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Section 2 Executive Summary: Leader Perspectives on System-Level Implementation Studies

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Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation Studies



[Wexford Institute](#) (Wexford) and Loyola Marymount University's [Center for Equity for English Learners \(CEEL\)](#) jointly conducted an external evaluation of the [Sobrato Early Academic Language Model \(SEAL\) Replication Model](#) that began in 2013-14, was implemented through 2016-17, and continued implementation and sustainability efforts since then. To gain information on the level of SEAL implementation and sustainability in these districts and their participating schools five studies were conducted, all utilizing instruments aligned to the Depth of Implementation Tool (DOI)¹.

Summary of key findings from each of the five studies on leaders' perspectives on system-level implementation:

- **Study #1 - Depth of Implementation (DOI) District and Site-Level Profiles (Brief 1):**
Increased levels of classroom implementation of EL research-based practices
 - An analysis of site-level systems ratings by district revealed that, while there is a range of mean scores across schools within a given district, three out of five districts are *Approaching Consistency* in implementing the SEAL Model after two years of implementation, as measured by the DOI Tool
- **Study #2 - SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results (Brief 2):**
Districts and School sites implementing SEAL at partial to consistent levels
 - Approximately two-thirds of SEAL district leaders perceived district implementation of SEAL at *consistent* to *sustainability* levels
 - About half of SEAL principals reported their schools implemented SEAL at *consistent* to *sustainability* levels
- **Study #3 - SEAL District Leader and Principal Fall 2019 Implementation and Sustainability Results (Brief 3):**
Districts and Schools sites implementing and sustaining SEAL approaching consistent levels
 - Approximately two-thirds of SEAL district leaders perceived district implementation of SEAL at the *consistent* level (none at the *sustainability* level)
 - Approximately 60% of principals indicated their schools implemented of SEAL at *consistent* to *sustainability* levels
 - District leaders and principals had high levels of agreement on SEAL impact they had seen on instruction and for children, teachers, and families
- **Study #4 - SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey Results (Brief 4):**
Coach-Facilitator role increases the Site-level implementation of the SEAL Model
 - Addressing structural and interpersonal barriers supports the SEAL Coach-Facilitators' role
 - Collective knowledge and ownership at the systems-level increases their degree of SEAL Model implementation
- **Study #5 - Leader Perspectives of Depth of Implementation for DOI AREA 1B (Brief 5):**
High levels of articulation, coherence, and intentional planning for sustainability
 - High levels of agreement related to SEAL articulation and coherence, intentional planning, and values, goals, and principles for sustainability and refinement
 - Leaders report low levels of use of the DOI or classroom data to analyze the impact of SEAL practices

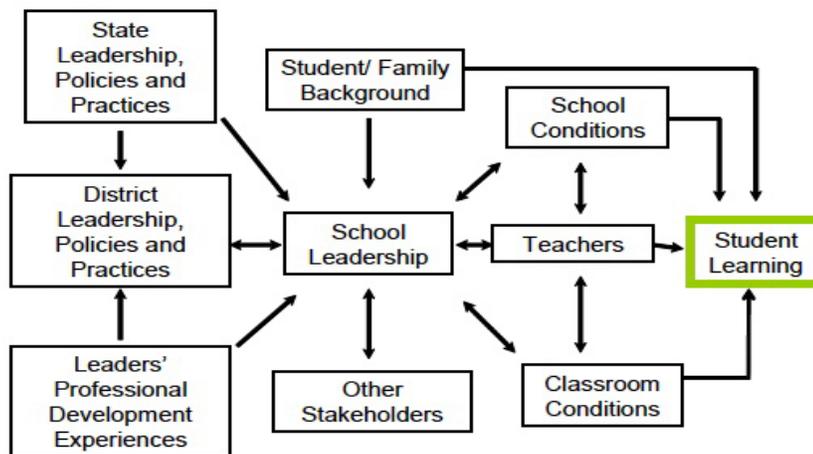
¹ The SEAL DOI tool was developed to capture data on the levels of implementation of the SEAL Model and can be used at the project, district, and site level. The tool is comprised of six focus areas that are measured on a four-point scale ranging from Level 1 (*no implementation*) to Level 4 (*sustainable implementation*).

