Exploring the supports that Contribute to Establishing Elementary Student Leadership Programs

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Abstract

This action research study investigated the current existence of student leadership programs offered at the elementary level and identified supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. A mixed-methods research design was conducted involving BC provincial elementary administrators as well as elementary teachers in School District 69 (Qualicum). Four themes emerged in this study reflecting supports needed for the facilitation of elementary student leadership: (1) vision/culture, (2) administrative supports, (3) 21st century learning, and (4) communication. The findings of this study assert that when administration and teachers support student leadership development through an alignment in vision to include involvement of partnership groups and administrative supports, elementary student leadership programs can be sustainable. This research contributes to the field by providing insights into the supports that can be considered in the facilitation of elementary student leadership programs.
Acknowledgements and Dedication

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Chapter One – Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current existence of student leadership programs offered at the elementary level, and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. A research question was established: How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level? Engaging students in early experiences in leadership creates the foundation for future leadership development (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Creating a definitive plan for effective leadership training and development is essential (Murphy & Reichard, 2011). Through data gathered from the BC Association of Student Activity Advisors (W. Peary, personal communication, October 8, 2013), it was revealed that, of the forty-five registered schools participating in its leadership association, not one elementary school is included in its membership. Further data gathered from the Franklin Covey Institute representing “The Leader In Me” leadership module geared for elementary students, it was found that only four British Columbian schools are actively participating (B. Koning, personal communication, February 22, 2014).

Educators aim to support and encourage young people as they achieve personal, social and academic success and to become leaders in their communities. However, leadership development as a part of every student’s educational training is not happening in the lives of today’s youth (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012). Since it is understood that leadership in adulthood is linked to early leadership experiences in childhood (Gottfried, et al., 2011), it can be
considered a priority to offer to students, whose future is impacted by the educational system, the critical life skills that leadership development and training can provide.

This study aimed to investigate the current existence of student leadership programs offered at the elementary level, and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established in School District 69 in Qualicum, BC. There were three goals in this study. The first goal was to establish *how many* provincial elementary schools were actively participating in the training and development of their students through a formal leadership program. The second goal in this study was to extract what *factors* contributed to the establishment of such leadership programs. The third goal was to determine what *barriers* existed, if any, which prevented elementary schools from active participation in a formalized leadership program. Information from this study may lead to the recommendation of a leadership module for School District 69 (Qualicum) that serves to resolve inconsistencies that may currently exist in the elementary school system, in order to meaningfully develop the leadership capacity of all students as they progress through their school careers.

**Justification of the Study**

Leadership development and training is important for young people entering the work force today (Wagner, 2008). Wagner (2012) has observed that leadership skills including creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and initiative are just a few of the skills required to be established in the work force. Creating opportunities to involve students in early experiences in leadership serves to build their leadership capacity (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Providing elementary students with meaningful opportunities to practice the skills
inherent in an effective leader likely can benefit both themselves and the society in which they will grow, live and contribute.

While student leadership programs which focus on specific leadership traits are readily accessible to students and teachers at the high school and post-secondary level, character building models alone are often the focus for students in the middle to late childhood developmental stage (MacGregor, 2013). Programs such as the “Virtues Project” (Popov, 2000) have an important place in elementary schools, and yet building on these character development programs with a leadership development and training module can be observed to benefit students as they progress through the education system. Leadership programs that teach the actual fundamentals of leadership are scarce (Hess, 2010). Hess (2010), further asserts that there is a paucity of research in the field of elementary student leadership, which indicates further justification to examine this issue.

Establishing a leadership training and development program positively influences students. The results can include improved motivation, a distinct sense of belonging, an improved school climate, and the support of young leaders in fostering change in our world. Motivation, both to achieve academic excellence as well as motivation to lead, is considered a precursor of leadership (Guerin, Oliver, Gottfried, & Gottfried, 2011). Within the context of improved motivation as a cornerstone of leadership development, communication skills also contribute to leadership capacity (Guerin, Oliver, Gottfried, & Gottfried, 2011). An increased sense of belonging among students who lead is an important consideration in identifying the value of student leadership programs. Students are more likely to engage in learning if they feel an attachment to their school (Lee, 2012). A positive school-wide climate is also considered a result of an effective leadership development program (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012).
Fostering change and educational initiatives on the part of school boards, administrative and teaching staff require the collaboration and intense partnership and inclusiveness of all students (Smyth, 2006). If provided opportunities to share in the ownership of learning that is meaningful, within an environment built around care and relationships, effective change and progress can be made (Smyth, 2006).

Leadership capacity can be developed in young people today in order to be ready to contribute as global citizens, both personally and professionally (Wagner, 2008). In order to strengthen these leadership skills, it is important to determine what patterns exist in leadership programs that are sustainably facilitated, and conversely, to ascertain what barriers exist, if any, preventing programs from becoming established. This, in turn, will inform administrators and teachers in the decision making process about how such programs are established, delivered and supported.

This research has potential for significant impact in the manner in which leadership education is delivered to elementary students in School District # 69 (Qualicum). It aims to contribute to the existing knowledge of the benefit of student leadership development and training that currently is lacking in the research field (Hess, 2010). The work presented in the current study revealed patterns and themes that can help to create a clearly defined lense through which this training can be offered. This may contribute to the development of students who possess the skills, through training and experience, to be adequately prepared for their personal and professional future (Greenwald, 2010).
Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question to be explored was: How and why is student leadership development and training happening at the elementary level? It was expected that, through data gathered quantitatively and qualitatively, patterns and themes would emerge identifying the factors that contribute to the establishment of leadership programs, as well as possible barriers preventing other schools from the ability to offer formal leadership training. The researcher of the present study hypothesized that, for an elementary student leadership program to be established, the following factors are considered:

a) Overall philosophy of staff and partnership groups support the ideal that students can benefit through formal leadership training and development.

b) Administrative supports are considered, including school vision, goals, budget, timetable and professional development of staff.

Definition of Terms

Leadership, for the purpose of this study, was to be interpreted in the context of the public education system. Leadership can be defined as an “exercise of social influence” (Murphy & Reichard, 2011, p. 5). A further descriptor of leadership includes “someone who significantly affects and influences other people, their thoughts, their feelings” (Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011). Leadership is an act of influence whereby capacity building and shared goals are achieved (BCPVPA Standards Committee, 2013). Leadership skills include a student’s ability to influence other people in capacities to include creativity and innovation, self-regulation and motivation, conflict resolution and problem solving, critical thinking capacity and communication (Wagner, 2008). Leadership development and training refer to any activity that
enhances the quality of leadership and the advancement or growth of an individual or an organization (Oxford Dictionary of Current English, retrieved Feb. 1, 2014). Training, more specifically, refers to the action of teaching a skill to a person which is geared toward a specific outcome. For the purposes of this study, training was a key component of developing leadership skill in students in the school setting. Elementary level (K-7) within the framework of British Columbia Public Schools, was defined as Kindergarten through (and including) grade 7. The age level and context of leadership training and development were central elements within the focus of this research.

**Brief Overview of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current existence of student leadership programs offered at the elementary level, and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. This study aimed to include teachers and administrators within SD 69 as well as administrators provincially. This action research study used a mixed-methods research design and contained three phases. The first component was a survey conducted, through the use of “Fluidsurvey”, which was delivered to every elementary school administrator in the province of British Columbia. This survey data was gathered to determine statistically, of participating schools, *how many* elementary schools were currently actively involved in the facilitation of a formalized student leadership program. The second component of this study was a paper survey, conducted in SD 69, directed toward elementary classroom teachers, which was intended to provide data to determine patterns and themes that emerged to indicate quantitatively and qualitatively the supports that exist in schools that offer a leadership development and training program for students, and the possible barriers that are present in schools that, at the time the survey was
conducted, did not offer a formalized leadership program. The third component of this study was the contribution of willing participant teachers, locally in SD 69, who participated in an interview aimed to further gather data qualitatively to determine potential supports and barriers that exist in the facilitation of student leadership within their school environment. Quantitative results from the Likert Scale surveys were analyzed with mean scores and the qualitative results from the surveys and the interviews were analyzed and coded for themes.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The review of literature to support elementary student leadership is organized into the first review, which focuses on the theoretical perspectives that influence the understanding of student leadership and the second review, which focuses on empirical research that supports the investigation of the current research study.

Theoretical Perspectives

The need for leaders and leadership is a theme that spans history (Zamahani, Ghorbani, & Rezaei, 2011). Effective leadership is just as important today as it was a century ago. Leadership is not just limited to adults alone. Students within the school age, and specifically at the elementary age can exhibit leadership capacity (Avolio & Vogelgessang, 2011; Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011). Literature on the subject of student leadership at the elementary level is supported by a theoretical foundation for the development of leadership skills in young people in the 21st century school system.

Leadership theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory.

Ruggieri (2009) states, “Among the various approaches to the study of leadership, one of the best known is the transformational framework” (p. 1018). Researchers have found that transformational leadership predicts empowerment, cohesion and group effectiveness (Jung & Sosik, 2002). The transformational leader is one who cultivates change through trust and teamwork (Northouse, 2010). In such a leadership structure, stakeholders are in the transformation together. A student leadership training model can flourish under such leadership. Students involved in a leadership program may feel safe enough to take risks, develop self-confidence and social skills that can cultivate their leadership capacity.
The transformational leader, as a “social architect” (Northouse, 2010), works with individuals to inspire, motivate and then celebrate. Students and staff reach beyond their own self-interest to the interests of the ‘whole’. Transformational leadership is based on four principal factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders are less centered on the task and more oriented toward the development and function of the work group (Ruggieri, 2009). This personalized approach allows students to feel an increased sense of belonging which has the potential to strengthen the efforts of a student leadership training program. Leading ‘from behind’ builds respect between students and teachers that allows for both personal and intellectual growth. Students can experience increased motivation to participate in activities that serve and lead their school and community. The transformational leader, with teamwork as a foundation, aims to celebrate and affirm the accomplishments of aspiring student leaders.

*Student Leadership Theory.*

Researchers assert that leadership capacity can be both taught and developed (Archard, 2011). Early ‘seeds’ of leader developmental experiences create the foundation for future leadership development to build on (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). It is possible that leadership development occurs more readily in childhood and adolescence because the behavior, personality and skills are more malleable, allowing researchers to argue that some skills may be more important to develop early on (Avolio & Vogelgessang, 2011; Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011). Bonstingl (2005), in his research on leadership development, asserts that leadership development, especially for elementary students who are not the ‘stars’ of their school, offers a new and more positive way for students to expand their capacity to think positively about
themselves and others. Student leadership, as a component of an educational model, can provide a meaningful vehicle for such student development.

Social Learning Theory.

Social Learning Theory is focused on change, or learning, over time within the context of a social situation. This learning can take place either through observation or direct instruction (Baker, 2013). There is a correlation between social skill competence and leadership capacity (Welch & Welch, 2005). Social Skill competencies have been cited to be the cornerstone of great leadership (Fullan, 2001). Baker (2013) asserts that social learning enables students to become good communicators, cooperative team members, effective leaders and increases aptitude toward goal setting, achievement and problem solving capacity. Theorists that are well-known within the framework of social learning theory include Bandura, Piaget and Vygotsky. These theorists contribute to the knowledge concerning how students learn and the stages of their development that impact their learning.

Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1971) is a prominent theory that supports students in their social and cognitive development. This learning theory is based on the premise that people learn through the observation of others (Boyce, 2011). The learning environment, an individual’s behaviors and personal beliefs all interact and contribute to the way in which a student can learn (p. 32). Social Learning Theory is driven by three core concepts:

1. People can learn through observation.

2. Internal mental condition (attitudes) are essential to the learning process.

3. Just because something has been learned, it doesn’t necessarily result in changed behavior (Miller, 2002).
Bandura (1971) asserts that the capacity for learning to take place can exist through observation as well as through one’s own perceptions and attitudes within a social milieu (p.40).

Piaget (1972) believes that a person can understand the world and learn from it when looking through their own personal view. He believes that human development and learning occurs when a student adjusts their thinking when receiving different information after a re-examination of their own current personal view. According to Miller (2002), Piaget’s stages of development include:

1. Sensory motor stage: Birth – Two years. Infants understand the world through their physical actions.

2. Preoperational Period: Two – Seven years. Children are able to use symbols to represent objects and events. They understand their world through their point of view.

3. Concrete Operational Period: Seven – Eleven years. Children develop mental acuity through concrete connections. They can solve problems in a logical manner.

4. Formal Operational Period: Eleven – Fifteen years. Mental operations can be applied to verbal and logical statements. Students can think in an abstract manner with increasing confidence.

Vygotsky’s developmental social learning theory asserts that children can learn logical reasoning skills through a social environment (Miller, 2002). He maintains that development is a lifelong process, and that conflict and problem solving provides opportunity for children to learn how to resolve issues and develop socially. Miller (2002) also notes that Vygotsky
describes a child’s “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving” (p. 377).

**Emotional Intelligence.**

The qualities possessed by one who leads can be summarized as “one who is equipped to effect positive social change” (Haas Centre for Public Service, 2014). In order to foster leadership capacity, according to Daniel Goleman (2006), one ought to possess emotional intelligence (EI), which incorporates both social and personal competencies. Goleman describes EI as a prerequisite to becoming an effective leader. In the publications of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2006), Working With Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2006), Primal Leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & Mckee, 2013) and Social Intelligence (Goleman, 2006), a resurgence of awareness of the social-emotional component of leadership as an important element of leadership has occurred. Fullan (2001) asserts that to be an effective leader, one must recognize leadership capacity in others while continually developing one’s own emotional and social faculty. Leadership involves managing and interpreting the emotions of others which suggests that an emotionally intelligent leader can be effective (Hernon & Rossiter, 2006).

These insights into leadership theory, transformational leadership and student leadership theory, in combination with understanding of cognitive, social and emotional development, offers the theoretical foundation aimed to support the knowledge gained in the current study.
Elements of Leadership

Leadership skills.

Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Leadership initially begins with the development of a self-concept and a capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings and ideas (A. Rahim, personal communication, October 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2002) describe five leadership practices comprised of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart.

Leadership is a skill set that informs all aspects of life (Greenwald, 2010). Leadership encompasses introspection, moral acuity, people skills and decision-making acumen (p. 2). Fullan (2001) lists five components of leadership that include maintaining a moral purpose, understanding the change process, the value of relationships (collaboration), knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making (inspiring others). Wagner (2008) describes leadership to include a student’s ability to influence other people in capacities to include creativity and innovation, self-regulation and motivation, conflict resolution and problem solving, critical thinking capacity and communication. Leadership skill can also include demonstrating self-confidence, a caring orientation and an openness/curiosity to their environment (Popper & Mayseless, 2007). Hoerr (2014) asserts that listening is a key element reflective in leadership competency.

All students.

It is appropriate to include all students when considering potential for leadership and not be limited by students perceived as ‘gifted’ (Gonsoulin, Ward, & Figg, 2006). Kouzes and Posner (2002) assert that when a student possesses the motivation and desire to lead along with
the supportive coaching, ‘ordinary’ students can be leaders too. They contend that leadership skill is available to all students rather than an exclusive group. Van Velsor & Wright (2012) maintain that leadership is not simply reserved for a ‘chosen few’ but can be offered in a manner that is inclusive of all students. Rather than viewing students on a distribution curve, Covey (2008) asserts that every child is capable of being a leader. In their studies on leadership in schools, Spillane and Diamond (2007) have found that everyone can share leadership in the school setting which serves to further leadership development and capacity in students. Matthews (2004) states,

A planned and sequential student leadership program is a vital and critical vehicle for the development of young people. Giving them skills in conflict resolution, decision making, communication, social responsibility and problem solving, positively equips them for adolescent relationships, social and environmental navigation and assists them in valuing diversity (p.21).

**Elementary aged students.**

Research in the field of elementary aged children asserts that there is value in developing leadership capacity in young people today (Murphy & Reichard, 2011). Studies suggest that engaging students in early leadership experiences may create the foundation for future leadership development (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Gottfried et al, (2011) assert that leadership capacity in adulthood is linked to early leadership experiences (p.510). Studies further argue for the likelihood that some skills may be more important to develop early on (Avolio & Vogelgessang, 2011; Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011). Similar to the benefits found in early language development, a parallel can be drawn to the capacity for leadership
acquisition at an earlier life stage (Avolio & Vogelgessang, 2011, p. 179). Kretman, (2009) states, “Leadership skills in children can be inculcated in childhood, so it is never too early to start” (Kretman, 2009, p.2). Research maintains that effective leadership development at the earliest stages of a child’s life can have an impact on the student’s motivation in their later years (Gottfried, et al., 2011). However, the reality today is that there are few opportunities for students of the elementary age to develop leadership capacity (Hickman, 1996; Hess, 2010; Van Velsor & Wright, 2012). With the understanding that leader traits are found to be an important predictor of leader emergence (Reichard, et al., 2011), the stage can be clearly set for value to be placed on the development of leadership capacity in elementary aged students today.

**Emergent Themes**

**School Culture.**

An emergent theme within the body of literature aims directly toward the overall improvement in school culture (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012; Manley, 2013; Hall, 2005; Stella, 2013; Poelzer, 2001; Lee-Cox, 2004; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). School culture includes the vision and mission of the school, participation of stakeholders in overall learning and school environment as well as a positive school climate (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Deal & Peterson (2003) assert that having a school with a heart, soul and spirit is directly correlated to productivity, and thus, academic progress.

Poelzer (2001) observed in his study of transformational leadership practices with elementary students that students of this age do wish to be given a role of significance within the culture of the school (p.39). It wasn’t enough for students to be simply led by an adult, but they exhibited an innate desire to serve as a meaningful part of the decision-making process (p.10).
Students that participated in his study were involved in the development and participation and function of an intra-mural program aimed to involve students throughout the school, and they furthered their involvement through assessment and evaluation of the intramural program’s success or failure. Their sense of ownership contributed to the overall school climate through their direct involvement.

In a study of leadership skill development in students of a middle school age, McGee (2014) explored Kouzes & Posner’s (2011) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to determine whether a structured leadership program would prove to be an effective vehicle to strengthen student leadership capacity in that intermediate age group. These five leadership practices were formally adopted by the educational organization (McGee, 2014, p. 10). This commitment by the organization significantly reflects the merit for an aligned vision for the culture of the school and district. McKee’s (2014) findings revealed that consistency in communication of the vision and definition of leadership was cornerstone to the success of the program (McGee, 2014, p. 85). The study also revealed that students desire to be included as a part of the stakeholders in their school and community (McGee, 2014, p. 85). Students who were not necessarily perceived to be high achieving students revealed an aptitude toward effective leadership of their peers. McGee (2014) states, “leadership aptitude and program selection should not be based on academic performance” (p. 86), which suggests that students who care about their school community and culture, regardless of academic achievement, can contribute positively toward the vision and leadership of their school.

Hall (2005) utilized a collaborative approach with grade six and seven students to develop a leadership curriculum intended to positively impact the school culture. He further seized this study as an opportunity to support students toward a pathway to competency and
leadership efficacy, as well as to engage the meaningful involvement of parents. His research methodology involved stakeholders, students, parents, teachers and administration. In his research focus group, Hall discovered that leadership is a complex process involving developing a shared vision amongst all participants. Acknowledging the important contributions that each stakeholder brings to the context of the school was interpreted as an important step in the effort to developing student leadership capacity in his students (Hall, 2005, p. 73). His results demonstrated that all students can be leaders when provided the opportunity for training and development and that cultivating a shared vision, using ‘common, yet powerful language’ (Kouzes and Posner, 2002) through the vehicle of teamwork and trust (Lencioni, 2002), served to support an improvement in student engagement and overall school culture. Hall also concluded that, for student leadership to be effective, it requires the professional organization and support of all staff (Hall, 2005, p. 86).

Manley (2013) utilized a mixed-methods approach to study leadership, communication, cooperation and collaboration in children enrolled in a learning leadership academy, and focused on addressing the problem of lack of leadership skills in children of the elementary age group. The researcher aimed to address this issue through an inductive and collaborative approach to research through the vehicle of a summer leadership academy, whereby thirty-two participants were instructed in skills, provided opportunities to practice these skills and then asked to reflect on their personal practice as a participant in the week long academy. The questions guiding research were: (1) What leadership skills emerge in children when participating in the leadership academy? (2) How did students evaluate their own leadership skills? (3) How did these skills transfer outside of the leadership academy? Through pre and post interviews, observations, video clips, student self-assessments and artifacts generated through the academy, data was
gathered quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the study indicated that students at the elementary age can learn and practice leadership skills and that “leading from behind” (Manley, 2013, p. 17) through transformational leadership practices is an effective manner in which to raise young people into their own leadership capacity. Manley also concluded that involvement of stakeholders in education (parents, students and staff) are essential in the effort to foster educational change.

**Administrative Supports.**

In a study on leadership training at the elementary level in a grade six classroom, Lee-Cox (2004), investigated and identified programs that demonstrated a significant impact on the leadership capacity of students. During the course of a school year, thirty students and twenty-three teachers were involved in the study, which measured the effects of three leadership curriculum designs on the leadership skills of the students involved. This mixed-methods study utilized a survey instrument and incorporated the involvement of stakeholders into the study to include parents and teaching staff. Three themes emerged as a result of this study: (1) teachers who incorporate a recommended leadership curriculum into their program did find positive impact on student leadership capacity, (2) implementation of such curriculum within their program proved to be a challenge due to lack of time and, (3) the entire school must be given time to collaborate on a specific program initiative for it to be deeply effective (Lee-Cox, 2004, p. 53). This conclusion aligned with the findings of Hall’s study (Hall, 2005, p. 86) which reinforces the significance of administrative supports as a consideration in the establishment of student leadership programs.
Through her study at California Lutheran University, the research conducted by Mulick (2009) offered a closer look at the attitudes of teachers and their perception of student leadership potential in elementary aged students. This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory design using constant comparative method and involved fourteen lead teachers in four ‘Title 1’ schools in a Southern California school district. “Title 1” schools are populations that are deemed to be ‘at risk’ due to socioeconomic, language or special education needs and receive particular funding aimed at supporting students for improved achievement (Mulick, 2009, p. 28). This study investigated teachers’ perception of leadership in order to gain understanding of the learning needs, social needs and skill competencies in the development of leadership capacity in students. Mulick gathered transcripts of teachers’ perceptions of leadership potential from interviews, observations, and field notes and these transcripts were coded for themes. The analysis was qualitative and two categories of findings emerged.

