

Student Leadership Education in Elementary Classrooms

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling Psychology

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

July 2010

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my advisors, Madalienne Peters and Sarah Zykanov, for their professional support and guidance through this process that has enabled me to complete my thesis. Madalienne and Sarah continually reminded me to “trust the process,” which served as my motto and strengthened me when persistence was needed. Suzanne Roybal’s presence in the library was instrumental in presenting the resources needed for my research. Thank you to the faculty in the Education Department and Teacher Credential program at Dominican University for inspiring my colleagues and me by fostering thought-provoking classroom discussions.

To my fellow classmates, thank you for all your support. It was an enriching experience to be sharing ideas, which promoted in-depth research. A special thanks, to Ashley Williams, Katie King, and Suzanne Schultz for keeping me on task and helping me to stay sane. I look forward to continuing our friendship as we progress in our professional arenas.

I would like to encourage my husband to continue preparing delicious dinners like the ones he served me at my computer during my thesis. I believe he deserves a medal of honor for his patience. I am truly grateful for my family’s unconditional love and encouragement through the completion of this program.

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Abstract

As I began my career as a teacher, I assumed leadership education would naturally be integrated into the elementary classroom curriculum because I was intrigued by this topic. However, as I spent more time in the classroom I quickly realized leadership skills were not part of regular classroom learning or practice for elementary age students. I became concerned because I believe that in our fast-paced, evolving society our youth need the strategies and skills to “tackle the major issues” we face (Hickman, 1996).

In the twenty-first century, there is a lack of opportunities for young children in elementary school classrooms to practice leadership skills. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the research that has been undertaken on the subject and assess the viability on the topic. Only two published resources were found that address the potential for leadership education at the elementary school level.

The lack of literature on leadership education in the elementary grades was combined with a general sentiment among practitioners and leadership experts that there is a need for leadership skills to be taught in elementary classrooms. The most effective way to promote these skills to elementary school students is by providing ample exposure and practice in the classroom. This project illuminates the fact that leadership skills are desperately needed in the elementary classroom because students are not being prepared with the tools needed in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Observing a classroom of elementary age students and watching their interactions. Students are often seen discussing playground dilemmas upon coming in from lunch or recess. They talk about friends being mean to each other before or after school. Often one can observe student being disrespectful to each other in class. This makes one wonder why do students have such a hard time relating to each other outside the classroom. Could it be a lack of modeling and reinforcement, or are the tools needed to handle those situations simply not taught or practiced in the classroom?

A soccer coach once said that we are only as strong as our weakest link. By this he meant that it is not the role that you play; it is how well you play the role that actually matters. The soccer field is one arena where leadership skills can be developed and reinforced. I remember playing on my select soccer team as a child. Our coach always reminded us that each of us had a very important role. He taught us that as a team player we had a responsibility and obligation to the other members of our team and to the team as a whole. Even though there may be a captain or a coach that would seem to fulfill the powerful leadership role, the whole team had to work collaboratively in order to function and achieve our common goal of winning games.

In college, I was introduced to the fundamentals of leadership in a leadership course. It was a unique program for those seniors whose role on the athletic field was also Captain. The leadership program paired the leadership curriculum and practical field experience to create an empowering relevance to the literature covered in the course. As

I began my career as a teacher, I was reminded of this experience and the value it could have in the elementary school classroom. I assumed leadership skills would naturally be integrated into the classroom curriculum. However, as I spent more time in the classroom I quickly realized leadership skills were not part of regular classroom learning or practice for elementary age students. I became concerned because I believe that in our fast-paced, evolving society our youth need the strategies and skills to “tackle the major issues” we face (Hickman, 1996).

In this study, leadership education for elementary students has a focus on character development, moral and ethical lessons, and life skills. Leadership skills include student: accountability, responsibility, self-knowledge, courage, collaboration, decision-making skills, risk taking, critical and creative problem solving, and being community conscious (K., 2009). These skills can be emphasized and practiced in a P.E. program and the regular classroom. In the classroom, strategies for teaching leadership skills could include role-playing, specific groupings for student projects, cooperative learning activities, service-learning projects, and cooperative learning activities (K., 2009).