Introduction to the SEAL Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation Studies

Research Focus

In 2010 the Wallace Foundation² supported an evaluation study “to identify the nature of successful education leadership and to better understand how much leadership can improve educational practices and student learning” (Louis & Leithwood, 2010). The framework that guided that study (shown in Figure 1) is based on earlier evidence of the systemic factors influencing student learning outcomes.

Figure 1
Leadership Influences on Student Learning



Selected key findings from the study are highlighted below.

School and District Leadership

“School leadership, from formal and informal sources, helps to shape school conditions (including, for example, goals, culture, and structures) and classroom conditions (including the content of instruction, the size of classrooms, and the pedagogy used by teachers)” (Louis & Leithwood, 2010).

District policies and practices around instruction are sufficiently powerful that they can be felt, indirectly, by teachers as stronger and more directed leadership behaviors by principals. Higher performing districts tend to be led by district staff who coordinate district support for school improvement across organizational units (e.g., supervision, curriculum and instruction, staff development, human resources) in relation to district priorities, expectations for professional practice, and a shared understanding of the goals and needs of specific schools.

Collective leadership has a stronger influence on student achievement than individual leadership.

The SEAL Replication Model, as described by the SEAL Logic Model, is a systemic approach to develop and sustain high-quality programs for English Learners (EL). District and school leadership have long been recognized as critical parts of our complex public education system. Because of the critical roles district and school leadership play in successfully implementing and sustaining programs, including SEAL, part of the four-year SEAL Research and Evaluation Design focused on the systemic nature of district and school leadership across SEAL districts and schools. The focus was limited to data collection through surveys for district leaders, principals and SEAL coach-facilitators. The research briefs in **Section 2** report on findings from the five studies, which included examination of the perspectives of SEAL district leaders, principals, and coach-facilitators.

² Louis, K.S. & Leithwood, K. (2010), Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning (Final Report of Research to the Wallace Foundation). University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.

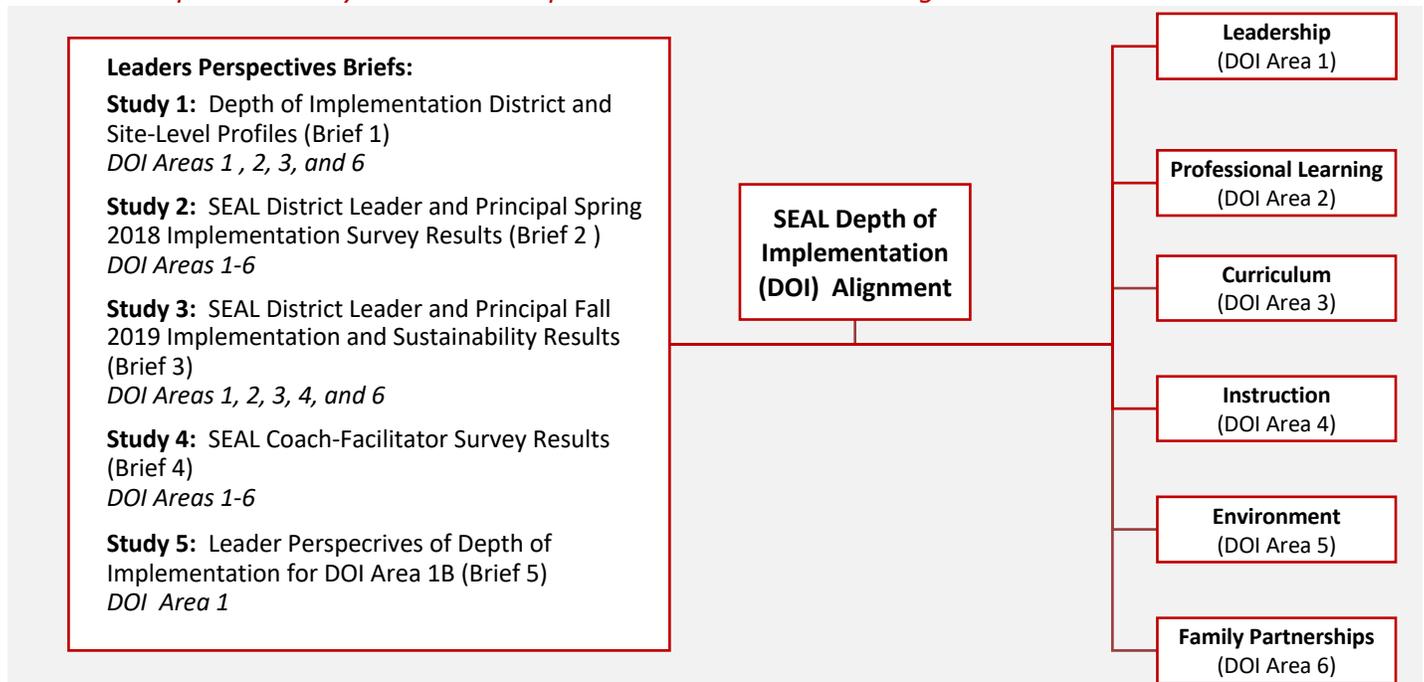
The data collection instruments for the studies were aligned to the DOI tool, which reflects the SEAL Logic Model components and implementation research. The CEEL team led the redesign of the SEAL DOI, as part of this research effort, between 2015 and 2017, using both an implementation science framework³ and adapted Innovation Configuration Map processes⁴. The DOI focuses on six areas. In addition to its use as a basis for the research instruments, it 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.

