1-13-2020

SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results

Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University

Wexford Institute

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Leader Perspectives on System-Level Implementation: Study #2

SEAL District Leader and Principal Spring 2018 Implementation Survey Results

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Introduction to the SEAL Model and the 4-Year Research and Evaluation Effort

The Sobrato Early Academic Language Model (SEAL) is a preschool through third grade model that powerfully develops students' language, literacy, and academic skills within the context of a whole-school initiative. This intensive approach to language and literacy education is woven into all aspects of the school day where English Learners and native English students learn together. The Model was first piloted in three schools in the Silicon Valley and an initial evaluation of the Model showed significant impact on student achievement, teacher practice, and parent literacy activities. As a result of these pilot findings, SEAL developed a Replication Model, a comprehensive whole-school reform that is implemented systematically and that includes teachers, coaches, principals, district leaders, and families.

Loyola Marymount University's Center for Equity for English Learners and the Wexford Institute conducted an external evaluation of the SEAL preschool through third grade Replication Model from fall 2015–fall 2019. This comprehensive research and evaluation study focused on (1) Leader Perspectives and Depth of Implementation, (2) Teacher Development, and (3) Student Outcomes. Twelve districts and 67 schools across California participated. This Research and Evaluation Final Report presents findings that will allow the SEAL team to institute its short- and long-term evaluation and research agenda based on the SEAL Logic Model and desired results for project management, decision-making, refinement, and expansion.

The SEAL Research and Evaluation Final Report is comprised of five sections presented in a series of briefs (see Figure 1) to maximize usability for multiple stakeholders. This brief is part of Section 2.

Figure 1
SEAL Research and Evaluation Final Report Overview

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5
Context and Study Design	Leader Perspectives on Systems Implementation *Briefs 1–5*	Teacher Development and Implementation *Briefs 6–8*	Student Outcomes *Briefs 9–12*	Conclusion and Implications

Section 2, Brief 2 – Research Focus

This research and evaluation brief provides findings from the SEAL District Leader Survey and the SEAL Principal Survey administered in June 2018. We report on a sample of respondents across seven SEAL districts and 34 SEAL schools. Part One provides an overview of the study methods and participants. Part Two presents descriptive findings for a select number of survey items. Part Three provides a summary of findings and related implications.

Systems-Level Impacts of the SEAL Model as Perceived by Principals and District Leaders

Research and Evaluation Questions

In 2018, what were the perceptions of SEAL district leaders and principals regarding levels of implementation of the SEAL Model, based on the revised SEAL DOI tool?

Part One: Study Methods and Participants

Purpose

In consultation with the SEAL Leadership Team and the Loyola Marymount University's Center for Equity for English Learners, the Wexford Institute developed the SEAL District Leader Survey and SEAL Principal Survey. The survey items were developed to align with each other and around the SEAL Depth of Implementation Tool (DOI). The DOI Tool is organized along six areas listed below, each with Indicators that describe the SEAL Model:

1. Leadership
2. Professional Learning
3. Curriculum
4. Instruction
5. Environment
6. Family Partnerships

The purpose of the surveys was to gain

- the perspectives of district leaders as to the implementation of SEAL at the district level and across the SEAL schools in their respective district,
- the perspectives of principals as to the implementation of SEAL at the district level and at the SEAL schools for which they are principal, and
- a deeper understanding about respondents' background and experience as educators and leaders.

Methods

Surveys were constructed with parallel items to gain responses indicating the perspectives of both district leaders and principals on all items, which were related to the DOI Indicators. Responses were summarized by:

- comparison of highest- and lowest-rated survey items
- response mean score comparison in order they appeared on survey
- response mean scores in descending order


Limitations

There are two limitations that could affect the interpretation of the results: (1) the varying length of time the respondents had worked with SEAL, and (2) the principal response rate. See additional details about the participant samples below.

Participants

A total of 15 (of 16) SEAL District Leader Survey responses were collected, yielding a 94% completion rate based on information provided by the SEAL Leadership Team. Of 67 possible respondents, the SEAL Principal Survey collected 34 responses, yielding a 51% completion rate. SEAL district leaders and principals, whose district or school participated in the SEAL Replication Model for two or more years, were administered their respective survey in June 2018. As shown in Figure 2, 67% of district leader respondents indicated their district began participating in SEAL before or since 2013-14, while 38% and 41% of Principal respondents were in schools that began participating in SEAL in 2014-15 and 2015-16, respectively.