For example, at the beginning of the year the teacher could take 20 minutes for two weeks to do cooperative learning activities. Some of the games could include rope course challenge games (no ropes course needed) to give the students a chance to really get to know their peers and appreciate them in a different way. These activities also

enable to students to build trust for one another. Another activity in the classroom could include frequent projects that the students must work on together (Karnes & Bean, 2010). The grade will not only reflect the outcome of the project but also on the overall group performance, how they interacted during the process. Variations of the project can involve assigning roles within the group that the students must adhere to during the group assignment. After the project the students would have time to discuss their roles.

Statement of the Problem

There are few opportunities for young children in elementary school classrooms to learn leadership skills. Hickman (1994) encourages educators to challenge students to take on leadership roles and participate in their communities. Teachers can support the development of leadership skills in young students by providing opportunities for them to develop self-knowledge and courage, work in collaboration with classmates, take risks, and practice critical and creative problem solving. Teachers would benefit from guidance in developing projects and activities that allow students to develop leadership skills.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to assess the need to educate young students about leadership in the elementary curriculum. The research will seek to define leadership education and skills appropriate for elementary age students. The research will also present a leadership

education curriculum design, which will guide teachers to teach these skills in the elementary school classroom.

Research Question or Hypotheses

1. What leadership skills are appropriate for elementary students?
2. How can Elementary school teachers foster leadership skills?

Theoretical Rationale

From an educational theoretical perspective, teaching leadership skills to young elementary age students can help build “critical and creative problem-solvers,” practicing stewards of our environment, self-empowerment, and the ability to share responsibilities and value diversity (Allen et al., 1998; Starr, 1996, p.70).

A curriculum that organizes teaching systematically around positive leadership skills from the kindergarten level up through high school will help students acquire and practice many of these skills and objectives. The child who is given the opportunity to apply, practice, and enforce these skills in many settings and situations will experience stronger personal growth and development (Starr, 1996, p. 69).

This research is based on the theoretical rationale that young students can learn and practice important skills that will help them practice leadership as adult citizens.

The school can integrate these themes and skills successfully at appropriate developmental levels across the curriculum, thereby providing a better coordinated range of tools with which students can understand who they are and how they can become more involved and effective members of society (Starr, 1996, p. 69).

Assumptions

Leadership education can and should be taught in elementary school classrooms and can be easily integrated with the existing curriculum. This project also assumes that some existing school programs such as “character development,” or “life skills” education teach some skills identified as important for young students to learn and practice, but that these skills should be emphasized as leadership skills. It also assumes that as young students are faced with adult issues earlier and younger, students do not have the wherewithal or appropriate tools to handle such challenges (Schulman, 1996).

Background and Need

Karnes and Beanem, (2010) write, “because of current circumstances facing our nation and world, it is clear that more serious attention should be given to developing young leaders—influential people who are critical thinkers, creative problems solver, and strong communicators” (p. vii). The question is often asked, “Where are the good leaders?” As if our nation is waiting for those leaders to emerge from the crowd but leaders are not born, they are trained and educated (Kretman, 2009). The disparity

between wanting and needing leaders no longer has to exist. Leadership education can support, teach, and train young students to be leaders on all levels to face some of the world's most threatening problems (Wren et al., 1995).

The research shares vast leadership programs for teenagers and in higher education, but the programs do not infiltrate down into elementary schools. Most familiar cultivated school themes include, life skills, moral and/or ethical education, and character development to name a few, which can be found in small doses in the primary grades. However, it is has been my experience in the classroom that the concepts and themes learned in school are valuable but there the students do not see the relevance of those themes in their own lives. There is no continuity between the qualities being discussed with the students and the qualities/skills that need be practiced over the course of an entire K-5th grade experience.

There are two important studies that have been published which focus specifically on the importance of integrated leadership education programs in the elementary school classroom. Both studies are supported by the same authors and therefore will be categorized as one leadership curriculum module. The first study was a joint project of the Center for Political Leadership and Participation from the University of Maryland at College Park and John F. Kennedy High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. The "CivicQuest" study was entitled, *Learning Leadership: A Curriculum Guide for a New Generation Grades K-12*. The second study was from the Kellogg Leadership Studies Project, 1994-1997, entitled *Rethinking Leadership*. The two models addressed

significant amounts of scholarly evidence to support leadership education and its dire necessity. The over-arching themes ask: what is the purpose of leadership and why should it be taught? (Allen et al. 1998).