Understanding the importance of developing a sense of school community through administrative supports in the development of leadership capacity was deemed to be a strong theme that emerged through participant transcripts (Mulick, 2009, p. 57). The value of the mentoring relationship between experienced leaders and potential leaders and the value of that shared knowledge, as outlined in Michael Fullan’s research (2001), coupled with opportunities for modeling and purposeful interaction, serves to build leadership capacity and self-esteem in students (Mulick, 2009, p. 81). Participants indicated that beginning to develop leadership capacity beyond grade 4 appears, based on their observations, to be too late, asserting that leadership development and acquisition can begin to be developed from an early age (Mulick, 2009, p. 82). Supporting this through a timetable designed to support staff and student mentorship and training emerged as a theme throughout this study. One participant asked a valid
question during her interview which provides much food for thought on the notion of leadership acquisition, asking, “How can you make the right choice if you don’t know what the right choice looks like?” (Mulick, 2009, p. 88).

Mulick (2009) further states,

> It is imperative that we define leadership potential in its emergent form so that the opportunity for acquisition of leadership skills is equitable across all social classes and we do not marginalize the underprivileged populations (p. 88).

**21st century Learning.**

21st century learning, which can include fostering the development of creativity, innovation, problem solving and team building skills, emerged thematically in the literature (Covey, 2008; Manley, 2013; Hall, 2005; Stella, 2013; Lee-Cox, 2004; Ullestaad, 2009; Wagner, 2012). Combined with conclusions that aligned with administrative supports, Mulick’s study (2009) further revealed themes related to the development of 21st century learning for students. The importance of communication skills as a precursor to solid leadership capacity emerged as a priority (Mulick, 2009, p. 49). Communication, as defined by Goleman (2006) in his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence,* was defined as not only a set of observable skills but also as personal competencies such as self awareness, self regulation, good listening and motivation. Maintaining a unique vision for the school was deemed to be imperative for meaningful leadership acquisition (Mulick, 2009, p. 51). Mulick asserts that, “vision involves forward thinking, and this, without question, is a characteristic of adult leadership in its finest form” (Mulick, 2009, p. 52). Understanding what leadership was not was repeatedly underscored in transcripts, reflecting that leadership is not synonymous with power or ‘above others’ thinking
(Mulick, 2009, p. 53). A significant stakeholder in developing leadership capacity was found to be the parents, who are the first contact with students to experience core values and character traits that form the foundation for cultivating leaders (Mulick, 2009, p. 58).

The research conducted by Ullestaad (2009) at Regis University suggested strategies for development of leadership in young people of an elementary age. With the assumption made that leadership development is important, Ullestaad went on to define leadership, identify qualities of a leader, suggested a process by which to develop a leader and asserted suggested impacts of early leadership development and training on students and their communities.

Defining successful leadership as beginning with a vision — a big picture that reflects a group’s shared purpose (Leshnower, 2008), Ullestaad (2009), through the use of qualitative data, gathered qualities of a leader as seen through the eyes of elementary aged children as supported through the literature of O’Brien & Kohlmeier (2003). These qualities included: (a) staying true to ideals, beliefs; (b) inspiring others; (c) fostering creativity and inventiveness; (d) offering unique ideas and perspective; (e) trustworthiness and perseverance; (f) critical thinking; and (g) communication skills. Ullestaad (2009) suggested a process to develop young leaders through the facilitation of a school council, participation in professional development, directly through curriculum, and through involvement in classroom committees and student forums. She emphasized the idea asserted by O’Brien & Kohlmeier (2003) that students, during direct instructional time, analyze ‘good’ leaders in order to recognize good leadership skills for themselves (p. 163).

Although the limitations to Ullestaad’s (2009) efforts include the recognition that there were only three participants involved in this study, the findings of this work offer an important
contribution to advancing knowledge in the area of student leadership. This knowledge includes the value of the administration of regular and essential training sessions of student participants in the development of leadership capacity (Ullestaad, 2009, p. 21) and the understanding that, as our social culture is changing, schools can continue to evolve and adapt to teach students leadership skills that increase their potential to be a positive and productive 21st century global citizen.

Stella (2013) utilized a mixed-methods approach to analyze the effects of a formalized leadership program on both students and staff in a selected elementary school. Staff and students were invited to respond to a five-point Likert survey, focus-group interviews were conducted and student test data were included in order to determine what effects, if any, would the elementary leadership program, Leader in Me, have on the overall culture of the school, following a three year commitment to professional staff training, implementation and review. The quantitative data demonstrated an improvement in literacy and numeracy achievements in students consistent with the implementation of the program. The study revealed, through qualitative data, that implementation of the program was not achieved with 100% consistency due to professional autonomy within the classrooms, noting that this leadership program does not provide prescribed lesson plans, but rather a lens to infuse into all instructional practices (p. 94).

The strongest conclusion from this study reflected the positive impact on school culture, school climate, student motivation and student-led conflict resolution and teambuilding (Stella, 2013, p. 96). Qualitative data reflected that the sense of staff and student commitment toward a supportive school environment were observed. Students demonstrated increased respect and acceptance of others, an increased aptitude for leadership and self-efficacy throughout this three-year study (Stella, 2013, p. 96). The researcher observed that students responded to this
leadership program with a demonstrated improvement in behaviors, facilitating actions with peers and in the development of communication skills (Stella, 2013, p. 96).

This study also revealed potential barriers in the implementation of a student leadership development program. The researcher discovered that communication was the largest barrier to implementation (Stella, 2013, p. 94), indicating the value for alignment of vision between all stakeholders within the organization. The second barrier reflected in this study was the limitation of time. Through interview data, it was indicated that professionals required significant time to absorb the framework of the program prior to implementation for students (Stella, 2013, p. 94). Further data indicated that the parent group, an important stakeholder in fostering educational change initiatives, required time to raise awareness and support for this reform to be effectively administered.

This research resulted in recommendations for future implementation of leadership programs that can serve to contribute to the body of knowledge intended in the current research study. Stella (2013) concluded that measures should be in place for successful launch of any program. Focus-group interviews support the findings that indicate that all staff, not just teachers, should be trained in order to improve consistency in implementation and support of an educational initiative. Stella (2013) states, “the lines of communication among all stakeholders should be open in order for any program or change in culture to occur” (p. 98).

This research demonstrated that a leadership program, if presented in a context that is supportive, and administered thoughtfully and inclusively, has the potential to “equip students with the self-confidence and the skills to be prepared for the workplace and society” (Stella, 2013, p. 98). Sorenson (1996) elaborated on Dewey’s (1916) foundation,
Since every person is both a leader and a follower in life, the opportunities to learn about, develop, and reflect upon leadership and followership in the context of small, naturally occurring groups, should be at the core of our educational system. Schools are the natural laboratories for examining and fostering strong leadership, followership, group problem solving, and citizenship (p. 3).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter served to guide the purpose, methodology, instrumentation and analysis of the current study. The examination into student leadership and the significance and value in developing elementary student leaders, as well as the acute awareness of the current paucity of research in this field deepened the justification for further research in this area. Information gained from the review of literature was used to organize the findings of the current study. Survey Likert statements (see Appendices A and B) as well as interview questions (see Appendix C) were designed to reflect literature findings and to serve to support the research question. The current study aimed to advance the existing body of knowledge that contributes to the understanding of how and why student leadership development and training at the elementary level can be offered and meaningfully facilitated.
Chapter Three – Procedures and Methods

Description of the Research Design

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the current existence of student leadership programs offered provincially at the elementary level and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. This study followed a mixed-methods design using the survey instrument (Appendices A and B) and interviews (Appendix C) in order to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The participation in the surveys was both voluntary and anonymous with confidentiality ensured for interview participants. The survey participants included elementary school administrators provincially (Appendix A) and elementary teachers in School District 69 (Qualicum) (Appendix B). Interview participants included teachers in SD 69 who voluntarily opted for the interview after completion of the survey. Data analysis was performed on the responses to the surveys and interview questions and results were organized into quantitative and qualitative results and qualitative interpretations.

Description of the Sample

The participants for this study included two sample groups: provincial elementary school administrators, as well as elementary teachers in School District 69. The principal researcher chose these two sample groups in order to situate School District 69, the district in which the principal researcher is employed as an educator, into the provincial framework for the purposes of this study. The first sample, the administrative sample with an available population of over 1000 provincial elementary school administrators, was included to represent elementary schools provincially in order to identify current trends in elementary student leadership development and
training. Surveys were electronically circulated provincially (see Appendix D), through “Fluidsurveys”, with 23 schools represented in survey results, resulting in a 2.3% return rate.

The second sample group included teachers in SD 69. Qualicum school district is a geographically broad, yet small district, and includes schools from Nanoose Bay to Bowser, employing, according to the seniority list accessed on the private district portal site, 278 teachers. Of this seniority list, approximately 133 teachers are employed in elementary schools. Teachers who participated live in the district region, which includes Nanaimo, Parksville, Qualicum, Port Alberni and Courtenay. The local elementary teacher participants served as a convenient sample. Paper surveys were distributed in SD 69 to all contract teachers teaching the elementary level with an invitation to participate (Appendix E). Of the total elementary teachers, 38 teachers responded for a return rate of 29%, which constituted a good sample size. Four elementary school teachers voluntarily participated in the interview portion of the study, which represented 11% of the respondents to further validate the study. These interviews were conducted after school in a secure location of their choosing to maximize internal validity and confidentiality was guaranteed through the securing of interview transcripts in a locked cabinet located in the principal researcher’s home office.

**Description of the instruments used**

Instrumentation included a 15 statement survey for administrators provincially (Appendix A), a 13 statement survey directed toward teachers within SD 69 (Appendix B), and an interview questionnaire (Appendix C) all of which were written by the primary researcher for the purposes of the present study. The survey instrument was chosen as a concise research tool that would maximize data with minimal impact on professionals, in the hope of a strong return rate to
benefit the research study. It utilized a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, strongly agree) that was completed by the respondents with an opportunity at the conclusion of the survey to comment qualitatively on any aspect of elementary student leadership that they felt would benefit the study. Current research in the field of student leadership guided the formation of survey statements and the interview questions. The work of Murphy & Reichard (2011) and Guerrin, Gottfried & Gottfried (2011) drew attention to the value surrounding early leadership experiences and training that lead to the building of leadership capacity. The research conducted by Lee-Cox (2004) suggested that stakeholders and their partnership in the facilitation of student leadership programs can be pivotal to the strength of a program. Archard (2011) addressed the ability and aptitude of leadership skill and capacity as something that can be taught. Prior to the study, the author of the present study field tested the survey statements with eight teachers outside of SD 69 for the purpose of identifying and removing any ambiguous aspects of the Likert scale statements to ensure reliability and validity of the research instruments.

