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Section 3 Executive Summary: Teacher Development and Implementation Studies

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Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) Model Research and Evaluation, Section 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Year 4 Final Report 2020

Teacher Development and Implementation Studies

Loyola Marymount University Center for Equity for English Learners

The Center for Equity for English Learners (CEEL) at Loyola Marymount University led a 4-Year Research and Evaluation study to examine the effects of the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) Model on teacher development and classroom implementation from 2015–2019. CEEL conducted three inter-related teacher development and implementation studies employing: (1) survey methodologies and (2) evidenced-based classroom observations using the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies (OPAL©)[1]. The OPAL© is validated measure focused on four domains: (1) Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum, (2) Connections, (3) Comprehensibility, and (4) Interactions.

Overall findings for each of the teacher development and implementation studies reveal:

- **Study #1 - Observed Changes in SEAL Classroom Practices (Brief 6):**
  Increased levels of classroom implementation of English Learner, research-based practices
  - Statistically significant growth from pre-to-post-program classroom observations as measured by the OPAL©
  - Highest growth in the area of *Interactions* that maximize student engagement
  - A large effect size in all four OPAL© domains and overall composite scores from pre-to-post program
- **Study #2 - Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual (BIL)[1] versus Structured English Immersion (SEI)[2] Classroom Practices (Brief 7):**
  Key differences between BIL and SEI classroom practices
  - Higher levels of implementation for BIL classrooms in all OPAL© domains
  - Statistically significant difference between overall BIL vs. SEI classroom implementation
  - Similarities between BIL and SEI classroom practices in promoting *Comprehensibility* and *Interactions*
  - Greater evidence of implementation in the areas of *Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum* and *Connections* in BIL vs. SEI classrooms
- **Study #3 - SEAL Teachers' Perceived Knowledge and Skills (Brief 8):**
  High levels of teacher efficacy, enthusiasm, and implementation
  - Intermediate or advanced-level implementation of the SEAL Model and practices
  - Statistically significant increases in teachers' perceived knowledge and levels of implementation after attending SEAL professional development
  - Highest growth in implementation of integrated, thematic instruction and home-school connections
  - Greater expertise in flexible grouping and differentiated instruction
  - High levels of teacher confidence, enthusiasm, and reported increases in student engagement

[1] Some SEAL schools implement a **Transitional Bilingual Program**, defined by the California Department of Education (CDE) as a program that utilizes English and a pupil's native language for literacy and academic instruction, enabling ELs to achieve English proficiency and meet state-adopted academic achievement goals. Other SEAL schools implement a **Dual Language Program** defined by CDE as a program where language proficiency and academic achievement in students' first and second languages, and cross-cultural understandings, are developed.

[2] The CDE defines the **Structured English Immersion (SEI) Program** as a language acquisition program for ELs in which nearly all classroom instruction is provided in English, but with curriculum and presentation designed for pupils who are learning English. Students are offered English Language Development and access to grade level academic subject matter content.

Introduction to the SEAL Teacher Development and Implementation Studies

In order to prepare its youth to be competent contributors to a culturally rich and global economy, US schools must support its educators to teach the broad range of content and curriculum, including the Next Generation Content Standards (e.g. English Language Arts, Science) inclusive of college and career anchor standards. These standards assume a mastery of 21st century skills, multiliteracies, and rigorous academic content in English and present an urgency to address the academic and opportunity gaps for English Learners (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). In 2017, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Committee on Fostering School Success for English Learners (ELs) recognized that the cultures, languages, and experiences of ELs are highly diverse and constitute assets for their development, as well as for the nation (p. 2). California's 1.2 million ELs account for approximately 20% of the nation's overall EL population (Ruiz Soto, Hooker & Batalova, 2015). In line with NASEM, the California *English Learner Roadmap* (2017) policy employs an asset-based approach and affirms that ELs have rich social and linguistic traditions that contribute to the state's economic and social strengths. California's EL Roadmap includes four inter-related principles that provide guidance and support for educational systems to strengthen comprehensive policies, programs and practices for ELs: (1) Assets-Oriented and Needs Responsive Schools, (2) Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access, (3) System Conditions that Support Effectiveness, and (4) Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems.