The current study is needed to address the gap in the literature. There is a need for more research into leadership education for students in the elementary grades. The research will seek to present a leadership education curriculum design, to address the lack of guidance teachers currently have to help them teach these skills in the elementary school classroom.

Definitions

Leadership education is defined in this study as a curriculum that teaches specific skills and qualities to students to empower and prepare them to deal with the many challenges our community, society, nation, and world faces. Some examples of these qualities and skills include the ability to: take risks, critically and creatively problem solve, make decisions, communicate, collaborate, cooperate, persist, adapt, be self-aware, be confident, know when and how to do the right thing, be an active community member, have courage, and develop a sense of a moral compass. These are the qualities and skills that make up the essential definition of leadership education for the current study.

Aspects of leadership education are integrated in the traditional character development programs and life skill instruction currently found in many schools.

Leadership: Taking responsibility for individual actions and being living exemplars of good.

Leadership Education: Teaching and modeling leadership ethics in the classroom. Providing a safe learning environment for students to experiment with leadership exploration. Give students opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills in class projects and activities.

Leadership Qualities:

Respect /appreciation for one another

Honesty/truthfulness

Moral compass

Persistence

Adaptability

Self-awareness

Empowerment

Confidence

Courage

Knowing when to do the right thing

Leadership Skills:

Critically and creative problem solving

Decision-making

Risk-taking

Communication

Social action

Collaborative work

Elementary age students: Kindergarten thru Fifth Graders.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

A leader is not necessarily a person who holds some formal position or is perceived as a leader by others. Instead, a leader is one who is able to affect change which helps others, the community and society.

Any individual is a potential leader.

The process of leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action, affecting change.

(Astin & Astin, 1996, p. 16)

Leadership skills are not necessarily innate characteristics/qualities; they are learned behaviors and therefore can be taught (Kretman, 2009). “Leadership skills in kids can be inculcated in childhood, so it’s never too early to start” (K., 2009, p. 2). Students will face real life challenges when they venture into society. Teaching leadership skills in schools will promote different ways of leading. Therefore, it is pertinent that students be given the opportunities to best develop their leadership skills. “Leadership activities should be designed to develop each and every quality” (Pilgrim, 2009, p. 3).

The purpose of this study is to assess the need to educate young students about leadership in the elementary curriculum. The research defines leadership education and skills appropriate for elementary age students. The research also presents a leadership education curriculum design, which can serve to guide teachers to teach these skills in the elementary school classroom. In this literature review the historical background of leadership studies are reviewed along with pertinent studies of leadership programs in K – 12 environments. The researcher examines the following questions: What leadership

skills are appropriate for elementary students and how can elementary school teachers foster leadership skills?

Historical background

Leadership has been studied for centuries. Early theorists believed that few became leaders because leaders were born with specific innate leadership skills and qualities (K., 2009). It was believed there was one kind of leader, or function of a leader. Theorists now understand there are many dimensions of leadership (Chemers, 1984). These can be manipulated by social situations and affected by individual values, needs, and interests. Furthermore, leadership in the twenty-first century has become broader and more complex with new expectations about democratic process (Chemers, 1984; Kretman, 2009).

In the *Leader's Companion: Insights on Leadership the Ages*, Martin Chemers, wrote a chapter on Contemporary Leadership Theory. He expands on the brief history of leadership. Chemers, (1984) says, "The scientific study of leadership can be roughly divided into three periods: the trait period, from around 1910 to World War II, the behavior period, from the onset of World War II to the late 1960's, and the contingency period, from the late 1960's to the present" (p. 83). As leaders and leadership research has evolved, future leadership theorists will determine the definition of leadership in the twenty-first century.

The trait period was the earliest leadership research focused on the difference between followers and leaders. This concept rested heavily on “those who became leaders were different from those who remained followers” (Chemers, 1984, p. 83). The trait theory asserts that leaders are born, not developed or learned. The behavioral period emerged from the trait period, but it emphasized specific leadership behaviors. Three leadership behavioral styles were researched, “autocratic,” “democratic,” and “laissez-faire” in hopes to discover the best single universal leadership style. The autocratic leadership style was a dominant, controlling style where the leader had tight reins of the group and did all the decision-making. In the democratic style, the leader enables group participation in decision-making (p. 84). Unlike the autocratic and democratic leadership styles, very little control or input comes from the leader with a laissez-faire style. At the end of these behavioral studies, researchers were unsuccessful in determining one leadership style that was better than any other or created more group productivity (p. 85).