Instrumentation also included an interview option for participating teachers of the initial teacher survey. This 12 question interview instrument (Appendix C) was written by the primary researcher, using similar questions related to the survey statements that were grounded in current research in the field, to gather further qualitative data about perceived supports or barriers that may exist in relation to elementary student leadership in their professional experience. Using these questions, the researcher hoped to develop a clearer picture about teachers’ perceptions on elementary student leadership drawn through their own experiences. This interview instrument was field tested with eight teachers outside of SD 69 for the purpose of identifying and removing any ambiguous words or phrases in order to ensure reliability and validity of the research.
instrument. Participants signed a consent form (Appendix F) outlining that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw their participation at any point in the study, and that their responses and participation would remain confidential. Answers to these questions were coded for themes and served to support the triangulation of data gathered in this research study.

The quantitative and qualitative data was collected from respondents and analyzed for themes. Although the survey instrumentation gathered quantitative data, due to the participation limitation, it should be considered as descriptive statistics for the purposes of this study. Several themes emerged as a result of this study and the findings are presented in chapter four and discussed in chapter five.

**Explanation of the procedures followed**

The procedures for this research study involved survey gathering and interview collection, transcription and storage. Permission to conduct the research was first granted by the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (REB), followed by provincial school district elementary administrators who were contacted via email through their professional organization, BC Principals and Vice Principals Association (Appendix D), and finally permission locally was granted by school administration in SD #69. All necessary documents, including approval letters, consent forms, an overview of the study and the link to the survey were provided electronically through the district web-mail server to school administrators prior to the initiation of the research. The research study began in October 2014 and was carried out for four weeks. The completion of the provincial survey and the teacher survey was the consent form, so no consent form was required to be attached to the survey instruments. The provincial electronic survey was linked to an “Invitation to Participate” document (Appendix G) email that
was forwarded to all district elementary administrators. A monthly e-newsletter distributed by the Provincial Administrators’ Association (BCPVPA) also included a link connecting administrators to the survey instrument. A lead teacher, with permission of administrators in all elementary schools in SD#69 was contacted by phone and invited to support the research through the reading of a script (Appendix H) at the next staff meeting and was asked to distribute the paper surveys to be completed by participating teachers. The lead teacher provided an envelope labeled “Elementary Student Leadership Study” that was left in the office for staff to anonymously deposit their surveys once completed. It was likely that the surveys were completed at school during a break before or after school, after being distributed mid-week, in the likelihood that a mid-week introduction may increase participation. Consideration was also made regarding the timeline for the research to take place, during a period in the school year when classrooms were more settled, when reports were not being written and any other increased demands were not being placed on administrators or teaching staff. The present researcher then gathered the survey data in two steps: the provincial survey data from Fluidsurveys was saved on a password-protected computer and the SD#69 paper survey data gathered via the envelopes four weeks after distribution. By the selection of a lead teacher to administer the survey, principals did not take on that role, which strengthens internal validity of the instrument for the purposes of this research.

The interview phase of the study included email or telephone contact to the present researcher, where an in-person interview was arranged. The consent form for the interview (Appendix F) was emailed to the participant prior to the conducting of the interview. Once the consent form was completed, the interview was conducted at a secure location of the participant’s choosing, the script was read at the beginning of the interview (Appendix I), and the
transcript was recorded on a voice recorder device and then transcribed into a word document typed onto a password-protected computer. This computer generated transcript was secured in locked storage throughout the duration of the research.

The safety and security of data gathered during this study was carefully considered. Data gathered electronically from Fluidsurveys was accessed by a password-protected account on a password-protected computer throughout the duration of the study. At the conclusion of the data collection, all data, including electronic data, paper data, interview recordings and interview transcripts, were stored on a portable storage device, secured with password protection and was kept in a locked storage until being destroyed in May 2016.

**Discussion of validity and reliability**

The purpose of this research was to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. The research question asked: *How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level?* External validity was strengthened through the study’s effort to include both a provincial and local perspective, which was gathered through survey and interview methods. In order to ensure internal consistency and validity of the survey instrument, common operational definitions of leadership, leadership skill, and leadership development and training were clarified at the beginning of the survey instruments. Statements included in the survey instrument as well as interview questions were based on current literature. The author of the current study received peer-editing to ensure the survey and interview questions utilized convergent and divergent statements, and were clearly measuring student elementary leadership supports in order to support the intention of this research. In addition, factors including clarity of print, size of type,
and appropriateness of language were considered. The survey and interview data was gathered in a timely manner, with the data collector bias minimalized by asking for only the information needed for the study, and through the facilitation of the study using a lead teacher in each elementary school. These research instruments were used to gather data and to aid in drawing themes and conclusions from the responding results in order to communicate supports that are needed to facilitate elementary student leadership programming.

Although efforts were made to minimize threats to validity, limitations include researcher bias, provincial response rates resulting in limited generalizability, as well as location threats. In acknowledgement of researcher bias pertaining to the importance of student leadership, a qualitative opportunity to reflect on their perception of student leadership was provided for all respondents. Provincial response was limited due to the use of an on-line survey. Due to the inclusion of all elementary schools, surveys could not be completed at exactly the same time, nor in the same location. In considering these threats, using scripts to introduce surveys, providing opportunities for participants to respond openly, and taking necessary precautions to avoid busy times, some of these threats were reduced.

**Description and justification of the statistical techniques and other methodological analysis**

The researcher’s study intended to collect data to help determine how and why student leadership development and training programs were offered at the elementary level. This researcher carefully organized the survey data and analyzed it to identify emerging themes. The interview data was gathered to further triangulate the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of this present research. Quantitative survey data was displayed on graphs and tables. Qualitative
statements were coded and analyzed through the emergent themes and displayed in frequency graphs. Emergent themes between both data were identified.

The data was collected to aid the primary researcher in drawing meaningful conclusions that may lead to a clearer analysis of elementary student leadership programs. This information was shared with administrative staff in SD 69 to contribute to the knowledge of supports that can be put into place in order to facilitate an elementary student leadership model that is beneficial to students.
Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis

The findings of this action research study aimed to answer the question: *How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level?* This study used a mixed-methods research design and contained three phases. The first component was an administrator survey delivered to every elementary school administrator in the province of British Columbia, with the intention to determine *how many* elementary schools were currently actively involved in the facilitation of a formalized student leadership program and to determine what supports were present. The second component of this study was a paper survey, conducted in SD 69, directed toward elementary classroom teachers, intended to provide data to determine patterns and themes that emerged to indicate quantitatively and qualitatively the supports that exist in schools that offer a leadership development and training program for students. The third component of this study involved willing participant teachers in SD 69 who participated in an interview aimed to further gather data qualitatively to indicate supports and potential barriers to the facilitation of student leadership programs. Provincially, a total of 23 administrators participated in the study, indicating a 2.3% response rate with a geographical representation of 27% of the total school districts in British Columbia (Appendix J). Of the 133 elementary teachers in SD 69, 38 teachers participated in the study, indicating a 29% response rate, with a further 11% of teacher respondents willing to participate in the interview portion to further validate the study. The data from this research has the possibility of providing evidence to inform teachers and district administration in SD 69 as to *how* and *why* student leadership can be facilitated at the elementary level.
Provincial Elementary Administrative Participation

The current researcher gathered information from administrator participants provincially through an on-line survey using Fluid Surveys. There were 16 school districts represented in the administrative portion of the research study, as shown in the British Columbia School Districts map (BC Statistics, 2008) (Appendix J). For the purposes of this current study, the participating districts were divided regionally into six categories: Vancouver Island Region, Metro/Coast Region, Northeast Region, Northwest Region, Okanagan Region and Kootenay Region. The only provincial region not represented in this study is the Fraser Valley region, due to lack of administrative participants.

Figure 4.1 School District Administrative Participation by region. (N = 23)

In order to answer the research question, survey questions were grouped into two categories: (1) How student leadership is offered at the elementary level and (2) Why student leadership is offered at the elementary level. Respondents were invited to evaluate survey questions on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Unsure (3),
Disagree (2) and Strongly disagree (1). Respondents could elaborate on their answers through an open-ended response at the end of the survey.

Of participating school district administrators, 60.9% indicated that student leadership development and training was currently offered at the elementary level, with 26% indicating that it is currently not in existence and a further 13% of administrators indicating that they were unsure of the existence of student leadership programming in their school.

Figure 4.2 illustrates administrative responses to questions outlining why student leadership is offered. Provincial administrative responses were compared specifically with SD 69 administrative responses in order to support the purpose of this present study. The overall mean scores reflected carry a potential mean range from 1-5. The actual mean scores ranged from 2.5 – 5. It was observed that the provincial mean scores reflect a strong belief in elementary aged student leadership development capability (as seen in Question 12) as well as support the belief that all students are capable of demonstrating leadership (as seen in Question 13). SD 69 administrative participants indicated slight differences in response to certain survey questions. SD69 administrators indicated with a mean score of 4.5 (agree) the availability of partnership groups in the support of student leadership development, as compared to 3.48 (unsure) at the provincial level (as seen in Question 7). SD 69 administrative participants indicated with a mean score of 3.0 (unsure) when asked if student leadership was a priority at their school, compared with a mean score of 3.65 from provincial administrative respondents (as seen in question 2).
Figure 4.2 Provincial and SD 69 respondent mean scores in response to why elementary leadership is offered. Provincial Respondents, N = 23. SD 69 Respondents, N = 2.

Figure 4.3 illustrates administrative responses to survey questions outlining how student leadership development and training is offered at the elementary level. The overall mean scores reflected carry a potential mean range from 1-5. The actual mean scores ranged from 1.5 – 4.5. It was observed that respondents indicated a mean score of 2 (disagree) in response to district funding available to support leadership programs (as seen in Question 6), while indicating with a mean score of 3.48 (unsure) the availability of partnership groups and Parent Advisory Councils to contribute both time and resources toward the development of student leaders (as indicated in question 7 and 8). SD 69 administrators demonstrated a mean score of 4.5(agree) in response to question 7, indicating availability of partnership groups within SD 69 compared with the provincial level. As indicated in Figure 4.3, administrators on both a provincial level as well as within SD 69 indicate with a mean score of 1.5 and 2 (disagree) in relation to district funding
available to support student leadership as well as a mean score of 2.5 and 2.61 (disagree) in relation to parent participation in the development of student leaders (as seen in question 6 and 9).

![Bar chart]

**Figure 4.3** Provincial and SD 69 Administrative respondent mean scores in response to how elementary leadership is offered. Provincial, N = 23. SD69, N = 2.

The final method of administrative data collection was through the use of an open ended question at the end of the survey. The qualitative data collected from the open ended question invited participants to provide further comments in relation to how and why student leadership development and training is offered at the elementary level. Of the 23 administrative participants, 13 offered further comments. These qualitative statements were collected and were represented in a pictoral word art form known as a Wordle and shown here as Figure 4.4. The researcher chose to take out the common English words such as (and, the, and I) so that the
themes would appear evident, and the more frequently a word was mentioned the larger it appears in the Figure.

