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## SEAL Coach-Facilitator Skills and Implementation Perceptions

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## Leader Perspectives on System-Level Implementation: Study #4

### SEAL Coach-Facilitator Skills and Implementation Perceptions



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

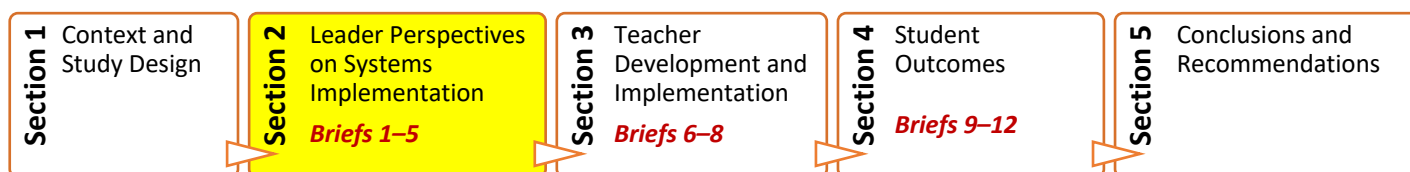
The [Sobrato Early Academic Language Model \(SEAL\)](#) is a preschool through third grade Model that powerfully develops students’ language, literacy and academic skills within the context of a whole-school initiative. This intensive approach to language and literacy education is woven into all aspects 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 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 2, Brief 4 - Research Focus**

The focus of this research and evaluation brief is on the results of the *SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey* and reports on SEAL Coach-Facilitators’ abilities and perceptions to support the implementation of the SEAL Model and practices at the site- and classroom-levels. It includes aggregate findings from the SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey administered in spring 2017 and 2018. Part one of this brief provides an overview of the purpose, methods, instrumentation, and participants. Part two includes descriptive findings of how the Coach-Facilitator role is supported. Part three describes the role of Coach-Facilitators in supporting the implementation of SEAL at the classroom level. Part four provides results from survey items on the effectiveness of implementation. The final section provides a summary of findings and implications.

## **Coach-Facilitator Development and Implementation Research and Evaluation 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?

### **Part One: Study Methods and Participants**

#### **Participants**

SEAL Coach-Facilitators who supported site-level implementation in schools where SEAL had been implemented for three or more years were invited to participate in the survey. In the SEAL Model, SEAL Coach-Facilitators are district employees who facilitate teacher implementation of SEAL classroom practices. They extend SEAL teachers' professional learning, support thematic unit development, conduct observations, provide demonstration lessons, and employ active questioning. SEAL Coach-Facilitators also serve to support the site administrator in school-wide implementation, at the discretion of the district/school. A total of 43 surveys were collected from spring 2017 (n=22) and spring 2018 (n=21) representing a 96% response rate based on information provided by the SEAL Leadership Team.

#### **Instrument - Coach-Facilitator Survey**

The CEEL research team developed the SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey (see Section 2 – Appendix N). It consists of 34 predominantly close-ended items plus four open-ended items organized into three sections: (1) demographic data; (2) SEAL Coach-Facilitator role, coaching culture, and support; and (3) effect on implementation of SEAL Model and practices. The survey allowed for quantitative descriptive statistics to depict Coach-Facilitator practices as well as a qualitative description of their successes, barriers, and ideas for improvement. However, not all participants responded to all survey items.

#### **Research Design and Data Analysis**

Use of the SEAL Coach-Facilitator Survey allowed for a mixed-methods approach to address the research question above. Descriptive statistics were performed for the quantitative analysis in order to examine SEAL Coach-Facilitator demographic information and for Likert-scale items related to Coach-Facilitators' perspectives on how SEAL professional development supported their role and skill development. For the qualitative component, the research team used content analytic procedures<sup>1</sup> to analyze open-ended responses. This approach provided insights on levels of implementation of the SEAL Model as well as the role of the SEAL Coach-Facilitator in support of implementation.