Teacher education and professional development have been a cornerstone in education reform in the United States for disseminating knowledge on effective, research-based practices for ELs. Research on effective teachers of ELs indicates that that they build their knowledge about the curriculum and school context, engage in inquiry about their own practice, and deepen their subject and linguistic knowledge for teaching ELs (Faltis, et al., 2008; Goldenberg, 2008; NASEM, 2017). They also support the development of family engagement strategies, policies and programs (Mapp & Bergman, 2019), consistently analyze, and challenge their beliefs and practices (Lucas et al., 2018). Many teachers of ELs however, are not prepared to provide high-quality instruction needed to achieve content area standards. Ballantyne et al., (2008) and King & Newmann (2001) argue that professional development, when delivered as part of a professional learning community, builds school capacity—and increases in school capacity lead to gains in student achievement. The SEAL Model seeks to increase schools' capacity to teach ELs by employing a comprehensive whole-school reform model that is implemented system-wide and includes leadership and development opportunities for district and site-level administrators, teachers, coaches, and families.

Loyola Marymount University's Center for Equity for English Learners and the Wexford Institute conducted an external evaluation of the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) PreK–Grade 3 Replication Model from fall 2015–fall 2019. This comprehensive research and evaluation study focused on (1) Teacher Development, (2) Student Outcomes, and (3) Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation. Investigation of SEAL Teacher Development and Implementation consisted of three studies: (1) Observed changes in SEAL Classroom Practices, (2) Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual versus Structured English Immersion Classroom Practices, and (3) SEAL Teachers' Perceived Knowledge.

Research Focus

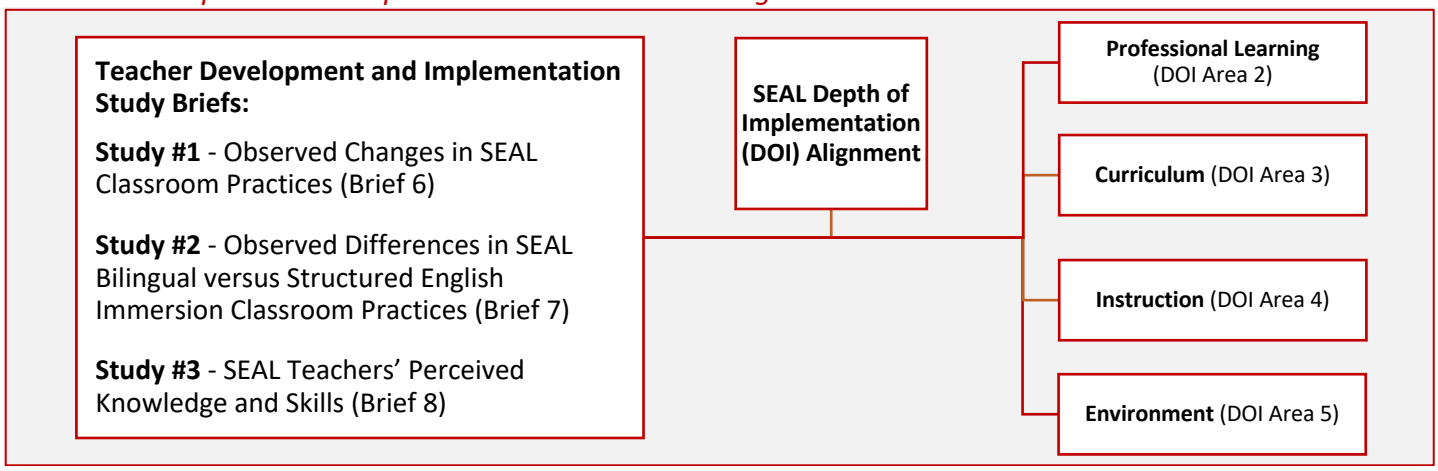
The research briefs in **Section 3** report on findings from three inter-related teacher development studies that investigate how well SEAL met its goals to: (1) build the capacity of educators in elementary schools (PreK–Grade 3) to align and articulate programs to develop the language and literacy skills of young ELs and (2) engage teachers in collaborative and interactive professional development to enable them to integrate SEAL Principles and High Leverage Strategies in their instruction throughout the school day. To determine the effectiveness of

the SEAL Model, the Research and Evaluation Advisory[3], developed a logic model that visibly ties all program goals to seven program components and desired short- and long-term outcomes. The research briefs in this section are aligned to Components 3 and 4 of the SEAL Logic Model, namely: Professional Learning and Curriculum and Instructional Strategies.