- SEAL DOI Tool Areas**
- Area 1:** Leadership
 - Area 2:** Professional Learning
 - Area 3:** Curriculum
 - Area 4:** Instruction
 - Area 5:** Environment
 - Area 6:** Family Partnerships

The five studies capture data about the implementation of the SEAL Replication Model at the project, district, and site level, using processes and instruments reflecting the DOI. Originally the first four studies were designed as independent studies to provide feedback to SEAL on leader perspectives of SEAL implementation levels. The fifth study, a cross-research analysis, was designed in 2019 to determine the feasibility of connecting common data points from Studies 2, 3, and 4. That analysis found common data points related to DOI Area 1B: Leadership: Site Level Systems. Figure 2 provides an overview of the alignment between the leader perspectives studies and the DOI Tool.

Figure 2

Leaders’ Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation Studies and Alignment to SEAL DOI Tool



Overview of the Research Briefs

The five research and briefs that follow present findings on leaders’ perspectives of district-level and site-level implementation of the SEAL Replication Model from 2014-2019. While each study has a research brief of its own, this executive summary highlights key findings from each.

³ Fixen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature* (Publication #231). University of South Florida Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute: The National Implementation Research Network.

⁴ Hall, G.E., & Hord, S.M. (2006). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (2nd ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation Study 1: SEAL Depth of Implementation (Brief 1)

The SEAL Depth of Implementation study (Brief 1) sought to answer the following research question: **What differences are found in the implementation of SEAL practices across schools and/or districts, as measured by the revised SEAL Depth of Implementation Tool?** To answer this question, a SEAL Depth of Implementation (DOI) Tool was developed by the LMU-CEEL research team to measure the degree of implementation of the SEAL Model across schools and districts as part of the continuous improvement process. The DOI Tool allows for a mixed-methods approach to answer the research question; for this study, only the quantitative data were analyzed. The DOI Tool allows the user to collect data and other evidence for district- and site-level SEAL implementation in six areas: (1 A) District-Level Leadership, (1B) Site-Level Leadership, (2) Professional Learning, (3) Curriculum, (4) Instruction, (5) Environment, and (6) Family Partnerships. Implementation level ratings are assigned on a four-point scale ranging from Level 1 (*no implementation*) to Level 4 (*sustainable implementation*). Five SEAL districts in California fit the sampling criteria for this study. A district composite means was calculated for each district from the overall mean scores for DOI Areas 1B, 2, 3, and 6. An analysis of site-level systems ratings by district reveals that although there is a range of mean scores across schools within a given district, three out of five districts are **approaching consistency** in implementing the SEAL Model after two years of implementation, as measured by the DOI Tool. Key findings are highlighted in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3
Comparison of Composite District Means for DOI Areas 1B, 2, 3, and 6

	Level 1 No Implementation		Level 2 Partial Implementation		Level 3 Consistent Implementation		Level 4 Sustainable Implementation
	<i>None</i> 1.00–1.49	<i>Approaching Partial</i> 1.50–1.99	<i>Partial</i> 2.00–2.49	<i>Approaching Consistent</i> 2.50–2.99	<i>Consistent</i> 3.00–3.49	<i>Approaching Sustainable</i> 3.50–3.99	<i>Sustainable</i> 4.00
District A (Composite Mean = 2.82)			●				
District B (Composite Mean = 2.97)			●				
District C (Composite Mean = 2.46)			●				
District D (Composite Mean = 2.43)			●				
District E (Composite Mean = 2.64)			●				

Note. Given the scope of this study, the research team considered the feasibility of data collection and limited the focus to four of the six SEAL DOI areas.