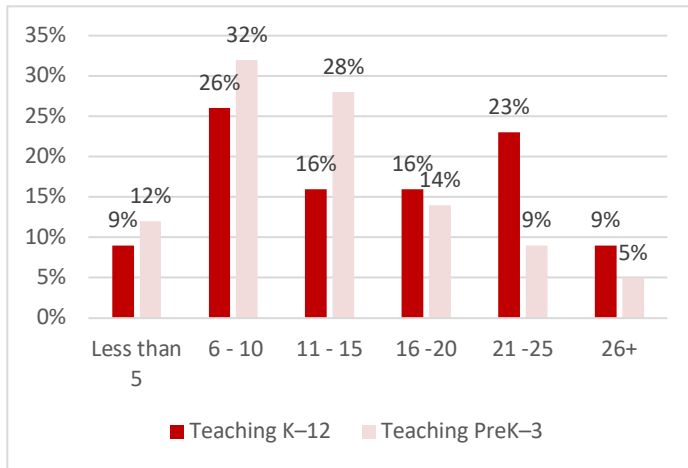
#### **Who are the SEAL Coach-Facilitator survey respondents?**

Figures 2 and 3 provide background information on the SEAL Coach-Facilitators who completed a survey.

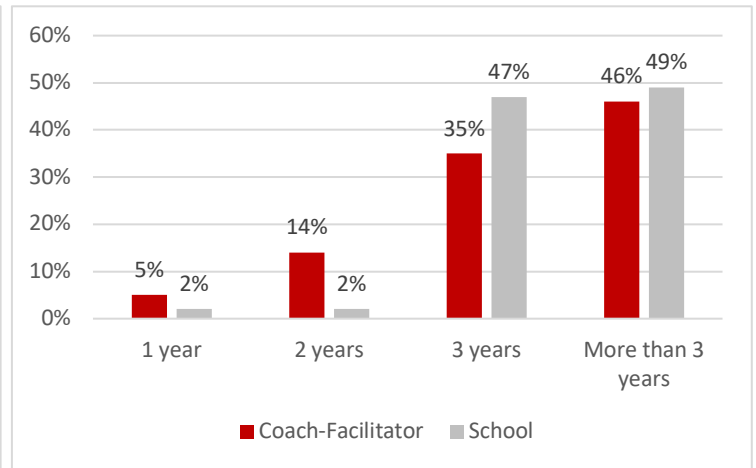
Nearly two-thirds have taught 11 years or more in K–12 and 55% have taught 11 years or more in grades PreK–3. In addition, more than three-fifths have been involved in the implementing the SEAL Model for 3 or more years and nearly all of their schools have been involved in SEAL implementation for 3 or more years.

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson, S. (2001). Education and grounded theory. In R. Sherman, & R.B. Webb. (Eds.). *Qualitative research in education. Focus and methods*. Routledge Falmer.

**Figure 2**  
Teaching Experience (N=43)



**Figure 3**  
Number of Years in SEAL Program (N=43)



All SEAL Coach-Facilitators have either Bilingual or English Learner Authorization. Nearly three-fifths (61%) of Coach-Facilitators reported having a Bilingual Authorization (Bilingual/Cross-cultural and Academic Language Development). Additionally, nearly one-third (30%) had an English Learner Authorization, with nine percent holding a Cross-cultural and Academic Language Development (CLAD)/English Learner Authorization (see Section 2 – Appendix O for additional Coach-Facilitator demographics).

## Part Two: Support for the SEAL Coach-Facilitator Role

Part Two presents findings on the utility of Coach-Facilitators’ professional development and the frequency of engagement in activities that support the enactment of the SEAL Coach-Facilitator role. SEAL Coach-Facilitators are expected to attend professional learning sessions alongside their classroom teachers (see Section 1 Narrative for explanation of SEAL professional learning cycles). 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.

### **To what extent does SEAL Professional Development support the SEAL Coach-Facilitator role?**

Figure 4 delineates several types of SEAL professional development sessions and resources and reports on what SEAL Coach-Facilitators found to be most helpful toward supporting their development of knowledge and skills to enact the defined SEAL Coach-Facilitator role. Figure 5 details the frequency of engagement in professional development and other support activities to develop coaching skills.