The third period was called the contingency period. This period’s focal point was on the effectiveness of leadership. “Almost all the [contingency] approaches [were] concerned with the degree of predictability, certainty, and control which the environment affords to leaders” (Chemers, 1984, p. 96). The heart of the contingency period attempts to interpret leadership-behavior in different social situations and considers outside and inside influences (Chemers, 1984, p.98). This theory builds the idea that different kinds of followers need different kinds of leadership. For example, an experienced teacher needs a different kind of guidance from a leader than a new teacher. The contingency

leadership theory proscribed different approaches leaders would take, based on the needs of followers.

As seen throughout the periods theorists have attempted for decades to understand and interpret the role of leader-behavior, however, leadership is a constantly evolving force. Therefore, the efforts to analyze the many facets of leader roles and leadership are dynamic. The new roles of leadership are now being seen in education well beyond the role of the teacher, principal, and/or administrators alone. As the concepts of leadership education are defined in this research, these leadership skills are restructured to encompass a larger spectrum. The elements of leadership tie into the interaction that students' have, creative problem-solving, innovation, and how to be a community member within the classroom, just to name a few (Adams & Webster, 1998).

Case study: Potential Benefits of Leadership Education

In Silver Spring, Maryland, academic achievement and school climate at the John F. Kennedy high school was declining at an increasingly rate. In the early 1990's there were about 1,300 students, 9-12th grades. What was once a predominately white middle-class community was now approximately 70% minority population. Of those students, 16% were on a lunch reduction program, 9% were in English Language Learner classes and 15% were in special education classes (Bordas, 1996).

The neighborhood communities saw the changes of "rising student mobility, falling test scores, and increasing percentages of limited-English-speaking and

special-needs students.... Members of the Kennedy community wanted a program that would encourage neighborhood cohesiveness and enrich the education of all children, not just the “gifted and talented” (Bordas, 1996, p.19).

A Leadership Training Institute (LTI) emerged from the concerns voiced in the community.

Throughout the LTI curriculum “themes and activities are woven into core subjects, creating the interdisciplinary approach” (Bordas, 1996, p. 21).

The program invested a deep interest for developing such fundamental skills as: a rigorous study of communication, which stressed reading comprehension, research, writing, speaking and active listening; development of intra- and interpersonal relations skills in teambuilding, group dynamics, conflict resolution, time management and self-assessment; emphasis on creative and critical thinking that involve moral reasoning, problem solving, and decision making (Bordas, 1996, p. 21).

As ninth through twelfth graders advanced through the LTI program the school environment and the community atmosphere changed for the better. Students were taking responsibility for their actions, learning, school culture, and community. Test scores increased, student mobility decreased, and cohesiveness improved among the community members. The JFK high school was a model of how a leadership curriculum could impact an educational infrastructure and its surrounding community (Bordas, 1996).

The Kellogg Leadership Studies Project (KLSP) provides another example of how to incorporate leadership in education. The project's vision was, "to transform the theory and practice of leadership to build a caring, just, and equitable world" (KLSP, 1998, p. 1). The project goal was, "to produce and disseminate knowledge that advances leadership theory, education, and practice to prepare people... to face challenges of the 21st century" (KLSP, 1998, p. 1). The study accentuated the purpose of leadership in this century and "implications for leadership," "principles of collaborative/reciprocal leadership," "collective leadership practices," and transitional leadership (KLSP, 1998, p. 42).

When designing a leadership curriculum, for elementary aged students, collective leadership practice objectives should be fostered in order to sustain a learning environment where students thrive in their leadership roles. Collective leadership practices can be transitioned through collectively sharing a vision, sharing power, (i.e. a horizontal power structure), modeling practices, creating a safe learning environment/zone, and sharing information gained among all group members (KLSP, 1998, p. 58). These objectives will ensure the sustainability of the leadership programs.