Figure 2
Year in which District or School Started Participating in SEAL
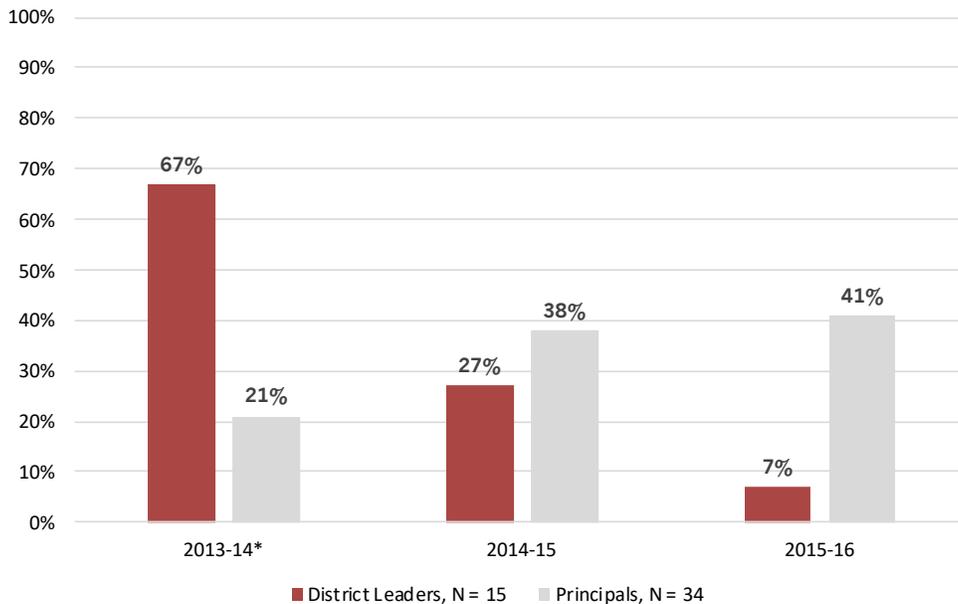
Note. All participants surveyed represent schools and/or districts that started participating SEAL in 2013-14 through 2015-16. A few respondents reported they participated in SEAL activities before the 2013-14 school year.

Most district leaders (79%) have worked with SEAL as a district leader for three or more years, and over half (53%) have six or more years of experience as a district administrator. Of the 34 principals who responded, 40% have two to five years of principal experience, 41% have eleven years or more, and 63% reported working with SEAL as principal for three or more years (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Figure 3
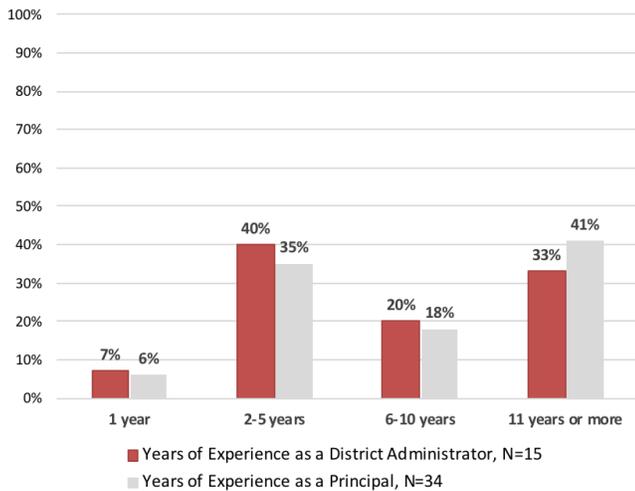*Years of Leader Experience*