Figure 4.4 shows the themes that emerged with administrators provincially. When viewing the data of Figure 4.4, themes that emerged included district, supports, activities, projects, opportunities, program, successful and goals. It was observed that aboriginal student needs emerged as an unexpected learning outcome in this analysis.
School District 69 Teacher Participation

The current researcher gathered information from teacher participants within SD 69 through the use of a paper survey. There were 38 participants in this portion of the study, reflecting a 29% response rate. In order to answer the research question, survey questions were similarly grouped into two categories: (1) How student leadership is offered at the elementary level and (2) Why student leadership is offered at the elementary level. Respondents were invited to rate survey questions on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Unsure (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly disagree (1). Participants could elaborate on their answers through an open-ended response at the end of the survey.

Of participating SD 69 teachers, 38.5% indicated that student leadership and training was currently offered at the elementary level, with 41% indicating that it is currently not in existence and a further 20% of teachers indicating that they were unsure of the existence of student leadership programming in their school.

Figure 4.5 illustrates teacher responses in comparison with both SD 69 administrative and provincial administrative responses in order to reflect both a local and provincial perspective for data analysis. The overall mean scores reflected carry a potential mean range from 1-5. The actual mean scores ranged from 2.5 – 5. The survey statements outlining why student leadership is offered at the elementary level demonstrate a slight difference between administrative mean scores and teacher mean scores for certain survey questions, with other survey questions indicating relatively similar responses. When asked if their school supports the fundamental belief that elementary students are capable of leadership, administrators agreed, while teacher respondents were unsure (as indicated in question 13). The current researcher also noted a
difference of 1.2 between SD 69 administration and teachers suggesting partnership groups support student leadership (as indicated in question 7). When asked if they believe that students are capable of leadership capacity, teachers and administrators demonstrated agreement (as indicated in question 12).

Figure 4.5 Provincial and SD 69 administrative participants compared with SD 69 Elementary Teachers Mean scores in response to why elementary leadership is offered. Provincial Respondents, N = 23. SD 69 Respondents, N = 2. SD 69 Teacher Respondents, N = 38.

Figure 4.6 illustrates teacher survey responses in comparison with both SD 69 administrative and provincial administrative responses outlining how student leadership is offered at the elementary level. The overall mean scores shown carry a potential mean range from 1-5. The actual mean scores ranged from 1.5 – 4.5. When asked if there was a teacher ‘facilitator’ for student leadership, the mean range was between 3.15 and 3.5 (unsure) (as seen in Question 3). Teachers indicated with a mean score of 2.49 (disagree) that staffing time is
provided for a facilitator of student leadership (as seen in question 4). When asked if there was district funding for leadership development, teacher respondents indicated a response of 2.62 (unsure) while administrative respondents disagreed (as indicated in question 6).

Figure 4.6 Provincial and SD 69 administrative participants compared with SD 69 Elementary Teachers Mean scores in response to how elementary leadership is offered. Provincial Respondents, N = 23. SD 69 Respondents, N = 2. SD 69 Teacher Respondents, N = 38.

The final method of teacher survey data collection was through the use of an open ended question at the end of the survey. The qualitative data collected from the open ended question invited participants to provide further comments in relation to how and why student leadership development and training is offered at the elementary level. Of the 38 teacher participants, 23 offered further comments. These qualitative statements were collected and were represented in a pictoral word art form known as a Wordle and shown here as Figure 4.7. The researcher chose
to take out the common English words such as (and, the, and I) so that the themes would appear evident, and the more frequently a word was mentioned the larger it appears in the Figure.

Figure 4.7 shows the themes that emerged with teachers in SD69. When viewing the data of Figure 4.7, themes that emerged included developing, growth, priority, culture, elective and unsure. Common themes between administrative survey respondents and teacher respondents included district, supports, opportunities and program. Reconfiguration was noted as an unexpected outcome that emerged in this analysis.
In analyzing the quantitative data, the current researcher isolated survey respondents who indicated that there was a formal leadership program offered at their school from those who indicated that there was no formal leadership program offered at their school. Figures 4.8 – 4.11 illustrate this comparative analysis with a focus on questions outlining ‘why’ student leadership is offered at the elementary level. When comparing respondents who indicate that there ‘is’ a formal leadership program within their school from those respondents who indicate that there ‘is not’ a formal leadership program within their school, some emergent themes were noted. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 73.3% of administrative respondents as well as 78.6% of teacher respondents indicated it was a priority. Where student leadership is not currently offered, only 50% of administrative respondents and 13.3% of teacher respondents indicated that it was a priority, as shown in figure 4.8. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 66.7% of administrative respondents as well as 42.9% of teacher respondents indicated partnership groups were available to support student leadership development. Where student leadership is not currently offered, only 33.3% of administrative and teacher respondents indicated that partnership groups were available to support student leadership development, as shown in figure 4.9.
Figure 4.8 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).

Figure 4.9 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).
Figure 4.10 and 4.11 demonstrate further comparative analysis between schools that currently offer student leadership from schools that currently do not. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 46.7% of administrative respondents as well as 42.9% of teacher respondents indicated it was mentioned in the school wide goals. Where student leadership is not currently offered, only 33.3% of administrative respondents and 0% of teacher respondents indicated that it was a priority, as shown in figure 4.10. 60% of teacher respondents indicated they were ‘unsure’ if student leadership was articulated in school wide goals. Question 13 asked if the school supports the belief that all students are capable of demonstrating leadership. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 100% of administrative respondents as well as 85.7% of teacher respondents indicated that the school supports the belief that all students are capable. Where student leadership is not currently offered, only 66.7% of administrative respondents and 28.6% of teacher respondents indicated that the school supports the belief that all students are capable, as shown in figure 4.11. 50% of these teacher respondents indicated they were unsure if the school supports the belief that all students are capable of student leadership capacity.
Figure 4.10 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).

Figure 4.11 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).
Figures 4.12 and 4.13 illustrate this comparative analysis with a focus on questions outlining ‘how’ student leadership is offered at the elementary level. When comparing respondents who indicate that there ‘is’ a formal leadership program within their school from those respondents who indicate that there ‘is not’ a formal leadership program within their school, some emergent themes were noted. Question 3 asked survey respondents if there was a staff member identifiable as ‘facilitator’ of student leadership. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 80% of administrative respondents as well as 85.5% of teacher respondents indicated there was a staff member identifiable as ‘facilitator’. Where student leadership is not currently offered, only 16.7% of administrative respondents and 13.3% of teacher respondents indicated that there was a staff member identifiable as ‘facilitator’, as shown in figure 4.12. Question 4 asked survey respondents if there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 26.7% of administrative respondents as well as 35.7% of teacher respondents indicated there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’. Where student leadership is not currently offered, 0% of administrative respondents and only 6.7% of teacher respondents indicated that there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’, as shown in figure 4.13.
Figure 4.12 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).

Figure 4.13 Comparative analyses between schools that currently offer student leadership and schools that currently do not offer student leadership. Administrative respondents (N=23). Teacher respondents (N=38).
School District 69 Teacher Interview Participation

The current researcher gathered qualitative information from teacher participants within SD 69 through interviews that were conducted with 4 volunteer participants following the completion of the teacher survey portion of the study. Interview questions considering ‘how’ and ‘why’ student leadership is offered within their school were asked that were designed and supported through the review of the literature.

These qualitative interview statements were collected and recorded and were represented in a pictoral word art form known as a Wordle and shown here as Figure 4.14. The researcher chose to take out the common English words such as (and, the, and I) so that the themes would appear evident, and the more frequently a word was mentioned the larger it appears in the Figure.

Figure 4.14 shows the themes that emerged with teacher interview participants qualitatively. When viewing the data of Figure 4.14, themes that emerged included community, barrier, important, time, capable, skills, district, supports, activities, projects, opportunities, program, successful and goals. Common themes between administrative, teacher and interview participants included opportunities, support, district and program.
Interview data was combined with qualitative responses from both administrative and teacher surveys and coded for themes. Responses were cited directly and categorized according to four themes: (1) Vision/Culture, (2) Administrative Supports, (3) 21st Century Learning, and (4) Communication. A fifth ‘unexpected learning’ category was established and categorized as (5) Aboriginal Community. These selected quotes are subject to researcher bias and are shown as Table 4.15.
Table 4.15

*Qualitative data categorized by top four themes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Qualitative response direct quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme #1:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vision/Culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Administrative respondent</td>
<td>Student Leadership has been priority for me as a teacher and an administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: I believe leadership capacity exists in nearly all elementary students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: As a district, a culture and a cohesive body, we collectively need to define this term IF we value it for children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Our school is essentially a new school. It is the result of a reconfiguration in our district. We are in the beginning stages of developing growth plans and school goals. I see the value of leadership programs and am hopeful that part of the vision for creating and nurturing a healthy school culture will include leadership opportunities for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: I strongly support student leadership, but at this time do not know what this school will provide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Student leadership is valuable in our school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: At new school; not sure of growth plan. I think in the past this has been a priority, but haven’t really heard much about it this year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I: I think elementary age students are capable of developing leadership capacity. It has to be geared to their age level and what they are capable of doing. It has to be geared to them to enable them to be successful at it. Otherwise they won’t do it. They have to be able to distinguish between being a leader and aggressive in their leadership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: I believe that kids want to be leaders, I believe they have lots of great ideas, and I believe that kids are really great at listening to other kids and I believe kids are a lot more capable than people give them credit for.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: It has to be valued in the school. Children who are being trained to be leaders have got to understand that they are being trained to be leaders. Ideally, there should be a leadership mentor, an adult, and there should be time offered for that adult to run a successful program in the regular timetable. It should be part of the culture, which is generic, but it should be promoted, celebrated and put on display.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Theme #2: Administrative Supports

A: Community service clubs has been willing to be supportive.
A: Training and supports have to be in place for them to be successful.
A: Leadership development is most successful when many teachers get involved.
A: There are increasing supports and opportunities for student leadership in a "gradual/guided release of responsibility" framework. A lot more supported modelling for our younger learners.
A: I have observed the building of leadership qualities in students at risk to be transformative in our school setting.
A: We have had to get creative with budgeting dollars to ensure that student leadership is built into our system in a holistic manner.
T: Leadership is not a priority at our school at this time, but I would love to see it happen immediately.
I: It needs to be a class. It needs to be factored into the timetable. It needs to be not the type of thing that is offered off the side of the desk. It has to be valued by the school and therefore timetabled. As an elective is a good way to do it. We train them and give them small responsibilities.
I: I would think it has to be done by a leader in the school...someone in the school has to take responsibility for the program to take the leaders along. Electives would work well in our situation with the older kids. Coaching as an example to model how leadership can be developed in a school.

### Theme #3: 21st Century Learning

A: Older learners take on projects that have international connections.
A: {Leadership experience} has participants expand the definition of successful student from purely academic activities to citizenship participation. This in turn is what many high level universities are looking for with applicants into what were traditionally purely academic entrance requirements.
I: Members of the community could support student leadership by providing opportunities for kids to do volunteer work, tour facilities, present or engage students in conversations about the needs that exist within their community, and how students can make a difference. For example, {Community member} came in to talk about the community cupboard, it gave students an idea of the needs that exist in the community and how they can help, and how that service works.
I: I think it is important to have in a school, it is important to promote and provide leadership opportunities within a school because it helps build character and many of the skills that employers would want in the work force are going to come from leadership experiences.