The leadership-training program at the JFK High School, for instance, prepares students with the necessary leadership qualities, skills and techniques needed to succeed in the 21st century. This leadership-training program is a great example of how a program cannot only affect the students and the school community, but the family community surrounding the school. Montgomery County school district is the 16th largest school system in the United States, ranking the largest in Maryland. There are 25 high schools in

this county, servicing 44,580 9-12th grade students. When the leadership program was introduced in 1993 at JFK High school the student population was 1,300 compared to 1,558 students currently. The percentage of minority students attending JFK was 70% in 1993, but has increased to 90.8% of minorities attending JFK. The African American and Hispanic student populations greatly increased while the white student population dropped considerably. The change in the demographics became a major concern for the community members and as a result the Leadership Training Institute (LTI) an answer to their cries. Since the program has been instated graduation rates at the high school, 82.0% compared to the county, 87.4% is on target. The overall attendance has increased at JFK and is one-tenth higher than the county average at 95.6%. Even surrounding counties with less diversity compare similarly to the graduation rates at JFK, pointing to heavily to the success of the LTI program. It has been noted that those students enrolled in the leadership training academic grades and SAT scores improved. Each year the program increasingly continues to grow, as does the outreach to the student and community members lives.

Interview with an Expert

When designing my questions for my interview with an expert I was interested to learn about leadership activities that were designed for students in higher levels of education that could be catered towards elementary age students. The interviewee had

some great ideas for two particular games that could be utilized at the elementary grade levels.

The interviewee teaches 2 games in the leadership course that would be appropriate for elementary age students. One of the games is called “Blind Leadership.” The object of the game requires teams/groups; one student is the designated leader, while the other students in the group are blindfolded. The groups are given a small set of classic Tinkertoys and a diagram of a simple design that the group must put together. The leader must describe the diagram model to the rest of the blindfolded team members. Oddly enough the interviewee finds that most often the leader describes the Tinkertoy pieces by color, however, the other member cannot see color. The idea of this exercise helps promote communication, teamwork, creativity, problem solving, encouragement, and the ability to listen and follow instruction from your peer(s). Different variations could include a time limit or other limitations. The leaders’ may switch to practice being a follower if time permits.

The second activity is called “Two Eggs Can Fly.” The students again are working in team(s) and building a contraption using limited materials presented by the teacher that will protect an egg dropped from a considerable height. The students cannot chose from the material and must use all materials provided for their team. There are no rules on how the egg contraption is designed or created, but there is a time frame in which the egg protector is constructed. The object of the activity is to preserve the egg

from breaking when dropped. The lesson teaches students how to work together, creative thinking, communicate, problem solving, how to work efficiently under time constraints, and role-play with a group setting. In life we do not necessarily always have the resources we need to be successful, but creative problem solving can resolve the issues at hand.

In the interviewee's course, this particular activity has a little twist to it. The only way the group(s) can receive an A for the day is if the egg lands unharmed. The thought behind the A is of course another lesson. The reasoning stems from idea that the process or objective does matter in our world. Our society also puts a heavy emphasis on results and results mattering. There are times in life when an objective is presented but only those who complete the specific objective is deemed "successful" or "passes." Therefore, the process must connect with the results or in this case a grade. When presenting this activity to younger students variations can be made to make it more accessible to the appropriate age. Some changes could be seen in the time limitation, the materials given to the students, and of course the grade. My recommendation would eliminate the grade all together as this lesson's concept is much too advanced for elementary age students.

One of the key components of leadership education was inspired from a new piece of research the interviewee read about dealing with a concept called, "self-management." Self-management is under the umbrella of leadership. Self-management is an attitude that incorporates effort and time management. It is important to understand that before one can become a leader, to get people to follow, one must demonstrate first that they can

be trusted. For young people learning how to demonstrate this on their own is essential. Children socialize and interact with each other all the time. Therefore, focusing on the interaction when students hang out and communicate, one can see the dynamics of leadership at play. The interaction among students also ties into teamwork. Teamwork is another essential leadership component. How well are groups of students working together towards a common goal in the classroom? When students are communicating well and collaborating, there is an energy that develops among the groups. The roles in which students play out become clear, especially when interacting in groups. One may see some students taking charge immediately and others following, either by choice or by force. These roles played by students while interacting and communicating is the other major part of leadership education at the elementary level.