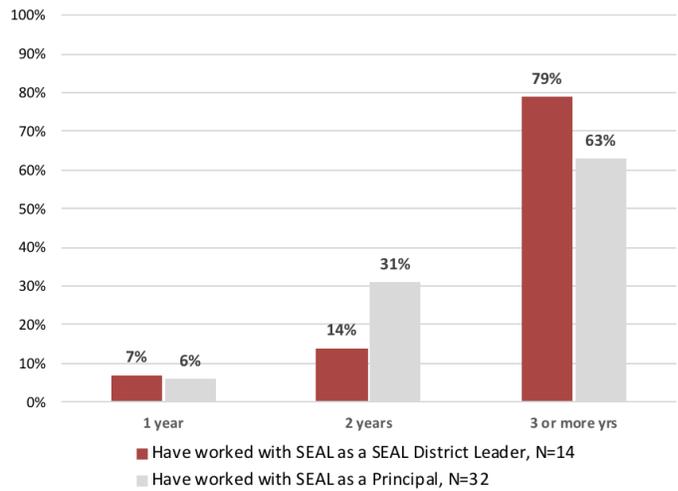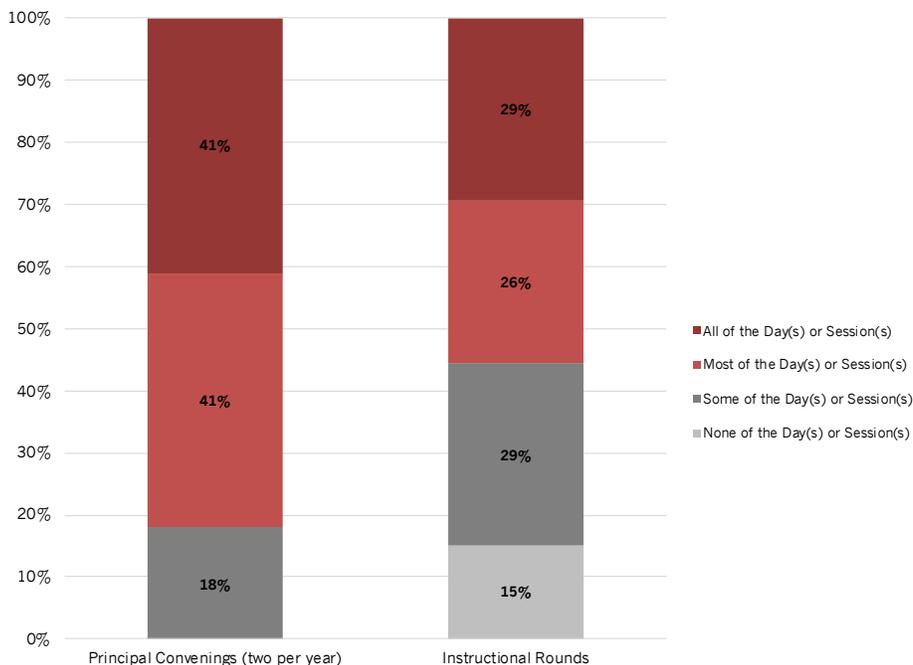**Figure 4**
Number of Years Worked with SEAL

Figure 5 summarizes Principal participation in SEAL activities. A majority of Principals (82%) indicated attending *all or most* of the principal convenings and 55% noted that they attended *all or most* of the Instructional Rounds.

Figure 5
Frequency of Principal Participation in SEAL Activities (N = 34)

Part Two: Findings

Comparing Perspectives about SEAL Implementation

To identify similar perspectives between district leaders and principals, items for the two respondent groups were listed in descending order of their means. The ten highest-rated and ten lowest-rated items for both respondent groups were identified and compared; six items were found in common from the highest-rated and two from the lowest rated (see Tables 1 and 2). The highest rated items by both groups were mostly related to teachers, while lowest rated items were related to data use and use of primary language.

Table 1
Similar Perspectives: Highest-Rated Items by Both Respondent Groups

	Mean Ratings	
Items with Highest Mean Ratings	District Leaders N = 15	Principals N = 34
Greater Teacher collaboration [a]	3.6	3.2
SEAL Teachers implement SEAL units that are standards-based and interdisciplinary [b]	3.6	3.2
Teachers implement SEAL units that are thematically and intentionally organized to develop language [b]	3.6	3.2
Teachers promote the use of academic vocabulary [b]	3.6	3.3
Teachers promote the use of complex language structures [b]	3.5	3.1
More joyful, confident, and engaged students [a]	3.6	3.2