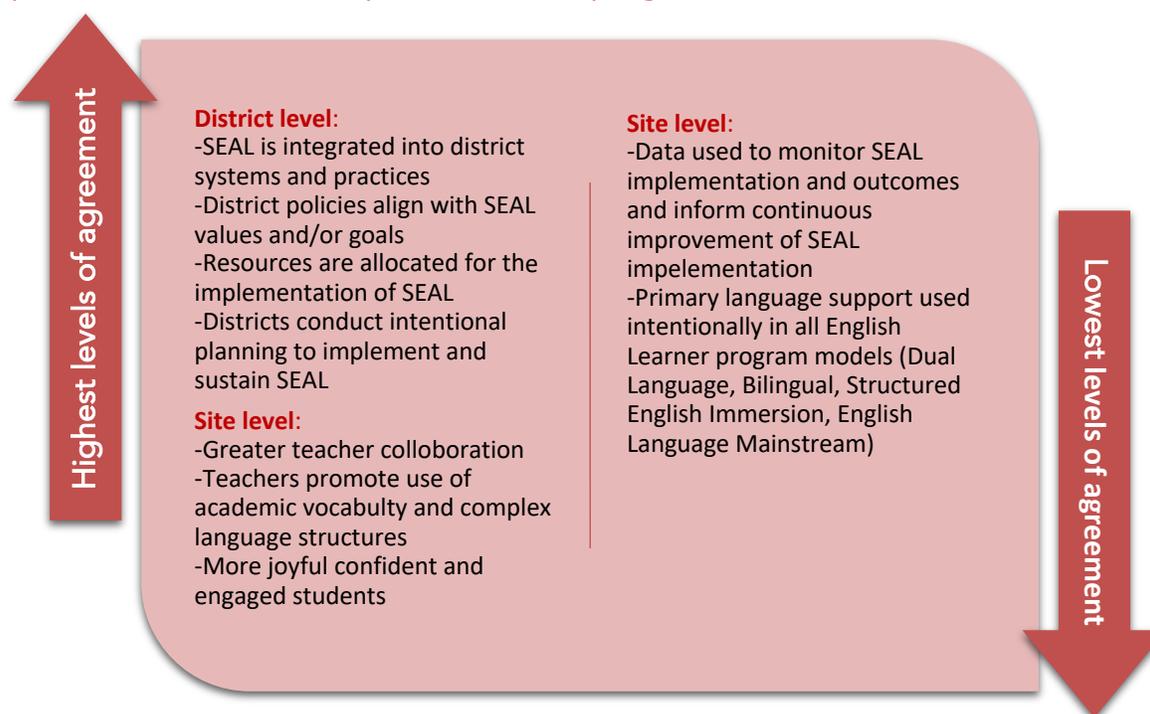
For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Leader Perspectives on System-Level Implementation Study 1: SEAL Depth of Implementation (Brief 1).

Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation Study 2: SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results (Brief 2)

The SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results Brief sought to answer the following research question: **In 2018, what were the perceptions of SEAL district leaders and principals regarding levels of implementation of the SEAL Model, based on the SEAL DOI tool?** The district leader and principal surveys were aligned to each other and to each area of the DOI (Areas 1-6). Survey data from both role groups were summarized and analyzed to find areas of agreement—both in items rated highest by both groups, and items rated lowest by both groups. Figure 4 below displays key findings for this study.