Some of the better quality leadership programs are geared towards leadership institutes at the higher levels of education. However, the interviewee felt from personal opinion that since leadership was a new fancy term, it is used too loosely. Many times when leadership is used it is unclear what the course or term means and includes. The interviewee did not feel there were many leadership development programs out in education that were teaching the actual fundamentals leadership. In higher educational institutes the leadership programs are soft disciplines and that is a challenge because everyone has a different definition of what leadership is or means and therefore the term is somewhat nebulous. But a really good leadership program should include what to do and how to be an effective leader at home, at school, and everywhere in between.

The interviewee stays abreast on the current trends in leadership education by attending workshops and seminars. Also, subscribing to leadership specific publications help stay current, as well as, reading a book a week narrowing on subjects such as leadership, management, motivation, sociology of success, and reading biographies of successful people.

As stated before, a major component of the interviewees' elementary program would include self-management. Alongside self-management the teachings of qualities and characteristics relating to good citizenship is necessary. It is very important to also address attitude, effort and humility in the classroom. Reinforcing creativity and innovation is essential as well. Students should be offered more opportunities to use their creativity without boundaries because it promotes self-discovery and builds self-esteem. Activities that include teamwork also help students' practice communicating more effectively and over coming setbacks when they arise. The combinations of these skills and qualities all play into leadership education and should be included thoughtfully in class lessons when possible.

After reviewing the literature, studying the case study, and conducting an interview with a leadership expert/enthusiast, there is a value to leadership education being taught in the school. The literature review illuminated the fact that there are not many leadership programs readily available to students in middle or high school and even fewer studies of leadership being brought into the elementary school.

Character education and life skills programs currently in elementary schools, do address some of the leadership skills appropriate for elementary students, but even these programs are often implemented inconsistently with a whole school approach and little or no time in the actual classroom. In the twenty-first century the belief that leadership behaviors are innate and cannot be learned is becoming less common. It is clear that leadership education as defined in this research project are skills students need to succeed in school, and will help them become good citizens and potential leaders as adults.

Chapter 3 Method

The qualitative research was collected from a review of the literature, a structured interview with a leadership enthusiast who is also a leadership studies professor. Other information was obtained through past academic work and professional training of the researcher. Information also came from conversations with experienced elementary school teachers, and direct personal experience. Graduate courses taken at Dominican University gave opportunities for discussion and additional insight not only into how other teachers viewed leadership education but verified the sense that leadership education was needed in the elementary classroom for the students.

Description

To address the research question: “What leadership skills are appropriate for elementary students?” The researcher examined the research literature on the topic and included questions in the interview with an expert. In order to address the question: “How can Elementary school teachers foster leadership skills?” The researcher examined existing curriculum and a book series for students that can be used to help introduce leadership skills to elementary students.

Access and Permissions

The expert interviewed was provided with a consent form approved by Dominican University of California’s institutional review board that detailed the purpose and goals of my study. The names used in this research was either changed or not used to

protect those individual. All information used from direct personal observations will remain confidential.

Data gathering strategies

The data for this research was gathered through extensive notes taken from direct observations in various classrooms in an elementary school, an analysis of a curriculum guide, an interview of an expert, and my literature review.

The fifth grade curriculum guide and the History-Social Studies Framework for California Public Schools will be evaluated to gain a better understanding of whether these standards include any aspects of leadership. Linking the literature review, interview, observations, research questions and the findings in the California Social Studies Framework for fifth grade, I can measure if leadership education is playing a role in the classroom and how leadership can be easily included in an existing Social Studies curriculum.

I also review a series of children books by Nancy Loewen. The books address how young children can deal with concepts such as trust, respect, courage, fairness, responsibility, and how to be a good citizen. The thought-provoking books foster student participation and engagement. These books are included in construction of a fifth grade curriculum, incorporating leadership education.

Data Analysis

The data analysis combines the review of the curriculum guide, the 5th grade Social Studies State standards, and the leadership education definition provided in this research to create a new curriculum. The curriculum guide examines specific examples of how a teacher can take a certain subject area and apply various activities, projects, and assignments to tie together the subject content and skill/qualities of leadership education. The curriculum addresses how elementary schools can foster leadership education, and address the importance of the leadership component.