The SEAL Depth of Implementation (DOI)[4] tool is reflective of the SEAL Logic Model components and was developed as part of this research and evaluation effort. Although not used as an exclusive evaluation tool for this series of research briefs, the DOI was introduced to SEAL districts and schools as a formative tool to collect evidence and identify areas to deepen and refine SEAL Implementation within and across sites. Additionally, the DOI Tool is reflective of EL research-based practices. It aligns with (1) the constructs of the OPAL© classroom observation tool and (2) several items developed for the teacher survey instrument used to collect data for the SEAL Teacher Development and Implementation studies presented in Section 3 of this report. See Figure 1 for an overview of the alignment between the SEAL Teacher Development and Implementation studies and the SEAL DOI Tool.

Figure 1

Teacher Development and Implementation Studies and Alignment to the SEAL DOI Tool



Note. SEAL DOI Focus Areas: (1) Leadership, (2) Professional Learning, (3) Curriculum, (4) Instruction, (5) Environment, and (6) Family Partnerships. Figure 1 shows the alignment to four SEAL DOI focus areas related to teacher development of knowledge and skills that translate to classroom practices for ELs.

Overview of the Research Briefs

The three research and evaluation briefs that follow present findings on teachers' level of implementation of SEAL's high leverage practices based on results from the Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies (OPAL©)[5] pre- and post-classroom observations as well as results from a survey of SEAL teachers engaged who completed SEAL Model professional learning between 2015–2018 (Cohort 3[6]). While each study has a research brief of its own, this executive summary highlights key findings from each.

[3] The SEAL Research and Evaluation Advisory was primarily comprised of the LMU-CEEL and Wexford evaluation teams, in addition to the SEAL Founding Director, Executive Director, Director of Research and Evaluation, Research Associate, and Director of Innovation and Strategic Design.

[4] The SEAL DOI tool was developed to capture data on the levels of implementation of the SEAL Model and can be used at the project, district, and site level. The tool is comprised of six focus areas that are measured on a four-point scale ranging from "No Implementation" to "Sustainable Implementation."

[5] Lavadenz, M. & Armas, E. G. (2010, 2012). The Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies: Conceptual Framework and Validation Report. Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University.