[a] Rating scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*
[b] District Leader rating scale: 1 = *none*, 2 = *a few schools*, 3 = *some schools*, 4 = *all schools*. Principal rating scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*

Table 2
Similar Perspectives: Lowest Rated Items by Both Respondent Groups

	Mean Ratings	
Items with Lowest Mean Ratings	District Leaders [a] N = 15	Principals [b] N = 34
Data is used to monitor SEAL implementation and outcomes, and inform continuous improvement of SEAL implementation.	2.9	2.4
Primary language instruction or support is used intentionally in all English Learner program models (i.e., Dual Language, Dual Language Immersion, Bilingual, Structured English Immersion, English Language Mainstream).	2.9	2.5

[a] District Leader rating scale: 1 = *none*, 2 = *a few schools*, 3 = *some schools*, 4 = *all schools*
[b] Principal rating scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*

SEAL Implementation at the District Level

Figure 6 shows district leader perceptions about their districts' level of SEAL implementation. Sixty-four percent indicated their districts were implementing SEAL at the two highest implementation levels: *consistent and sustainability.*

Figure 6

District Leader Perceptions related to the level of SEAL Implementation at their District (n = 14)
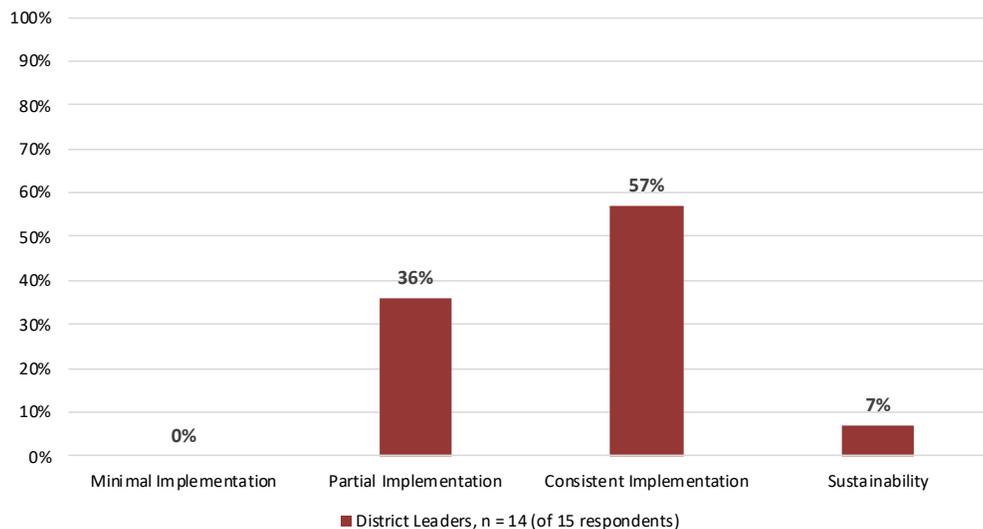
Highlighted below are reflections from district leaders about the level of SEAL Implementation at their districts.

District Leaders: Positive, Increased or Improved SEAL Implementation at the District Level (n = 7)

Respondents indicating *partial implementation* of SEAL at their respective district

"This year we have included our SEAL coaching and staff in our District wide PD around ELD and incorporated SEAL into our EL master plan."

"We are coming to the final year of implementation and are developing a district-wide sustainability plan. We continue to work with our site administrators to further align SEAL to school-wide practices. Selected strategies have been included in our instructional units for summer programming."

"Time is allocated for teachers to have weekly collaboration meetings during the school day focused on their SEAL implementation. Coaches continue to have ongoing collaboration meetings to support each other. Principals, district leaders and coaches actively participate in SEAL convening meetings. Summer Bridge continues to be a priority and included in summer planning and budgeting. More and more teachers are asking to be coached and mentored from the SEAL coach. With budget decreases, district continues to allocate funding for SEAL coaches."

Respondents indicating *consistent implementation* of SEAL at their respective district

"Now that teachers have a better understanding of what the strategies are, they are asking questions that are about the "why" behind a strategy. They are seeing the big picture of how it all works together including designated ELD."

"Participation in convenings and instructional rounds. LCAP has goals specifically written about SEAL implementation. PD plan includes SEAL. All coaches are SEAL trained. Coach role is clearly defined (job description) and coach evaluation includes SEAL implementation."