Ethical Standards

This project has been reviewed and approved by my faculty advisor at the Dominican University of California, School of Education and Counseling Psychology.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The following is a model of a how a teacher could include leadership education in one specific subject area: fifth grade Social Studies. Using the California State Standards I adapted assignments and projects as examples of how this can be accomplished. It may require some additional planning on the teacher's behalf, but the impact on the students is much greater than the time spent planning. My curriculum model is just one example of how a teacher could improvise, creating new lessons and ways in which can foster leadership education in the classroom. The overall objective of leadership education is teaching and giving students an opportunity to practice: student accountability, responsibility, self-knowledge, courage, collaboration, decision-making skills, taking risks, critical and creative problem solving, and being community conscious.

Grade Five – United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation

The Social Studies course for the year is a vibrant example of how incorporate leadership. The lessons teach the students about an important part of the history in the United States and how a new nation was created. It has leadership written all over it.

1.1 Students describe the major pre-Columbian settlements, including cliff dwellers and pueblo people of the desert Southwest, the American Indians of the Pacific Northwest, the nomadic nations of the Great Plains, and the woodland peoples east of the Mississippi River.

Activity –

After reading about the cliff dwellers and pueblo people, the American Indians, the nomadic nations, and the woodland peoples the students will be given a challenge on adaptability. The students have just spent the past two-week learning and discussing how people have adjusted to the environment around them to survive. The challenge will be written as a rubric so the students are clear on the expectations.

As this will be the first group assignment, the teacher organizes groups. It is up to the group to decide how to divide the tasks. Each group will get a different piece of paper describing where their group is being transported. The group must research their region and figure out how their new environment will affect the clothes worn, homes they live in, food they eat, and transportation. The groups must brainstorm about how they will create their tribe or clan. There are no limitations on how the students can present their information to the class. Students can choose what they feel best represents their strengths and talents.

This activity challenge fosters: collaboration, communication, creative problem solving, decision-making skills, taking risks, self-knowledge, and adaptability.

An Alternative project if time is a constraint is going the “Shoebox” activity. The students will take a shoebox and fill it with items at home that represent them as a person. If personal items do not fit in the shoebox the students may not bring them in, everything

must fit in the box. These items not only represent the individual but, express the student's culture, traditions, customs, and interests. After reading in the History textbook about pre-Columbian settlements, this activity enables the students to share something about their settlement. The shoebox activity can bring the class together and build respect amongst each other.

1.2 Students trace the routes of early explores and describe the early explorations of the Americans.

Activity –

While students are learning about the explorers coming the new world, students will work with a partner to create a matrix to organize and compare information about the explorers. The partners will work together to fill in the chart, but every student will be their own matrix. The chart will include information such as background information on the explorers, their sponsor, motives, dates traveled, route of exploration, and impact. The students will be able to discuss with their partners the different attributes and using the information gathered. The partners will also understand the entrepreneurial characteristics, which will enable the teacher to talk about leadership qualities of the explorers studied. The students will their views about the explorers and their leadership skills in small groups before sharing out to the whole class. Each small group will have to nominate a scribe to keep track of the group's discussion. How the group decides the scribe is up to each group.

This activity fosters: different group dynamics, collaboration, cooperation, communication, and decision-making.

5.5 Students explain the cause of the American Revolution.

5.6 Students understand the course and consequences of the American Revolution.

Activity –

The students will prepare in pre-assigned groups for a debate. The groups will be given a popular influential figure from the time of the American Revolution and must defend the individual's stand on the war, whether they are a Patriot, or a Loyalist, or a Neutralist. The group will be assigned specific roles, but the group grade is determined by the overall performance in the debate.

This activity fosters: responsibility, courage, accountability, communication, collaboration, decision-making, and cooperation. Life does not always throw our way a task or assignment that we either feel comfortable doing or even like doing, but the overall result can and will affect others and a task one receives must be completed well for the betterment of the whole group. It is important that the students know and can adapt, learn to ask for help from other group members, and support each other through the process.

5.7 Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation system.

Activity –

Students will research an individual from this time period and put together a project and/or presentation. Students will have to use outside resources to research their individual. The only criterion is the student must be able to explain in his/her own words why the person they chose could be seen as a leader. Students will work individually and independently, but may use their peers as resources or ask questions. During the work period the students will be able to the computer lab or library to work on their project. The teacher should feel comfortable giving the students a sense of responsibility, trust, and ownership of their work and the time spent on their work. The teacher can rotate around to the different student work areas to answer questions or offer assistance to any student needing extra support.