Figure 4

Leader Perspectives Related to SEAL Implementation in Spring 2018 – All DOI Areas



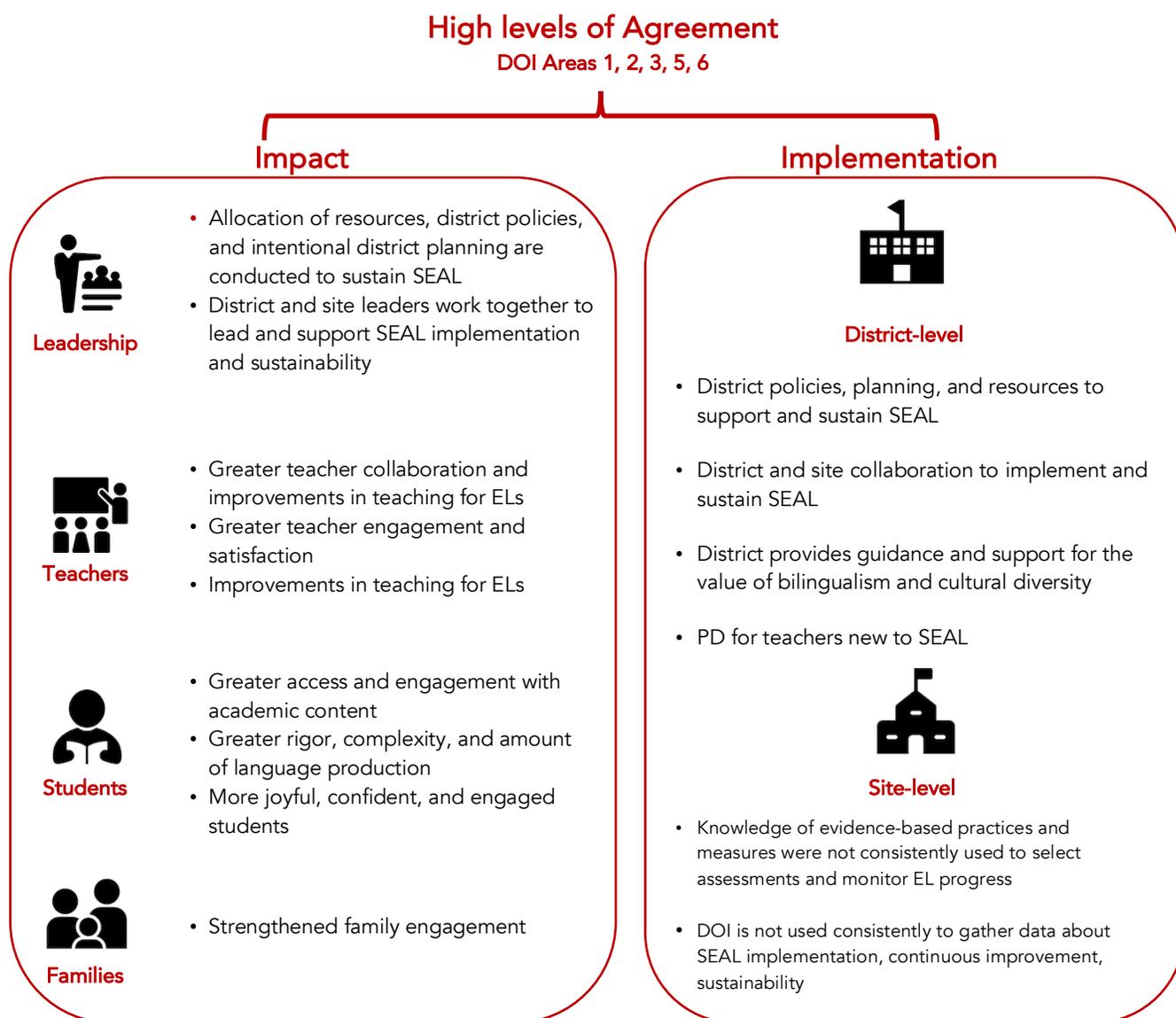
Additionally, district leaders and principals also agreed that SEAL is supported at the district level through: district policies aligned with SEAL values and goals; resource allocation for the implementation of SEAL; district intentional planning to implement and sustain SEAL; and, integration of SEAL into district systems and practices.

For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results (Brief 2).

Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation Study 3: SEAL District Leader and Principal Fall 2019 Implementation and Sustainability Survey Results (Brief 3)

The SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2019 Implementation and Sustainability Survey Result Brief sought to answer the following research question: **In 2019, what were the perceptions of SEAL district leaders and SEAL principals regarding levels of implementation and sustainability of the SEAL Model, based on the SEAL DOI tool?** The district leader and principal survey were aligned to each other and to the DOI Areas 1A and 1B. Survey data from both role groups were summarized and analyzed to find areas of agreement on survey items rated highest and lowest by both groups. Figure 5 highlights key findings of leaders' perspectives of SEAL impact and implementation at their respective districts and schools.