A comparison of district leader and principal perceptions related to overall district planning for SEAL is shown in Figure 7. A majority (over 75%) of both respondent groups *agree* or *strongly agree* that their districts conducted intentional planning to implement and sustain SEAL. They also indicate that SEAL is integrated into systems and practices within the district. Also worth noting, is the difference in responses between the two groups; the percentage of district leaders responding *strongly agree* is between 8% and 25% greater than that of principals.

Figure 7
Comparison of District Leaders and Principal Perceptions: Integration and Intentional Planning for SEAL at the District Level
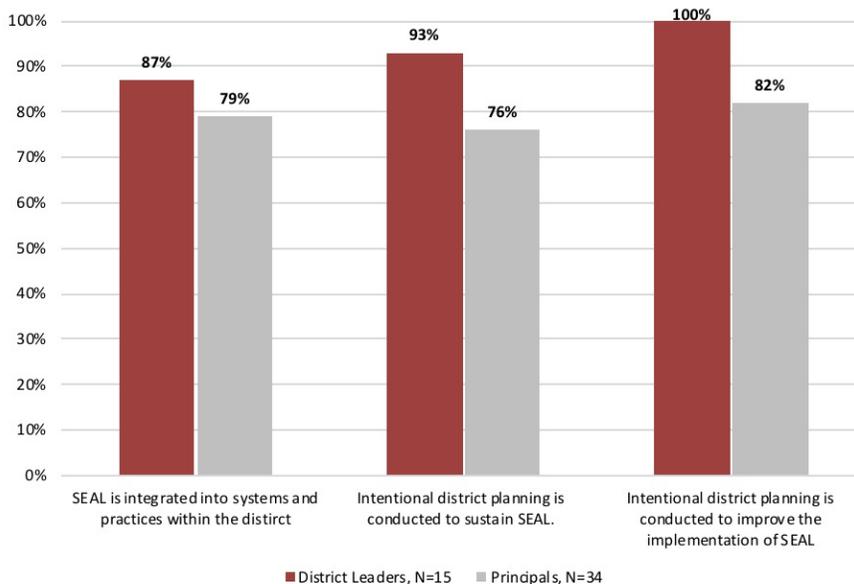
Highlighted below are examples of positive SEAL implementation at the district level reported by principals that *strongly agree* intentional district planning is conducted at their district to improve and sustain SEAL implementation.

Principals: Increased or Improved SEAL Implementation at the District Level (n=4)

Principals who *strongly agree* "intentional district planning" is conducted to both improve the implementation of SEAL and to sustain SEAL. Below are district level examples of positive, increased, or improved SEAL implementation:

Coaching, Teacher Planning, Additional PD
"This year the science coach has begun working with some of the SEAL coaches. They have been working together to understand how SEAL integrated into the new ELA curriculum."

"SEAL is embedded into our School Plans for Student Achievement and all of our PD. Districtwide expectations on how classrooms should look and what strategies are used reflect SEAL indicators."

"Each school is provided with a SEAL coach. Money is set aside each year for teaching planning. NEW ELA [textbook] adoption was aligned over the summer to incorporate SEAL units."

"SEAL coaches have been provided additional PD to build and support their skill in coaching peers. Planning time for SEAL teachers has been negotiated in the current contract for teachers."

As shown in Figure 8, while all district leaders *agree* or *strongly agree* that resources are allocated for SEAL, only 79% of principals indicated they *agree* and *strongly agree*. Both respondent groups reported similarly to the item on policies and decisions regarding SEAL.