### Theme #4: Communication:

T: I strongly support student leadership, but at this time do not know what this school will provide

T: I am at a very new school just converted to elementary. I am not completely sure of where we are going leadership wise. We are just developing our school culture

T: Leadership seems to be limited to intermediate teachers and students. It is not an inclusive process

### Unexpected Learning:

A: My feedback is contextualized based on leadership opportunities for Indigenous elementary students. I believe the talk is out there but there is limited action in creating leadership opportunities for Aboriginal students. Sadly, in my experience, this demographic is often looked at through a 'deficit' lens rather than a 'strength' lens. Enhancement Agreement goals and $ and district goals often target leadership opportunities for indigenous elementary students but the action on the ground remains sporadic and limited. Rather than creating a blended, inclusive leadership group, Aboriginal students are still often isolated together or targeted separately. This perpetuates isolation, stigmas and feelings of 'other'

When observing the combined qualitative data of all three components of the study, the current researcher found themes that emerged to support the objectives of the current study. The qualitative data from all three components of this study which support the factors that contributed to the establishment of leadership programs as well as barriers were observed within each emergent theme.

The qualitative data that aligned with the school vision and culture was observed. One administrative respondent indicated, “It has to be valued in the school”, while another participant stated, “It should be part of the school culture”. Another respondent indicated, “Leadership is not a priority at our school at this time, but I would love to see it happen.” An interview participant observed,
Our school is essentially a new school. It is the result of reconfiguration in our district. We are in the beginning stages of developing growth plans and school goals. I see the value of leadership programs and am hopeful that part of the vision for creating and nurturing a healthy school culture will include leadership opportunities for students.

The qualitative data that aligned with administrative supports was observed. One respondent asserted, “Training and supports have to be in place for [students] to be successful.” Another participant stated, “It has to be timetabled. As an elective is a good way to do it.” An administrative participant commented, “Community service clubs have been willing to be supportive.” An interview participant noted, “Leadership development is most successful when many teachers get involved.”

The qualitative data that aligned with 21st century learning was observed. One administrative respondent stated, “Older learners can take on projects that have international connections.” Another administrative respondent observed, “We have to get creative to ensure that student leadership is built into our system in a holistic manner.” An interview participant stated, “It is important....because it helps build character and many of the skills that employers would want...” Another participant noted,

Members of the community could support student leadership by providing opportunities for kids to do volunteer work, tour facilities present or engage students in conversations about the needs that exist within their community and how students can make a difference.
The qualitative data that identified communication as a theme was observed. One participant stated, “Leadership seems to be limited to intermediate teachers and students. It is not an inclusive process.” Another study participant noted, “I strongly support student leadership, but at this time do not know what this school will provide.” An additional respondent indicated, “We have not had much communication from adult leaders in our school. I hope this topic will be covered in the future.” A respondent further stated, “I think in the past this has been a priority, but haven’t really heard much about it this year.”

The qualitative data demonstrates participant observations of student leadership programming offered at the elementary level as it relates to the emergent themes. A more thorough discussion of these common themes will be presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter Five: Summary, Discussions and Conclusions

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current existence of student leadership programs offered at the elementary level, and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. The research question asked: *How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level?* This qualitative study followed a mixed-methods design using the survey instrument (Appendices A and B) and interviews (Appendix C). The data from this research was gathered and analyzed with the goal of building on the existing knowledge that supports the understanding as to *how* and *why* student leadership development can be facilitated at the elementary level.

This research reflects representation from 16 school districts in the province of British Columbia to include a 2.3% response rate from the elementary administrative level as well as a 29% response rate from elementary teacher respondents in School District 69 (Qualicum). Data was further gathered qualitatively through 4 elementary teacher interviews to further triangulate the research findings.

Questions outlining *why* student leadership is offered at the elementary level were examined. Survey respondents were invited to indicate whether student leadership was a priority in their school. Schools that indicated that there was a student leadership program indicated with 73.3% (administrators) and 78.6% (teachers) that it was a priority. Respondents were invited to indicate whether partnership groups are available to support student leadership programs. Schools that currently offer student leadership programs indicated with 66.7% (administrators) and 42.9% (teachers) that there were supports in place to support student leadership.
Respondents were invited to indicate whether student leadership is articulated in the school wide goals. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 46.7% of administrative respondents as well as 42.9% of teacher respondents indicated it was mentioned in the school wide goals. When asked if the school supports the belief that all students are capable of demonstrating leadership, where student leadership is offered at their school, 100% of administrative and 85.7% of teacher respondents indicated that the school supports the belief that all students are capable. The fundamental belief that students of the elementary age are capable of developing leadership capacity was strongly reflected in the research data. One respondent indicated,

I think elementary age students are capable of developing leadership capacity. It has to be geared to their age level and what they are capable of doing. It has to be geared to them to enable them to be successful at it (interview respondent).

Questions outlining how student leadership is offered at the elementary level were explored. Survey respondents were asked if there was a staff member identifiable as ‘facilitator’ of student leadership. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 80% of administrative and 85.5% of teacher respondents indicated there was a staff member identifiable as ‘facilitator’. Respondents were asked if there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership. Where student leadership is offered at their school, 26.7% of administrative respondents as well as 35.7% of teacher respondents indicated there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership. In response to both the importance of a facilitator and time designated for student leadership to be offered, one interview respondent indicated,

Ideally, there should be a leadership mentor, an adult, and there should be time offered for that adult to run a successful program in the regular timetable. It
should be part of the culture, which is generic, but it should be promoted,
celebrated and put on display.

The data suggests that schools which support student leadership through a strong belief in
student leadership capacity as well as support through administrative efforts to include a lead
facilitator with time scheduled for this to take place may have an increased likelihood that
student leadership opportunities can be facilitated at the elementary level. The data findings also
suggest that partnership groups can be utilized to further support the facilitation of elementary
student leadership programs.

Discussion

Research suggests that to create a strong vision and culture within a school, the school
mission statement, overall learning environment and school climate ought to be in alignment
(Deal & Peterson, 1999). The existence of a strong belief that students of school age, and
specifically the elementary age can exhibit leadership capacity, as articulated by Avolio &
Vogelgessang (2011) and Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi (2011), can be included in this aligned
vision. The evidence of the current study suggests that where there is an alliance between
administrative and teacher priority, the likelihood of the vision to move forward exists.
Conversely, it was observed that schools that did not offer student leadership demonstrated a
response that suggested there was a lack of harmony in vision between administrators and
teachers. The evidence suggests that teachers and administrators both agreed that students in the
elementary grade levels are capable of developing leadership capacity. However, when asked if
the school supports the belief that all students are capable of demonstrating leadership, teachers
responded that they were ‘unsure’, suggesting that they do believe in student leadership capacity,
but that the school ought to support that belief with action. Together, these results confirm the findings of McKee (2014), who observed that the importance of an alignment of vision between administration, teachers and students support the development of student leadership in elementary aged students. While one respondent commented, “It has to be valued by the school”, another respondent observed,

> We are in the beginning stages of developing growth plans and school goals. I see the value of leadership programs and am hopeful that part of the vision for creating and nurturing a healthy school culture will include leadership opportunities for students.

These statements provide further evidence to support the important relationship between alignment of vision and culture by administration and teachers and the likelihood of facilitation of a student leadership program.

Administrative supports have been demonstrated to be important considerations in the facilitation of elementary student leadership programs. The data collected in the current study suggests a strong connection between the existence of student leadership programming and a visible facilitator. Where student leadership exists, both administrators and teachers strongly agree that there is a lead facilitator present to support programming. This is in contrast with schools lacking in student leadership which demonstrated disagreement in the presence of a facilitator. One respondent commented, “I would think it has to be done by a leader in the school...someone in the school has to take responsibility for the program to take the [student] leaders along”.
The research further demonstrated a relationship between the existence of student leadership within the school and staffing time provided for the facilitation of the program. Where student leadership is offered at their school, respondents indicated there was staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership which was in contrast with schools not currently offering student leadership. One respondent stated, “It needs to be a class. It needs to be factored into the timetable. It needs to be not the type of thing that is offered off the side of the desk. It has to be...timetabled.” This research aligns with the findings of Lee-Cox (2004) where it was observed that time for collaboration of staff as well as time to devote to leadership programming were key elements in the facilitation of student leadership.

Involving stakeholders as an administrative support for the development of student leadership was shown to be an important outcome of the current study. A relationship between availability of partnership groups to contribute their time and financial resources and the existence of student leadership programs was observed. In schools that offer leadership, 66.6% of administrative respondents indicated that there were partnership groups available, in sharp contrast with only 33.3% of administrators within schools that do not currently offer student leadership. Teacher respondents indicated consistently that they were ‘unsure’ in comparison with administrative respondents who agreed that stakeholders were available to lend support. One administrative respondent remarked that, “Community service clubs have been willing to be supportive”, while another respondent further indicated that, “members of the community could support student leadership by providing opportunities for kids to do volunteer work, tour facilities, present or engage students in conversations about the needs that exist within their community...” When observing the emergent themes as shown on the wordle (Figure 4.14), the word ‘community’ was shown to be the strongest qualitative response of interview respondents,
establishing a connection between the quantitative and qualitative data.

   Administrative supports that include a facilitator, time for that facilitator to support the programming and the increased involvement of partnership groups have been demonstrated to be foundational in the support of elementary student leadership programs.

   21st century learning elements to include problem solving skills, communication and team building emerged qualitatively in the current study. One respondent indicated, “It is important to promote and provide leadership opportunities because it helps build character and many of the skills that employers would want in the work force”, which supports the research conducted by Stella (2013) which concluded that the positive impact on student-led conflict resolution, communication and teambuilding skills were directly related to the development of student leadership within the school. Another respondent noted that the development of leadership experiences permits students to, “expand the definition of successful student from purely academic activities to citizenship participation” substantiating the research conducted by Ullestaad (2009) who identified that as our culture is changing, schools can continue to adapt to teach students leadership skills that increase their potential to be positive and productive 21st century global citizens.

   Communication emerged as an important element in the present study. Although Mulick (2009) identified the importance of communication skills as a precursor to solid leadership capacity, communication between administration, teachers and stakeholders emerged within the present research. Administrators indicated that they ‘agreed’ when asked if partnership groups were available to contribute both their time and financial resources, in contrast with teachers who indicated that they were ‘unsure’. This outcome was repeated when asked to identify if leadership was articulated in the school wide goals. When the survey invited administrators and
teachers to identify if the school supports the belief that all students are capable of demonstrating leadership, it was noted that administrators indicated agreement while teachers indicated that they were unsure. These recurring survey results suggest that communication between the administration and teachers can have an impact on the facilitation of student leadership within the context of the school setting. One respondent indicated that there was a “lack of awareness that [leadership programs] existed, while another survey respondent asserted, “We have not had much communication from adult leaders in our school. I hope this topic will be covered in the future”. An administrative respondent further supported this observation by suggesting, “As a district, a culture and a cohesive body, we collectively need to define this term if we value it for children.”