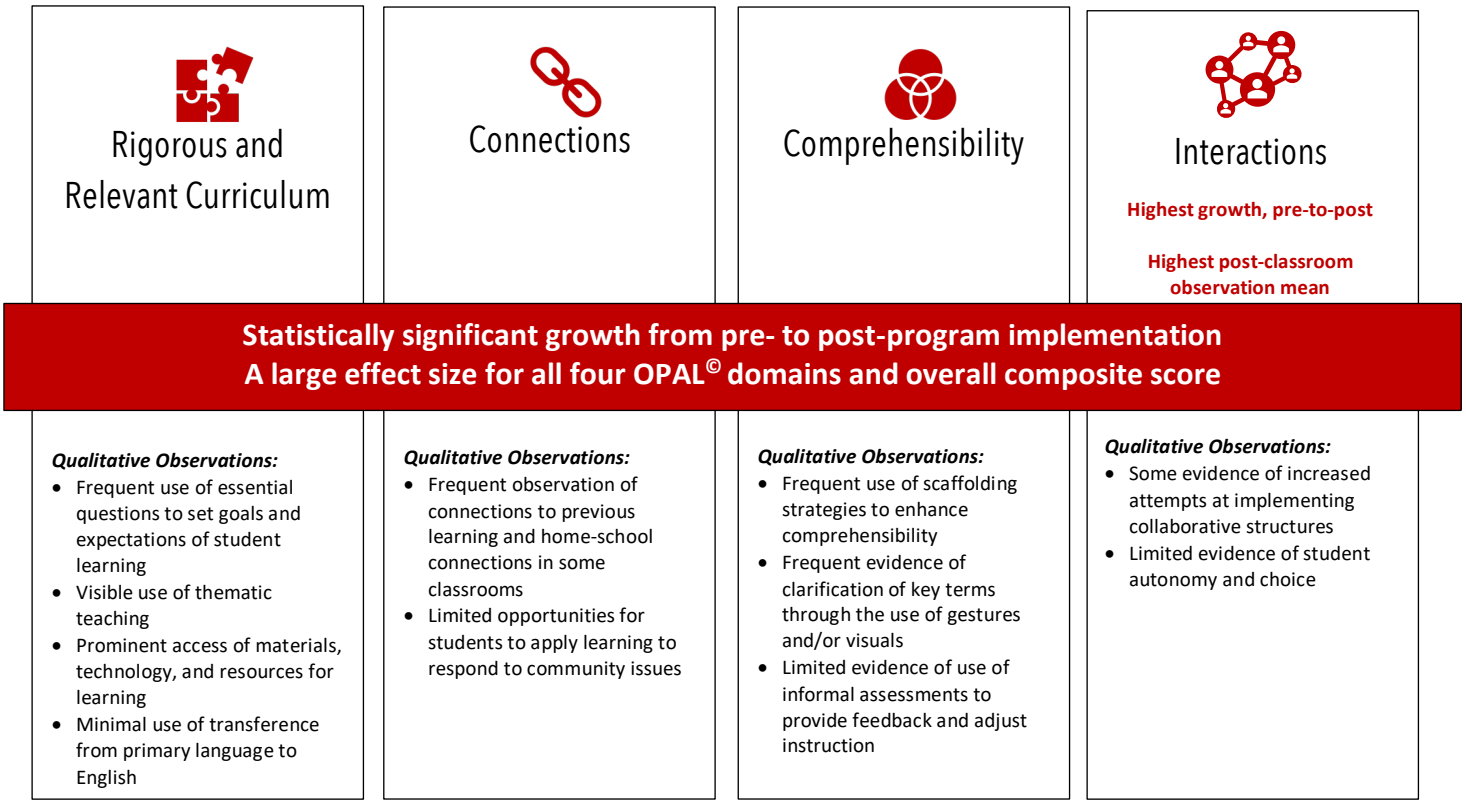
[6] Cohort 3 consisted of 31 schools across 10 districts. They implemented SEAL in Y1 (2015-16) with training for PreK, TK, K, and 1st grades. In Y2 (2016-17), Cohort 3 completed its second year of training for PreK, TK, K, and 1st grades and its first year of training for 2nd and 3rd grades. In Y3 (2017-18), Cohort 3 completed its second year of training for 2nd and 3rd grades.

Teacher Development and Implementation Study #1: Observed Changes in SEAL Classroom Practices (Brief 6)

The Observed Changes in SEAL Classroom Practices Study (Brief 6) was designed to answer the following research question: **In what ways do teachers' level of implementation of SEAL's high leverage practices change as a result of their participation in SEAL's professional learning opportunities?** Use of the OPAL© tool allowed for a mixed-methods approach to explore this research question by examining implementation of SEAL practices for ELs across four research-based constructs represented by the OPAL© Domains: (1) *Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum*, (2) *Connections*, (3) *Comprehensibility*, and (4) *Interactions*. Evaluators standardized their observation methods, conducted a quantitative analysis of change in practice from pre- to post-, and provided a qualitative description of what those practices looked like at the time of observation. The research brief reports on observed changes in instructional practices and classroom interactions for designated teachers in SEAL Cohort 3 districts and schools. Classroom observations were conducted in PreK–3rd grade classrooms across eight SEAL districts in Cohort 3 in order to obtain classroom implementation data at two intervals: (1) prior to teachers' participation in SEAL training and (2) after participating in a minimum of six SEAL Module professional learning sessions and unit development days over a two-year period. Figure 2 illuminates key findings.