**Figure 4**

*Helping Increase SEAL Coaches' Knowledge about the SEAL Model and Practices (N=33)*

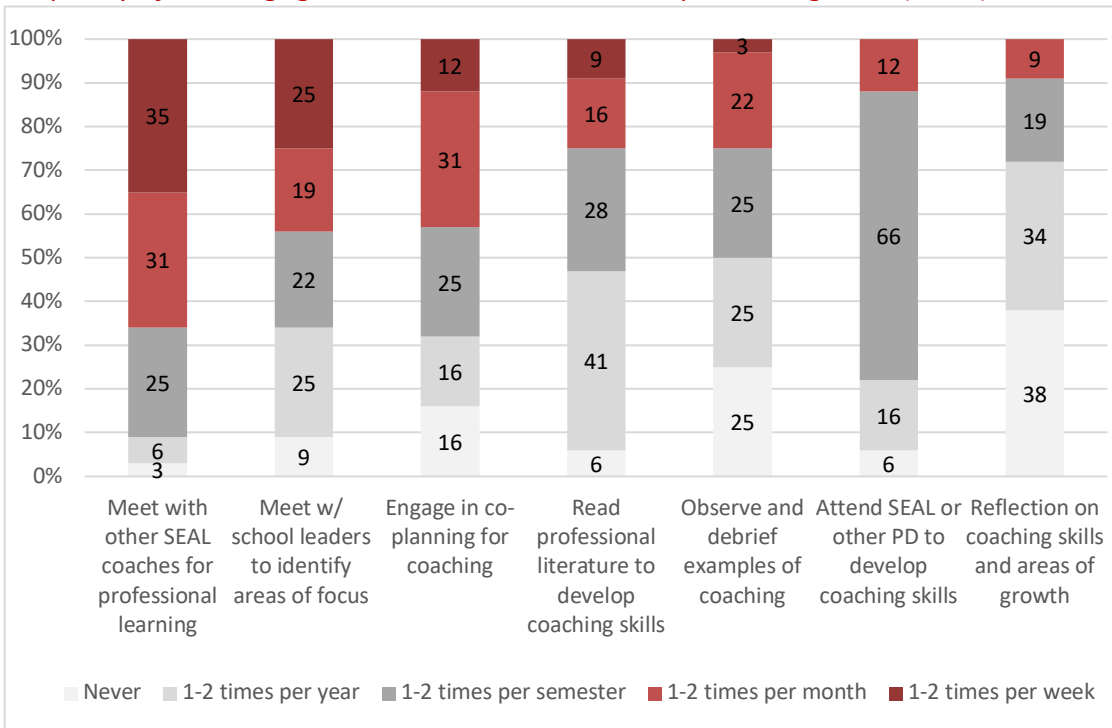


Coach-Facilitators reported high levels of helpfulness for professional development sessions, support, and resources.

Note. SEAL Coach Convenings provide role-specific support.

**Figure 5**

*Frequency of and Engagement in Activities to Develop Coaching Skills (N=32)*



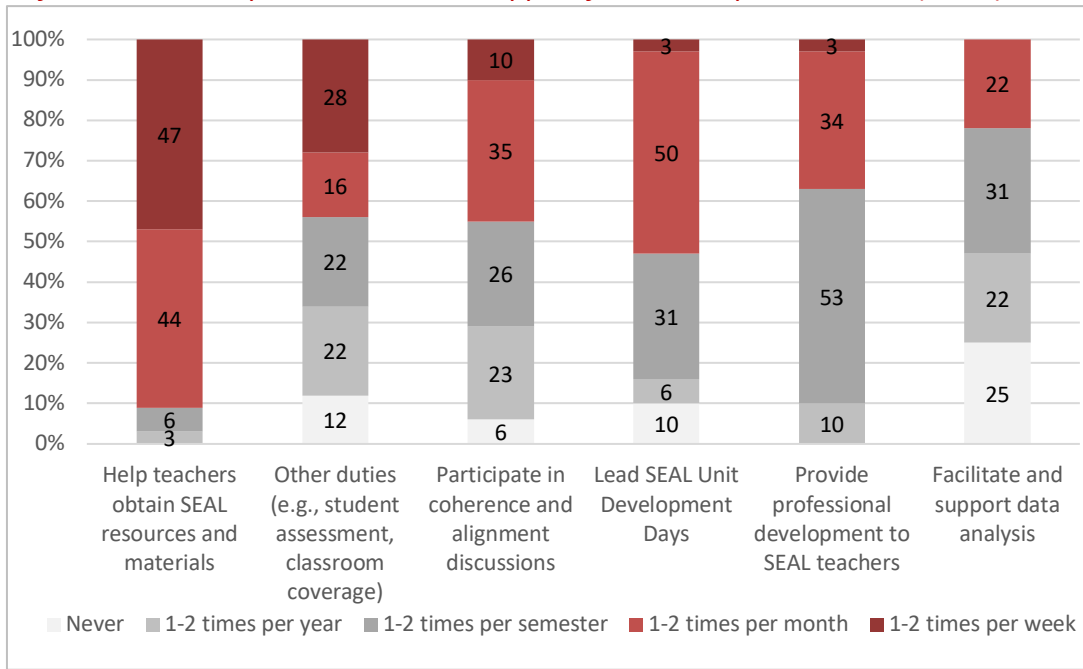
**Most Frequent:** Coach collaboration across SEAL schools