Figure 8
Comparison of District Leader and Principal Perceptions: District Resources and Policies Related to SEAL Implementation
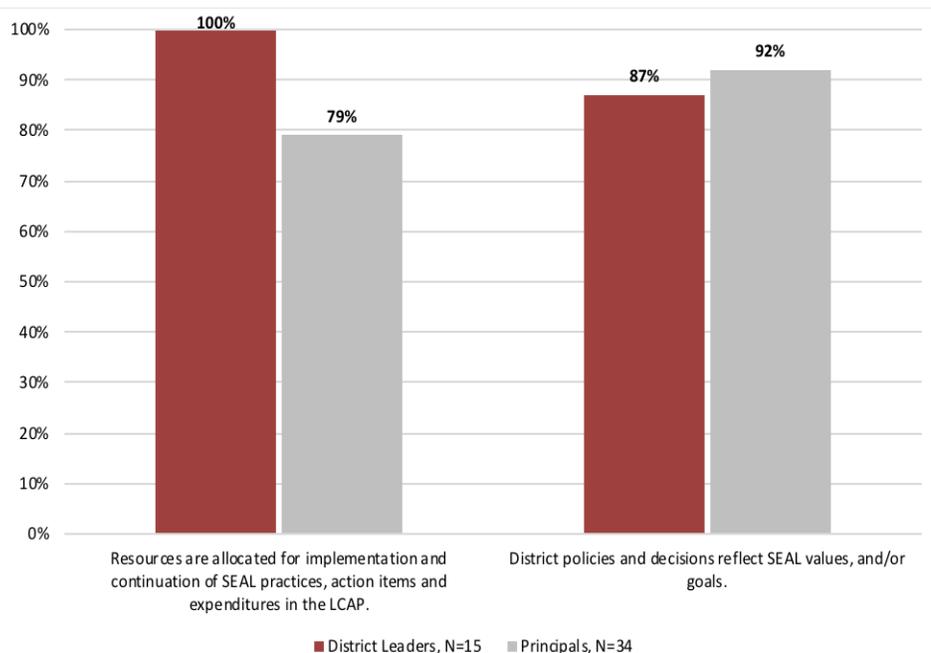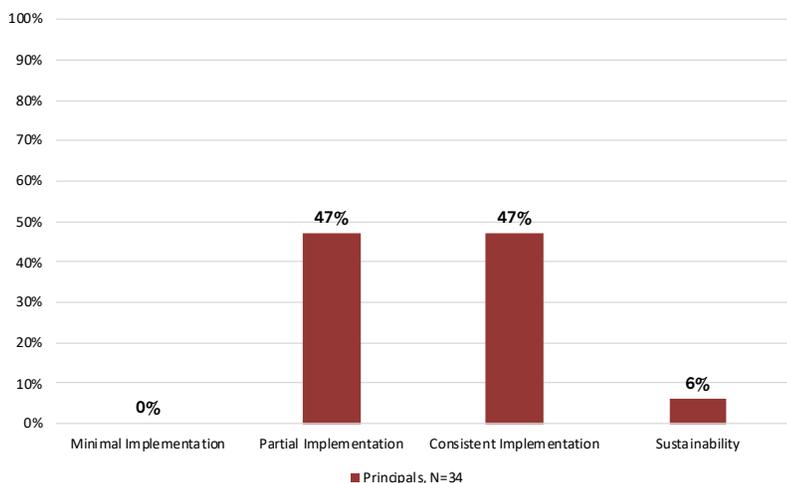

SEAL Implementation at the School Level

An equal number of principals (47%) indicated their respective schools are implementing SEAL at either the *partial implementation* or the *consistent implementation* level (see Figure 9). None of the principal respondents reported implementing SEAL at the *minimal* level.

Figure 9
Principal Perceptions related to the Level of SEAL Implementation at their School (N = 34)

Highlighted below are examples of SEAL implementation reported by principals that indicated their respective school was implementing SEAL at either a *partial implementation* or *consistent implementation* level.

Principals: Increased or Improved SEAL Implementation at their School (N = 15)

Principals provided the following examples of positive, increased, or improved SEAL Implementation at their respective school:

Principals indicating *partial implementation* of SEAL at their school
"Our teaching staff is very excited about the implementation. As an administrator, it has been difficult to integrate SEAL practices with other initiatives at the school."

"More grade level teams have completed SEAL training and work together to refine the units. School has purchased leveled books aligned with SEAL themes to be used for Guided Reading - we have them in a shared library (since last year) - teachers were able to order more books for the next school year aligned to their SEAL themes both for their classroom libraries and the shared library."

Principals indicating *consistent implementation* of SEAL at their school
"Units are consistently implemented across grade levels at the school site and teachers are employing SEAL strategies and visual supports on a regular basis as part of this implementation. As a result of SEAL teacher planning days, teachers have been allocated the time and support in order to continue with deeper implementation of units and strategies. During walkthroughs I am able to see that SEAL Strategies are in place in order to support our students with their overall language development and content area literacy."