Figure 2

Observed Changes in SEAL Classroom Practices - Key Findings



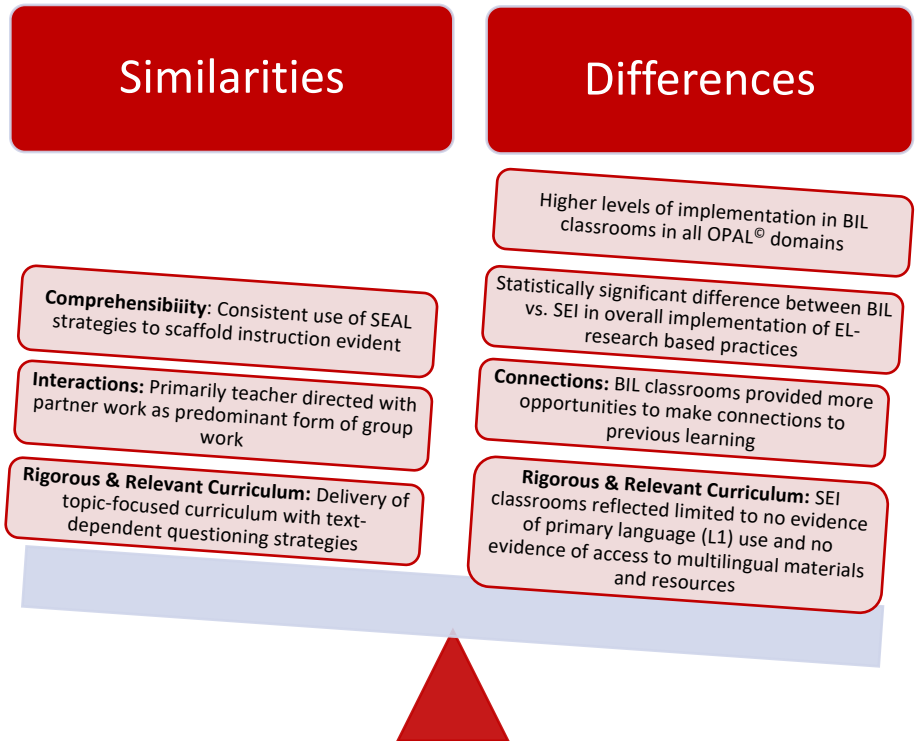
For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Teacher Development and Implementation Study #1: Observed Changes in SEAL Classroom Practices (Brief 6).

Teacher Development and Implementation Study #2: Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual versus Structured English Immersion Classroom Practices (Brief 7)

The SEAL Model serves ELs, and all students, across a variety of language program types including Bilingual, Dual Language, Structured English Immersion and Mainstream English. Given the SEAL Model's design to support systems and classroom level implementation, the SEAL Research and Evaluation Advisory was interested in examining differences between SEAL Model implementation across various language acquisition programs. The Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual versus Structured English Immersion Classroom Practices for Cohort 1[7] (Brief 7) intended to answer the following research question: **What differences exist, if any, in teacher practice between SEAL Cohort 1 Bilingual/Dual Language Program (BIL) and Structured English Immersion Program (SEI) classrooms after teacher participation in SEAL's professional development?** Use of the OPAL© tool allowed for a mixed-methods approach to the research question. Evaluators standardized their observation methods, conducted a quantitative analysis of post-program implementation levels, and provided a qualitative description of what those practices looked like at the time of observation in BIL and SEI settings. Study participants consisted of a subset of classrooms from SEAL Cohort 1. Classroom observations from 25 BIL classrooms and 27 SEI classrooms whose teachers completed the SEAL two-year professional development were compared. Figure 3 highlights general findings.

Figure 3

Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual versus Structured English Immersion Classroom Practices



For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Teacher Development and Implementation Study #2: Observed Differences in SEAL Bilingual versus Structured English Immersion Classroom Practices (Brief 7).