This assignment fosters: creativity, responsibility, self-knowledge, courage, and honesty.

After each group project have the students individually fill out a student/group evaluation. The only person reviewing these evaluations is the teacher. Assure the students of this confidentiality so the students can be honest on the forms. This will help the teacher see the group dynamic from the student's perspective. The evaluation form can include questions about the contribution that the students put in to the assignment and

a reflection on the over all student/group performance. This is a great way to promote self-reflection, self-empowerment, accountability, and honesty. It is also a nice way for the student to visually see their personal contribution to the group and ultimately the great good. It is a confidence buster or a reminder to more of an active participant in the group.

One sees the majority of the assignments consist of group work or partner work. The reason behind this is because in life, most people are working with others. It is uncommon to find jobs or careers that are done in complete solitaire. Therefore, it is important to mimic what is real in life and in our society. School children spend the majority of the time socializing, so that is why the same behavior is being brought into the classroom environment. The consistent group work allows the students to try and figure out the best ways for them to interact and accomplish the assignments. It is a trail and error process as is leadership and leading others. In a safe environment the students can feel comfortable to take risks and try new skill sets.

To build on the leadership culture in the classroom when there is some extra time in the day the teacher can pull from the children book series written by Nancy Loewen. The structures of the books are set up like a “Dear Abby” newspaper column. However, in Nancy’s books, characters, Tina Truly and Frank B. Wize answer questions from students about topics such as, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility, courage, and being a good citizen. The teacher would read a letter sent into the character. Before reading the

response on a specific issue, the students could have a chance to write a response in their own words in their journal before hearing Tina or Frank's responses. The students could choose to share during the whole class discussion.

This simple writing activity brings awareness on the topics and also brings up social consciousness. If there is constant talk on the topics at hand, the students have a greater chance of applying it in their own lives and making personal connections.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

The objective of this research focused on the purpose of teaching leadership skills to young students, exploring how elementary schools can foster leadership learning, and how to incorporate leadership training into content area. Interwoven major themes throughout the research point out the lack of leadership training in elementary schools. Many of the resources show gaps in primary grade curriculum in respect to a focus on character development, moral and ethical lessons, and life skills.

Making the adaptations and modifications to the current curriculum is possible with additional curriculum planning. Schools have a great opportunity to take the initiative and bring leadership skills into the classrooms. Elementary schools, specifically, can begin integrating leadership into the classroom. In the twenty-first century where theory supports leaders can be trained and are not just born mentality teachers, administrators alike will develop ways in which students can be taught how to practice effective leadership skills.

Limitations/Gaps in the Literature

The lack of leadership programs and curriculums for younger students made the literature review challenging. The lack of resources on this specific research topic could be a result of different terminology used, but based on the definition used comparable information was extremely limited. The resources found were designed for use with

older students and therefore had to be modified to fit elementary age students. As of now, the research indicates there are very few leadership programs in Middle and High school and even fewer in Elementary schools.

Implications for Future Research

It may be beneficial to find and take a deeper look into leadership programs currently offered to elementary students. How are these leadership programs affecting student performance and the school environment as a whole? How are leadership programs implemented and maintained? Other areas for future research could include exploring activities specific to developing leadership skills. What are students' attitudes in relation to learning and using leadership skills in the classroom? Are elementary schools in the Montgomery County Public Schools incorporating leadership programs passed down from the JFK High School? Is this particular school district measuring leadership and the advancement/productivity of leadership skills in the classrooms, and if so, how? Additional study should also be done to determine the effect of leadership skills education in responding to the social needs of elementary school students?

Overall Significance of the Literature

As students are faced with adult-like issues at a younger age, students need the wherewithal and appropriate tools to handle such challenges. Leadership skills can help foster the tools needed. Developing skills and qualities such as: accountability, responsibility, taking risks, critically and creative problem solving, persistence,

adaptability, confidence, self-awareness, collaborative cooperation, and how to become active community members are these essential tools. However, there is a lack in the amount and quality of existing leadership program. Students need a space, such as the classroom, to have opportunities to best develop their leadership skills. The significance of the literature addresses the need for leadership education and lack of these skills being taught in the elementary classroom.

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