"Collaboration has been so valuable this school year, giving our teachers an opportunity to discuss, plan, refine SEAL lesson/ implementation. Coaches have offered their support to grade level teams and teachers have been very receptive to that support."

SEAL Implementation at the Classroom Level

On survey items related to the implementation of SEAL at the classroom level, district leaders and principals responded similarly about the standards-based, thematic units that are intentionally organized to develop language and their use of strategies designed to gather formative information on student progress. Figures 10 and 11 summarize their responses.

Figure 10
District Leader Perceptions about SEAL Implementation at the Classroom Level
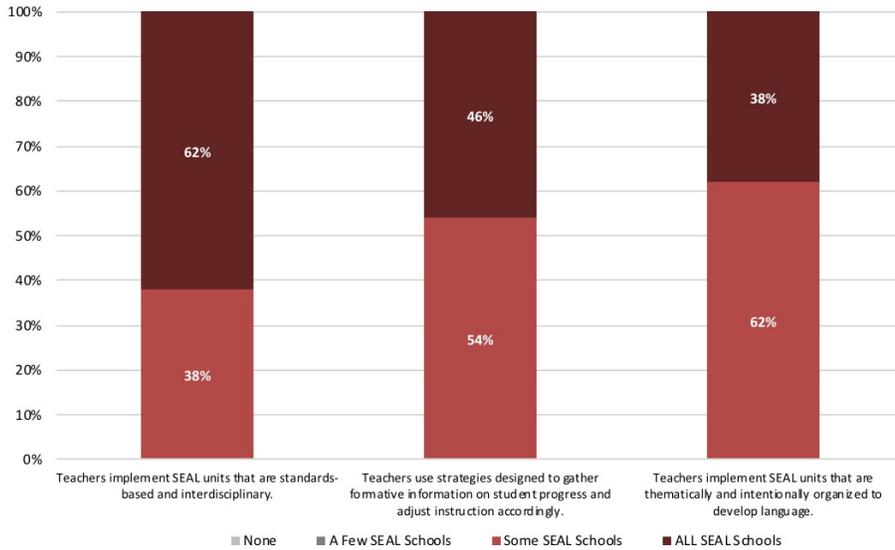

Total district leaders responding (*N* = 15)

• 62% reported teachers at *all schools* implement SEAL standards-based units

• 54% indicated teachers *some schools* use formative data on student progress to adjust instruction

• 62% indicated teachers at *some schools* implement SEAL thematic units intentionally organized to develop language

Figure 11
Principal Perceptions about SEAL Implementation at the Classroom Level
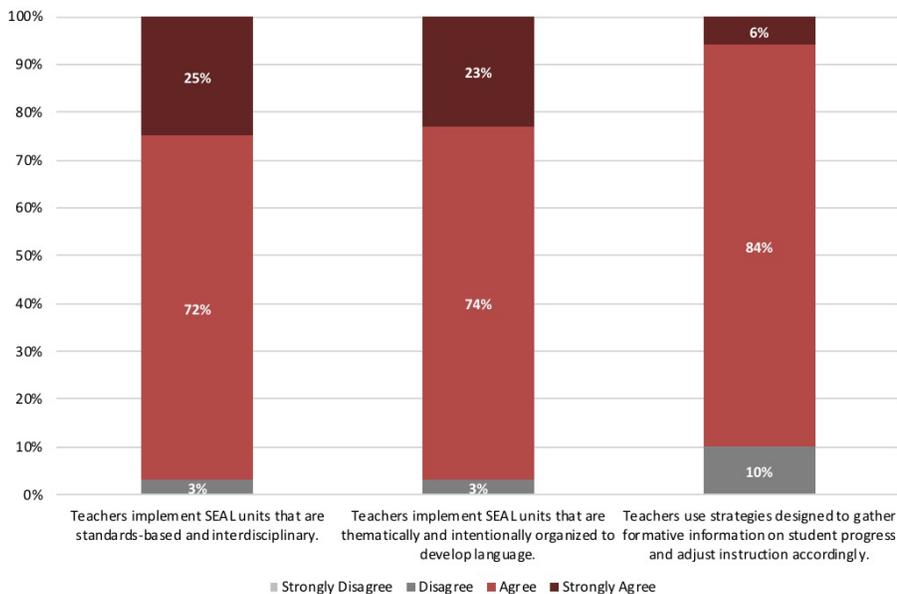
Total principals responding (*N* = 34)