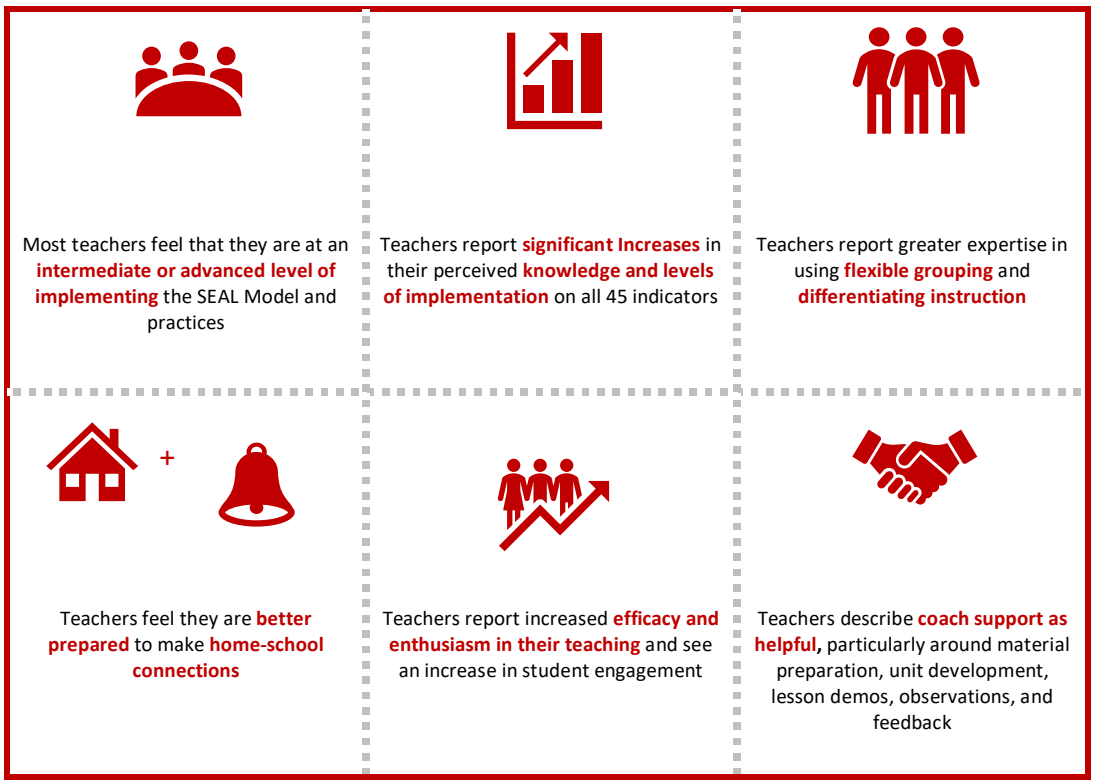
[7] SEAL Cohort 1 consisted of 13 schools across 4 districts. They implemented SEAL in Y1 (2013-14) with training for PreK, TK, K, and 1st grades. In Y2 (2014-15), Cohort 1 completed its second year of training for PreK, TK, K, and 1st grades and its first year of training for 2nd and 3rd grades. In Y3 (2015-16), Cohort 1 completed its second year of training for 2nd and 3rd grades.

Teacher Development and Implementation Study #3: SEAL Teachers' Perceived Knowledge and Skills (Brief 8)

SEAL teachers' perceived knowledge and skills were collected by a retrospective pre-post survey administered to SEAL teachers who completed their second year of SEAL professional development. Brief 8 intends to answer the following research question: **What are teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and skills in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students?** The SEAL Retrospective Pre-Post Teacher Survey was created by the CEEL Research and Evaluation team; it allowed for a mixed methods approach to the research question. The survey was aligned to Areas 1B, 2, 3 and 4 of the DOI[8] and to all four domains of the OPAL©[9] tool. The survey was administered in spring 2016, 2017, 2018. A total of 490 surveys were collected over three survey administration periods. General findings are detailed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

SEAL Teachers' Knowledge and Skills



For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Teacher Development and Implementation Study #3: SEAL Teachers' Perceived Knowledge and Skills (Brief 8).

[8] The SEAL Depth of Implementation (DOI) tool was developed to capture data on the levels of implementation of the SEAL Model and can be used at the project, district, and site level. The tool is comprised of six focus areas: Area 1A – District-Leadership, Area 1B – Site Leadership, Area 2 – Professional Learning, Area 3 – Curriculum, Area 4 – Instruction, Area 5 – Instruction, and Area 6 – Family Partnerships.

[9] The OPAL© is a validated classroom observation measure that consists of a standard framework based on four domains: (1) Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum, (2) Connections, (3) Comprehensibility; and (4) Interactions. See SEAL Classroom Observation Research & Evaluation Brief (6) for more information.

Conclusion

Section 3 of this report presents findings from three inter-related studies on teacher development and implementation that support the proposition that the completion of SEAL training leads to: (1) ***greater use*** of high-leverage, English Learner, research-based classroom practices; and (2) ***increases*** in teachers' knowledge and skills.

Key differences between BIL versus SEI program classroom implementation surfaced as a result of this study. Teachers reported increases in self-efficacy and student engagement. The full teacher development and implementation studies are captured in the three research briefs that follow (Briefs 6, 7, and 8). Section 3 appendices provide supplementary information, including observation and survey instruments as well as additional statistical data and research findings.

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This Section is based on the 4-Year External Research and Evaluation Study conducted by the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University and Wexford Institute for the Sobrato Family Foundation.

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