lighthouse" school was expensive, stressful and time consuming. It was hard to jump through all their hoops. I like that we have decided to become a 7 Habits school so we can continue to use the program stories, characters and terminology which are very helpful and I believe can change lives. I recommend the 7 Habits, but not going for full Lighthouse status.*
- *I would recommend the leadership principles that the Leader in Me program advocates. I love using the habits with my students and in my teaching. But the with rising cost and demands from the Leader in Me sales reps, it is not worth the effort that they want for their program.*
- *Some portions yes. I like the 7 habits and using the language in the classroom. The whole program is overwhelming and takes a lot of outside prep time.*
- *Yes, there are a lot of great components. Some of it became burdensome.*
- *Yes, but I would not recommend going all the way through the program. It changes to being more hoops to jump than focusing on the kids.*

More training is needed.
- *Now that we have done this program for 2 years, I feel that some additional training, events or ideas to continue this program in our school is needed*
- *I wish there was more training during the schools contract time so everyone could have the experience.*
- *I think the program itself is very good. Teachers have not been trained enough to teach or do related activities because of lack of knowledge, buy in, and TIME. Even just time to find or research the materials to use.*

SAGE Scores of Participating Schools

The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) conducted a series of statistical analyses to examine whether participation in the leadership program could be linked to increases in SAGE results at the school level. School-level data from 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 school years were used. Because a small number of schools were funded each year, and because the ways that schools were funded varied from school to school (with schools starting in different years and receiving between one and three years of funding), we conducted two kinds of exploratory analyses.

> *Participation in the student leadership program appeared to have no significant effects, either positive or negative, on student SAGE results.*

The first analysis involved creating a sample of schools as a control group that were matched with the participating schools on student characteristics such as percentage of English language learners, students from low-income families, race and ethnicity, and previous test scores. Several outcome variables were used, including average SAGE scores, percent proficient, and median growth percentiles. Our analyses found no differences on SAGE results between this matched group of schools and the leadership schools.

The second analysis used a fixed-effects model to examine change in annual SAGE results for participating schools based on the year in which they received their first year of funding. Control variables included percentage of mobility students, students from low-income families, English language learners, race and ethnicity, and special education. School year (as a fixed effect) was also used in the model to control for any systematic changes in the SAGE tests from year to year. Again, using several different outcome measures, our analyses found no significant differences in SAGE test results following initiation of the leadership program.

Although the analyses did not indicate that the student leadership programs improved SAGE scores, a number of points should be considered in interpreting those results. First, the leadership programs are not specifically designed to increase test scores; although, through the development of other skills such as motivation and goal setting, improvements in tests scores might be expected. Second, the amount of time needed for these programs to have an effect might be longer than the amount of time available for the current analyses. In the survey comments, teachers mentioned that the first year of the program required a number of changes and schools may not have fully implemented the programs until their second year or later. Third, the small number of schools in the analyses also reduced the likelihood of detecting an effect. Finally, although there were no improvements in SAGE results based on participation, there were also no decreases in performance. This is worth noting because the survey results indicated that 25% of responding teachers felt that the program took time away from instruction. Despite that cost of instructional time, there were no decreases in SAGE scores.

Summary and Conclusions

The Utah State Board of Education was able to use the funding allocated by the Student Leadership Skills Development Pilot to support student leadership programs in 66 elementary schools between the 2013-14 and 2015-16 school years. A large sample of survey respondents from 44 of these schools indicated the programs generally used research-supported best practices in their programs. Additionally, agreement was very high among survey respondents that the programs were effective in reaching the

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intended goals of improving student communication skills, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, initiative and self-motivation, goal-setting skills, problem solving skills, and, to a lesser degree, creativity. Survey comments provided by faculty and administration described myriad ways that the program was beneficial to teachers, individual students, and the school environment overall. A small number of teachers indicated reservations about the program, primarily focused on the costs of the programs in terms of money, time, and effort; however, even many of those teachers indicated that the programs were well worth the costs. Finally, the analysis of SAGE scores indicated that the programs did not have any observable effects (either positive or negative) on school SAGE performance. Future evaluations should continue to assess possible impacts on SAGE results as the limitations of the current data make the analyses preliminary.

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