A majority of principals *agree* that teachers:
• Implement SEAL units that are standards-based (72%)

• Implement SEAL units that are thematically and intentionally organized to develop language (74%)

• Use strategies designed to gather formative information on student progress (84%) and adjust instruction

Part 3: Summary of Findings and Implications

Findings: Similar Perspectives of District Leaders and Principals

Strengths. Based on similar perspectives of district leaders and principals, survey results indicate the following areas as strengths of SEAL implementation in districts, schools, and classrooms:

There were three areas that included the highest-rated items by both groups

- overall effects of SEAL on teachers and student -- *g*reater teacher collaboration, and more joyful, confident and engaged students
- implementation of SEAL units -- SEAL teachers implement SEAL units that are standards-based, interdisciplinary, and thematically and intentionally organized to develop language
- language development - teachers promote the use of academic vocabulary, and the use of complex language structures

District alignment and support of SEAL implementation were identified as strengths by over three-fourths of respondent agree or strongly agree that:

- their districts conducted intentional planning to implement and sustain SEAL
- district policies align with SEAL values and/or goals, and SEAL is integrated into district systems and practices
- resources are allocated for the implementation of SEAL

Respondents indicated that teachers implement SEAL standards-based thematic units that are intentionally organized to develop language.   They also indicated that teachers use of formative data on student progress to adjust instruction.

Areas for Improvement. Based on similar perspectives of district leaders and principals, their responses indicate the following areas of SEAL implementation, the lowest rated items, that could be improved:

- data use to monitor SEAL implementation and outcomes and inform continuous improvement of SEAL implementation
- primary language instruction or support used intentionally in all EL program models (i.e. Dual Language, Dual Language Immersion, Bilingual, Structured English Immersion, English Language Mainstream)

Findings: District and School Levels of SEAL Implementation

District leaders rated their districts' levels of implementing SEAL More than half indicated that districts are at the *consistent implementation* level. About one-third indicated that districts are at the *partial implementation* level. Only one district leader indicated his/her district was at the *sustainability* level

Principals rated their schools' levels of implementing SEAL. Approximately half indicated their schools are the *partial implementation* level. Approximately half indicated their schools are at the *consistent implementation* level. Only two principals indicated their schools are at the *sustainability* level

Findings: Principal Participation in SEAL Activities

 Principals indicated they attended *all* or *most* of these types of sessions: principal convenings (82%), and instructional rounds (55%). Principals attended *none* of the sessions for: unit development days (33%), summer bridge (25%), instructional rounds (15%), and SEAL Professional Development Modules (9%).

Implications

Principals are expected to attend SEAL principal convenings and instruction rounds. Eighty-two percent of Principals indicated that they attended *all or most of the sessions* of the principal convenings. Fewer principals (55%) indicated that they attended *all of most of* the session of the instructional rounds. The frequency of principal participation in these SEAL activities may be related to the level of implementation of SEAL at their schools. There may need to be more specific agreements made with districts and prinipals regarding principal participation in SEAL activities.

District leaders and principal responses related to data use for continuous improvement ndicated a need to strengthen that area. District and principal convenings and other SEAL support activities could help to strengthen the use of data for continuous improvement, and for sustainability. Principal and district leader convenings could also be helpful forums, providing participants with opportunities to share the indicators and action steps that have helped move SEAL to *consistent implementation* or toward *sustainability*. For example, one district leader cited the following as that district's indicators of the positive, *consistent implementation* of SEAL:

- principal participation in convenings and instructional rounds
- LCAP goals include SEAL implementation
- professional development plan includes SEAL
- all coaches are SEAL trained
- coach role is clearly defined (job description) and coach evaluation includes SEAL implementation

The indicators they share could also be linked to the DOI, leading into professional development on how that instrument could be used to provide continuous improvement data.