Figure 5
District and Site Leader Perspectives on Impact and Implementation, Fall 2019



For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Teacher Development and Implementation SEAL District Leader and Principal Fall 2019 Implementation and Sustainability Survey Results (Brief 3).

Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation Study 4: SEAL Coach-Facilitator Skills and Implementation (Brief 4)

The role of the SEAL Coach-Facilitator is to support teacher implementation of EL research-based classroom practices. They extend SEAL teachers' professional learning, facilitate unit development, conduct classroom observations, and provide demonstration lessons. SEAL Coach-Facilitators attend professional learning sessions alongside their classroom teachers. Additionally, SEAL Coach-Facilitators attend statewide SEAL network trainings that provide professional learning on the foundations of the SEAL Model, implementation considerations, tools for site-based support and reflection, and other information on current initiatives and policies related to EL teaching and learning. The SEAL Coach-Facilitator plays an integral role in the site-level implementation of the SEAL Model. Therefore, the SEAL Coach-Facilitator Skills and Implementation Study (Brief 4) was designed to answer the following research question: **What are SEAL Coach-Facilitators' perceptions about (1) their skills, and (2) the overall effectiveness of SEAL Model implementation at the site- and classroom-levels?** Use of a SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey allowed for a mixed-methods approach to explore this research question. Figure 6 illuminates key findings.

Figure 6

Coach-Facilitators' Perceived Skills and Implementation of the SEAL Model – Key Findings

Addressing Structural and Interpersonal Barriers Supports SEAL Coach-Facilitators' Role

- Develop coaches' knowledge about SEAL in advance of their work with teachers
- Build relationships before coaching
- Manage coaching responsibilities

"I think coaches should have a crash course of all modules over a summer before being asked to coach SEAL implementation at a high level. Spending time in a classroom where SEAL is fully integrated would be helpful."

Collective Knowledge and Ownership at the Systems-Level Increases Degree of SEAL Model Implementation

- Deepen leaders' understanding of the SEAL Model
- Increase district support and involvement

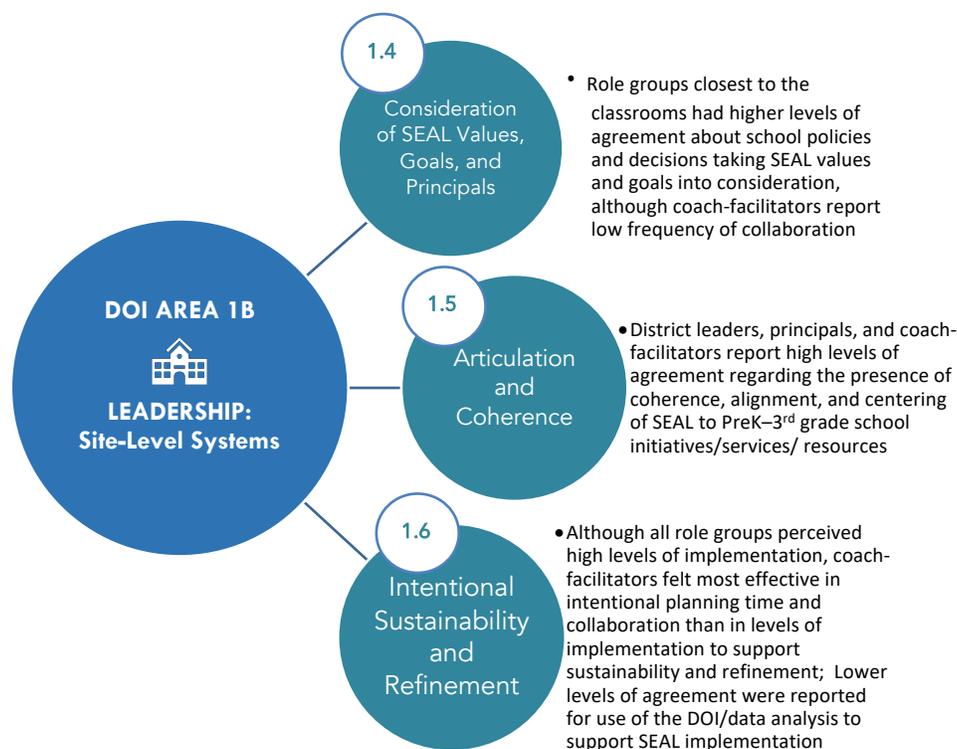
"[We need] for our district to be more involved in the SEAL implementation at our school. Good leadership that understands and respects the coaches' priorities."