It is evident from both the review of literature and discussion of research findings that elementary student leadership programs can be considered as an important element of student development in a 21st century educational system. As shown in Figure 5.1, the elements that serve to support the establishment of student leadership include school wide vision, priority on behalf of the administration and school based team, an intentional involvement and inclusion of the stakeholders in education, as well as the designation of a lead facilitator who is provided time to facilitate the delivery of such a program.
The goal of this study was to investigate the current existence of elementary student leadership programs and to identify the supports that can be present in order for an elementary leadership development and training program to be established. An e-survey was sent out to every elementary administrator in the province through the BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association newsletter. This portion of the study had a response rate of 2.3%, which left 97.7% of the province’s elementary school administrators having not responded. Within SD 69
Although there was a 29% response rate for the paper survey, there was a limitation of only 11% response rate for the interview portion of the study. Although there were a number of participants at both the administrative level as well as the elementary teacher level within the study, there were only 2 administrators that responded within SD 69, further limiting the findings of the research. Therefore, even though a number of participants responded provincially, the results cannot be generalized to a larger context or different school district.

A further limitation to the study was the likelihood that the recent difficult and lengthy provincial teacher’s strike impacted participation and participant responses. Although great lengths were taken to conduct the research with consideration of appropriate timeliness and facilitation of the surveys, it is possible that some teachers and administrators either may have not chosen to participate or were influenced in their survey responses due to this difficult climate in the educational system provincially.

This study was conducted at a challenging time in SD 69. The district was in the process of a reconfiguration of schools whereby the middle school model was replaced with a K-7 and 8-12 model. Teachers and administrators were faced with the added pressure of relocation challenges and different teaching assignments at the time the survey was distributed. This reconfiguration impacted both administrative and teacher survey responses as well as qualitative responses.

While the results are not generalizable to other districts, the response rate was significant enough for interpretations to be drawn that can inform current practice in the facilitation of elementary student leadership programs. The study results have the potential to form the basis
Suggestions for further research

With very little research in the field of elementary student leadership, the current study has served to expand on existing knowledge as it relates to both supports that can be fostered to build elementary leadership programs as well as to identify, through the review of literature, the merit for such programs to begin at this earliest level. As Murphy & Johnson (2011) assert, the engagement of students in early experiences in leadership is foundational to develop 21st century leaders.

In taking this work forward, it is recommended that further research be conducted to include participation of students in the development of elementary student leadership that meaningfully addresses the shifting needs of the 21st century learner as well as the work force for which the educational system aims to prepare them for. Recommendations for such research can also include a province wide inclusion of all elementary teachers and administrators in order to allow the results of this study to be generalizable to a broader audience.

The unique needs of the aboriginal community arose as an unexpected learning outcome in this study. In an effort to address current efforts to include programming and funding for aboriginal leadership education, one respondent articulated, “rather than creating a blended, inclusive leadership group, aboriginal students are still often isolated together or targeted separately. This perpetuates isolation...” As a result of this unexpected learning, it is recommended for future research to focus on aboriginal leadership education in elementary
schools in order to provide a deeper understanding of supports needed to facilitate leadership that is equitable to all members of our society.

Implications

Research has demonstrated that developing leadership competencies at an early age is beneficial to elementary students as they progress through the educational system (Gottfried, et al., 2011; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). With 40% of participating administrators indicating that student leadership is not currently offered in BC elementary schools, this study confirms previous research that suggests greater opportunities for students of the elementary age to develop leadership capacity are appropriate to consider (Hickman, 1996; Hess, 2010; Van Velsor & Wright, 2012).

The data collected in this study supports the claim hypothesized by the researcher. It was suggested that, in order for a sustainable leadership program to be established, it may require key supportive factors. The first support includes an overarching philosophy of staff and partnership groups who support the ideal that student leadership development and training is beneficial to students. The second element includes administrative supports to include a facilitator who has time dedicated to the development of leadership capacity in students.

This study further suggests the significance of the stakeholders within the educational system as an integral component of student leadership. Under a transformational leadership structure (Northouse, 2010), the stakeholders can facilitate a sustainable development of leadership in students together. Hall (2005) described leadership as a process of developing a shared vision amongst all participants, including stakeholders. Smyth (2006) articulated the importance of the inclusion of all stakeholders in the effort to foster change and educational
initiatives on the part of school boards, administrative and teaching staff. Smyth also asserted that if shared ownership within an environment built around care and relationships exists, effective change and progress can be made. An increased awareness of who the stakeholders are within every school community can serve to be an important factor in bringing about educational change. Providing educators with a list of stakeholders within the specific community that they impact can potentially increase the opportunities for a shared experience that enriches the community, supports educational change initiatives and contributes to the student leadership development that takes place within that population.

Communication between administration, teachers and students was also considered an important finding in the current study. This research highlights the relationship between communication amongst staff and the likelihood for elementary student leadership programs to exist. This confirms McKee’s (2014) research findings that revealed that consistency in communication of the vision and definition of leadership was cornerstone to the success of the program. This knowledge supports the significance of strong communication as a foundation for all participants in the educational system. At the school level, high visibility of school mission statements, school growth plans and school goals, in combination with the inclusion of student leadership as a regular element in staff meetings can serve to support the fostering of student leadership that is meaningful and sustainable. The importance of the inclusion of student leadership within the assignment of a lead teacher who can direct the vision of student leadership within the school in combination cannot be underestimated.

Student engagement in the development of leadership programming within elementary schools can serve as a consideration for educators. Poeltzer (2001) observed that students of this age do wish to be given a role of significance within the culture of the school, which can
contribute significantly to their sense of attachment to their school (Lee, 2012) as well as a positive school-wide climate (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012). One respondent, in describing elementary aged students, articulated,

I believe that kids want to be leaders; I believe they have lots of great ideas, and I believe that kids are really great at listening to other kids. I believe kids are a lot more capable than people give them credit for.

Inviting students as participants in the development and direction of the school vision through a student leadership program creates ownership and a strong sense of purpose for the students, resulting in an increased potential for the development of elementary student leaders.
References


Guerin, D. W., Oliver, P. H., Gottfried, A. W., & Gottfried, A. E. (2011). Childhood and adolescent antecedents of social skills and leadership potential in adulthood:


Mulick, L. (2009). *Teachers' perceptions of student leadership potential in elementary education. (Ed. D., California Lutheran University)*. Retrieved May 2014, from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses:

http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.viu.ca/docview/305184291?accountid=12246


This survey is part of a study conducted by Kerri Faa, an MEd student researcher at Vancouver Island University. This survey is intended to gather data to explore the supports and/or barriers to the establishment of a student leadership program at the elementary teaching level.

This information is gathered anonymously and will form the basis for a thesis that is part of the requirements for a Master in Education program. By participation in this on-line survey, you are giving consent for this information to be gathered and analyzed for themes. Please do not write your name or identify yourself (or others) in any way on this survey.

It will take about fifteen minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation.

Definition of terms:

Leadership: “the qualities of someone who significantly affects and influences other people, their thoughts, their feelings” (Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011).

Leadership skill: a student’s ability to influence other people in capacities to include creativity and innovation, self-regulation and motivation, conflict resolution and problem solving, critical thinking capacity and communication.

Leadership development and training: the action of teaching a leadership skill to a person which is geared toward a specific leadership capacity outcome.

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

Employee of District #

Years of administrative experience 1-5  6-10  11-15  16+
Please circle the descriptor best suited to the question, in your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP SURVEY STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is a FORMAL student leadership program in existence in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student leadership development and training is a priority in my school.</td>
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<td>3. There is an identifiable staff member deemed as the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership in my school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. There is staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership in my school.</td>
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<td>5. There are regularly held ‘school celebrations’ where achievement in leadership competencies are recognized. (i.e., speech competition)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6. There is district funding available to support leadership programs.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. There are partnership groups (e.g., PAC, Rotary) available to donate time in support of leadership programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. There are partnership groups (e.g., PAC, Rotary, Local businesses) available to contribute financially to support leadership training programs at my school.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>9. Parents are active partners in the development of student leaders in my school.</td>
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<td>10. Leadership development and training is articulated through the school wide goals.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Leadership training and development is mentioned in the school growth plan.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students in the elementary grade levels are capable of developing leadership capacity.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. My school supports the belief that ALL students are capable of demonstrating leadership.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. There are professional resources available to staff to support development of student leadership capacity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. There are professional development opportunities for staff interested in developing student leadership capacity in our district.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Further Comment:_ Please feel free to add any comments that may reflect your insight on the value placed in your school as it relates to student leadership development and training.

________________________
________________________
________________________
Thank you, in advance, for completing and submitting this survey!
APPENDIX B

ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP

TEACHER SURVEY

This survey is part of a study conducted by Kerri Faa, an MEd student researcher at Vancouver Island University.

This survey is intended to gather data to determine what supports and/or barriers exist in relation to the development and training of student leadership capacity specifically at the elementary level.

This information is gathered anonymously and will form the basis for a thesis that is part of the requirements for a Master in Education program. Please do not write your name on this survey or identify yourself (or others) in any way. By completing and submitting this survey, you are giving consent for this information to be gathered and analyzed for themes.

It will take about fifteen minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation.

Definition of terms:

Leadership: “the quality of someone who significantly affects and influences other people, their thoughts, their feelings” (Gardner & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011).

Leadership skill: a student’s ability to influence other people in capacities to include creativity and innovation, self-regulation and motivation, conflict resolution and problem solving, critical thinking capacity and communication.

Leadership development and training: the action of teaching a leadership skill to a person which is geared toward a specific leadership capacity outcome.
Please circle the descriptor best suited to the question, in your opinion.

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<td>1. There is a FORMAL student leadership program in existence in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student leadership development and training is a priority in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is an identifiable staff member deemed as the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. There is staffing time provided for the ‘facilitator’ of student leadership in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are regularly held ‘school celebrations’ where achievement in leadership competencies are recognized. (i.e., speech competition)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6. There is district funding available to support leadership programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. There are partnership groups (e.g., PAC, Rotary) available to donate time in support of leadership programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. There are partnership groups (e.g., PAC, Rotary, Local businesses) available to contribute financially to support leadership training programs at my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>9. Parents are active partners in the development of student leaders in my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Leadership development and training is</td>
<td>1</td>
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articulated through the school wide goals.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Leadership training and development is mentioned in the school growth plan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students in the elementary grade levels are capable of developing leadership capacity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>13. My school supports the belief that ALL students are capable of demonstrating leadership.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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**Further Comment:** Please feel free to add any comments that may reflect your insight on the value placed in your school as it relates to student leadership development and training.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you in advance for completing and returning this survey. Please take this survey to the drop box at your school secretary’s office desk by November 15.

If you would like to participate in a 30 to 45 minute interview to further inquire about elementary student leadership development and training, please contact kfaa@sd69.bc.ca to arrange an interview. Your participation in this survey remains anonymous, but your participation in the interview will be confidential. The first five teachers who wish to participate in the interview portion of this research will be contacted for an interview.