For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the Leader Perspectives on System-Level Implementation Study #4: SEAL Coach-Facilitator Skills and Implementation (Brief 4).

Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation Study 5: Cross-Research Analysis- Leader Perspectives of SEAL Site-Level Implementation and Sustainability (Brief 5)

The Cross-Research Analysis: Leader Perspectives of SEAL Site-Level Implementation and Sustainability Study (Brief 5) sought to answer the following research question: **What are the perceptions of district leaders, principals, and coach-facilitators regarding site-level implementation of the SEAL Model?** To answer this question, CEEL and Wexford conducted a cross-research analysis of descriptive statistics from datasets obtained from the following surveys: (1) CEEL’s Coach-Facilitator Survey, (2) Wexford’s Principal Survey, (3) Wexford’s District Leader Survey, (4) Wexford’s Principal Implementation and Sustainability Survey, and (5) Wexford’s District Leader Implementation and Sustainability Survey. CEEL and Wexford utilized the SEAL Depth of Implementation (DOI) Tool to guide the investigation on the perspectives of site and district leaders who began SEAL implementation from 2013-14 through 2015-16. Specifically, DOI Area 1B Site-Level Leadership and its indicators were used as a framework for their cross-research analysis. Overall, results appear to indicate perceptions of sustainability and refinement vary by role, frequency, and effectiveness. Key findings for other site-level leadership indicators related to SEAL implementation and sustainability are highlighted in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7
Leader Perspectives of SEAL Site-Level Implementation and Sustainability – Key Findings



For more information about this study and a more detailed description of findings, read the full Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation Study 5: Cross-Research Analysis- Leader Perspectives of SEAL Site-Level Implementation and Sustainability Study (Brief 5).

Conclusion

Section 2 of the report presents findings from five related studies on leaders' perspectives of district-level and site-level implementation of the SEAL Replication Model from 2014–2019. The findings from the five studies indicate: 1) implementation of SEAL at the sites and districts ranged mostly from the *partial* to *consistent* levels of implementation; 2) there was high agreement that intentional planning occurred and that district and site collaboration were being implemented; 3) collective knowledge and ownership at the systems-level increases implementation of the SEAL Model; 4) the coach-facilitator plays an important leadership role in the implementation of the SEAL Model, and addressing structural and interpersonal barriers supports that role. The full Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation studies are captured in the five research briefs that follow (Briefs 1-5). Section 2 appendices provide supplementary information, including instruments as well as additional statistical data and research findings.

The four-year research and evaluation effort, focused on SEAL replication in 67 schools in 12 districts. In the broader picture of school reform efforts, the SEAL Model can be viewed as a large-scale, school-wide replication model, in which a lead agency like SEAL acts as a “hub” for support of the adoption of its model by a network of districts and schools.⁵ This type of replication model has aspects similar to those of SEAL replication being implemented at the schools and districts represented in the five studies. The lead agency, schools, and districts are linked together by a common design for learning, working, and leadership. Rather than rapid adoption, this type of replication model is, “a long-term enterprise in which program providers and schools collaborate to produce, use, improve, and retain practical knowledge” (Peurach & Glazer, 2011).

Researchers have identified strategies that lead to higher levels of implementation for large-scale implementation. Those strategies have already been used, to some degree, at SEAL schools. In large-scale replication efforts, it is typical for there to be variability in how the model is implemented at each school. Those variations can occur around factors related to all of the areas of the DOI. Some of that variability and the similarities in implementation across schools and districts are apparent in leader perspectives described in the five research briefs.

This Brief 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.



Section 2 Recommended Citation: Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University & Wexford Institute. Leader Perspectives on Systems-Level Implementation studies (Section 2, Series of Briefs). In Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University & Wexford Institute, *Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) Model: Final report of findings from a four-year study*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15365/ceel.seal2020>

⁵ Peurach, D.J. & Glazer J.L. (2011) Reconsidering replication: New perspectives on large-scale school improvement. Springer Science+Business Media B.V. https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Peurach_Glazer_2011_JEC.pdf