*Your input is valued and appreciated.*
APPENDIX C

Teacher Interview Questions

ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP STUDY

Thank you for your participation in this study. The information you provide will contribute to the understanding of both the barriers and supports that may exist in the elementary school system that impact elementary student leadership programs. Please do not name others or provide identifying information. With your permission, I will audio record the interview. The information provided through this interview will remain confidential, and you can withdraw from this study at any time. This interview questionnaire will take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. Have you ever participated as a teacher in the facilitation of student leadership in your professional career? YES NO

2. If you answered, “yes”, describe your experience. Please include the ages of the students you worked with and the types of experiences that they participated in.

3. Have you received any formal training in student leadership before? YES NO

4. If you answered, “yes”, describe the type of training. (e.g., Professional development, leadership development course)

5. What are some of the most important skills you believe that students need to be leaders?
6. In your opinion, do you believe that elementary aged students are capable of development of leadership capacity? Why or why not?

7. What is the ‘ideal’ age for students to begin to receive training in student leadership competencies? Why?

8. In what ways do you feel student leadership development and training is best facilitated in schools?

9. What role does the community have in a school based leadership program?

10. What barriers (if any) exist that prevent students from receiving formal training in leadership?

11. What supports would benefit students in the development of leadership capacity?

12. Do you have anything further to comment on as it relates to elementary student leadership?

Thank you for your participation. In order to protect the confidentiality of this interview, the information gathered from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet throughout the duration of this study and will be destroyed in May 2016.
Greetings to all elementary school administrators in the province of BC!

Volunteers are invited to participate in a study of the following research question:

“How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level?”

This study entails the participation in a brief survey which hopes to offer insights into the research question being asked. **This survey is intended to gather data to determine what supports exist in relation to the development and training of student leadership capacity specifically at the elementary teaching level.**

The survey is part of a study conducted by Kerri Faa, an MEd student researcher at Vancouver Island University. This information is gathered anonymously and will form the basis for a thesis that is part of the requirements for a Master in Education program. By participation in this survey, you are giving consent for this information to be gathered and analyzed for themes.

It will take about fifteen minutes to complete. Your support of this study is greatly appreciated. Please follow the link to the formal Invitation to participate and Letter of Consent. It will then link you to the electronic survey tool (fluid surveys) to complete the fifteen minute survey.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research!
APPENDIX E

Teacher Survey

Invitation to Participate and Letter of Consent

ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP STUDY

Principal Investigator: Kerri Faa, Graduate Student, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Kerri Faa
Research Supervisor: Rachel Moll, Professor, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Rachel Moll (250) 753-3245 x2161 Email: rachel.moll@viu.ca

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Elementary Student Leadership: Exploring the Supports that exist in the establishment of Elementary School Leadership Programs”. The study is open for all School District 69 elementary school teachers (K-7) who are currently in temporary or continuing postings in School District 69 (Qualicum).

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to explore supports and barriers to the establishment of a student leadership program at the elementary teaching level.

Study Procedures:
To participate in this survey portion of the study, you will be asked to consider 13 survey statements relating to the subject of elementary student leadership. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time. You will be asked to consider your understanding of your own experiences relating to student leadership capacity and how the school(s) you have worked in have supported a student leadership program from your point of view. At the end of the survey you will be invited to participate in a follow up interview. You will be asked to email the Principal Investigator if you are interested in volunteering for a follow up interview.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip statements or choose not to continue completing the survey at any time, for any reason, and without penalty. However, if you complete and submit the survey, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the results as your responses cannot be distinguished from other participants’. Data will be compiled and analyzed by the Principal Investigator. Data will be reported on at an academic conference at Vancouver Island University and published as a partial requirement for the Principal Investigator’s Master of Education thesis.
Potential Risks: There are no known potential risks associated with participation in this study.

No names are being collected in this study. Although your responses may be quoted in study results, any information you provide that may inadvertently identify you will not be presented. Your survey data will remain anonymous and confidential. Only the Principal Investigator and her supervisor will have access to your survey data. Study documents will be securely stored throughout the study and then destroyed in May 2016. Electronic data and results of this study will be stored on a secured computer with restricted access (password).

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Kerri Faa. General results will be made available after June 2016 by contacting Kerri Faa at the above email. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the Vancouver Island Research Ethics Officer at reb@viu.ca or by telephone at 1-888-920-2221 (local 2665).

Consent:

By completing and submitting the survey, you are consenting to participate in this research and for the information you provide to be included in the study results.
APPENDIX F

Teacher Interview Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Kerri Faa, Graduate Student, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Kerri Faa
Research Supervisor: Rachel Moll, Professor, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Rachel Moll (250) 753-3245 x2161, Email: rachel.moll@viu.ca

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Elementary Student Leadership: Exploring the Supports and Barriers that exist in the establishment of Elementary School Leadership Programs”. The study is open for all School District 69 elementary school teachers (K-7) who are currently in temporary or continuing postings in School District 69 (Qualicum).

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to explore supports and barriers to the establishment of a student leadership program at the elementary teaching level.

Study Procedures:
To participate in this interview portion of the study, you will be asked 12 questions relating to the subject of elementary student leadership. The interview should not take more than 30 to 45 minutes of your time. With your permission, I will audio record the interview. The purpose for an audio recording is to ensure quality and accuracy of transcription of information. You will be asked to answer questions about your understanding of your own experiences relating to student leadership capacity, how the school(s) you have worked in have supported a student leadership program, and how leadership experiences have looked from your point of view.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip questions or choose not to continue completing the interview at any time, for any reason, and without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, the data you provide in the interview will be removed from the data set. Data will be compiled and analyzed by the Principal Investigator. Data will be reported on at an academic conference at Vancouver Island University and published as a partial requirement for the Principal Investigator’s Master of Education thesis.

Potential Risks: There are no known potential risks in the participation in this interview.

Your interview data will be kept confidential. Your participation in the interview is not anonymous, but will be kept confidential. Although your responses may be quoted in study results, any information you provide that may inadvertently identify you will not be presented. Only the Principal Investigator and her supervisor will have access to your interview data. Study documents will be
securely stored and then destroyed in May 2016. Participants will not be identified by name and results cannot be attributed to a particular school. Electronic data and results of this study will be stored on a secured computer with restricted access (password).

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Kerri Faa. General results will be made available after June 2016 by contacting Kerri Faa at the above email.

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the Vancouver Island Research Ethics Officer at reb@viu.ca or by telephone at 1-888-920-2221 (local 2665).

**Consent:**

I have read and understood that my participation in this study is voluntary and will remain confidential. I understand that my involvement can be withdrawn, or answers withdrawn from the study results at any point in the study. I have read the above consent form and consent to participate in an interview and to be audio recorded. The transcripts from this interview will be used solely for the purpose of this study. I also understand that the transcripts will be secured in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed in May 2016.

**Please keep a copy of this Consent Form for your records.**

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<tr>
<th>Interview participant</th>
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<th>Principal Researcher</th>
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</table>

I, the participant, give the researcher permission to use direct quotations resulting from this interview for the purposes of this study. I understand that I shall not be named or identified in any way.

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<th>Interview Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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APPENDIX G

Administrator Survey Invitation to Participate and Letter of Consent

ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP STUDY

Principal Investigator: Kerri Faa, Graduate Student, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Kerri Faa
Research Supervisor: Rachel Moll, Professor, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University
Contact Information: Rachel Moll (250) 753-3245 x2161, Email: rachel.moll@viu.ca

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Elementary Student Leadership: Exploring the Supports and Barriers that exist in the establishment of Elementary School Leadership Programs”. The study is open for all elementary school administrators in the province of British Columbia.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to explore supports and barriers to the establishment of a student leadership program at the elementary teaching level.

Study Procedures: To participate in this study, you will be asked to consider 15 survey statements relating to the subject of elementary student leadership. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time. You will be asked to consider your understanding of your own experiences relating to student leadership capacity and how the school(s) you have worked in have supported a student leadership program from your point of view. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip statements or choose not to continue completing the survey at any time, for any reason, and without penalty. However, if you submit your survey, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the results as your responses cannot be distinguished from other participants’.

Data will be compiled and analyzed by the Principal Investigator. Data will be reported on at an academic conference at Vancouver Island University and published as a partial requirement for the Principal Investigator’s Master of Education thesis.

No names are being collected in this study. Although your responses may be quoted in study results, any information you provide that may inadvertently identify you will not be presented. Your survey data will remain anonymous and confidential. Only the Principal Investigator and her supervisor will have access to your survey data. Study documents will be securely stored and then destroyed in May 2016. Electronic data and results of this study will be stored on a secured computer with restricted access (password).

Potential Risks: There are no known potential risks in the participation of this study.
Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Kerri Faa. General results will be made available after June 2016 by contacting Kerri Faa at the above email.
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the Vancouver Island Research Ethics Officer at reb@viu.ca or by telephone at 1-888-920-2221 (local 2665).

Consent: By completing and submitting the following survey, you are consenting to participate in this research and for the information you provide to be included in the study results.

FLUID SURVEY ONLINE SURVEY TOOL

The Fluid Surveys site where the online survey is located is an online Canadian survey tool and server, which has privacy and security settings in line with Canadian Research ethics protocols. Your survey data will remain anonymous and confidential. Email and IP address tracking has been disabled and data is stored on Canadian servers. (See Fluid Surveys Privacy Policy for further information http://fluidsurveys.com/about/privacy/.) Fluid Surveys may allow persistent 3rd party ‘cookies’. As each browser and version is slightly different, to remove these cookies refer to AboutCookies.org’s “How to Delete Cookies” http://www.aboutcookies.org/Default.aspx?page=2”

By clicking on the link below, you consent to participate in this research project and for the information you provide to be used in study results

http://fluidsurveys.com/
This paper survey is part of a study conducted by Kerri Faa, an MEd student researcher at Vancouver Island University, who aims to determine what leadership development is currently in practice in elementary schools. **This survey is intended to gather data to explore supports and barriers to the establishment of student leadership programs specifically at the elementary level.**

This information is gathered anonymously, and will form the basis for a thesis that is part of the requirements for a Master in Education program. By participation in this survey, you are giving consent for this information to be gathered and analyzed for themes.

Please read the letter of consent that is attached to the survey. The survey will be provided for you at the end of staff meeting today. It will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

When you are finished completing the survey, please leave your survey in the envelope in the office marked ‘Elementary Student Leadership Study’. It would be appreciated if you can complete the survey and return it by November 1 to complete this portion of the study.

Thank you for your support and time!
APPENDIX I

Teacher Interview Script

ELEMENTARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP STUDY

Researcher: Thank you for your voluntary participation in this study. The intention of this study is to gather data to support an investigation into the following research question:

“How and why is student leadership development and training offered at the elementary level?”

By reading and signing the consent form, you have familiarized yourself with the types of questions that you may be asked during this interview. Do you have any further questions about the intent of this study, how your information will be stored, how confidentiality is preserved or any other matters concerning this study?

Thank you, again, for your support of this research.
Appendix J

Administrative Participation by BC School District