**Least Frequent:** Activities to support development of coaching skills and reflection on identified areas of growth

## Part Three: SEAL Coach-Facilitators' Role in Supporting SEAL Implementation at the Classroom Level

This section describes the ways SEAL Coach-Facilitators reported how they support SEAL implementation at the classroom level. Coach-Facilitators were asked to gauge the frequency of their engagement in key activities that promote leadership and/or support SEAL implementation (see Figure 6 and Figure 7).

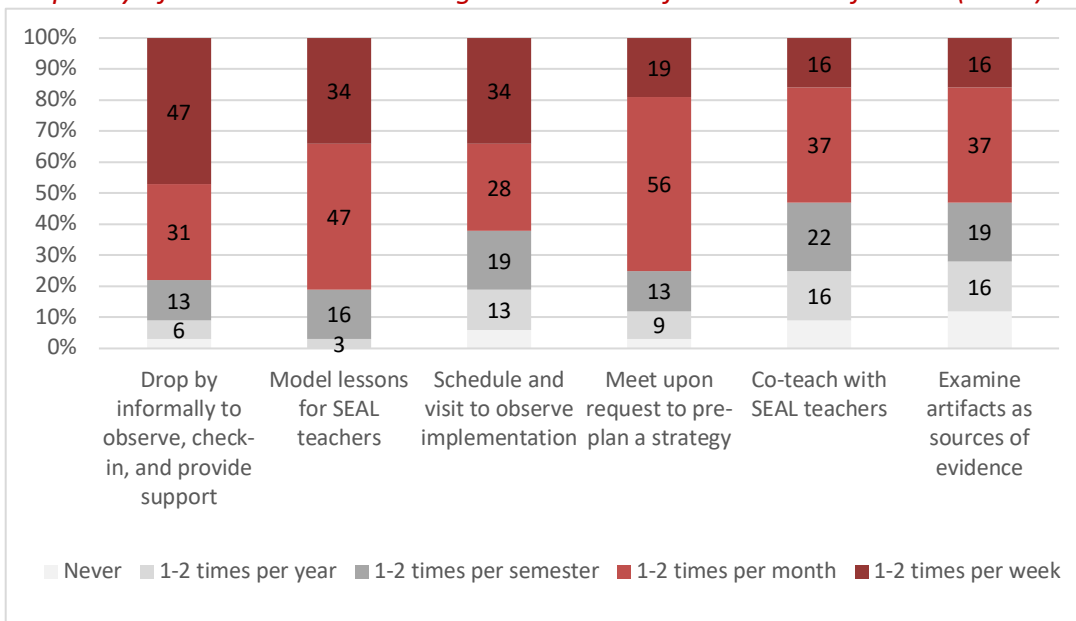
**Figure 6**  
*Professional Development and Other Support for SEAL Implementation (N=32)*



Helping teachers obtain SEAL resources and materials occurs most frequently.

Facilitating and supporting data analysis occurs less frequently.

**Figure 7**  
*Frequency of In-Classroom Coaching and Guidance for Teacher Reflection (N=32)*



Informal visits to observe, check-in, and provide support occurs most frequently, on a weekly basis.

Co-teaching and examining artifacts as sources of evidence occur least frequently.

SEAL Coach-Facilitators were asked to identify any gaps in the SEAL Coach-Facilitator role that, if filled, could maximize their impact on the implementation of the SEAL Model. They were also asked to describe the barriers they encounter in providing in-class support. The following finding and supporting themes emerged from the qualitative analysis:

### **Finding 1. Addressing Structural and Interpersonal Barriers Supports SEAL Coach-Facilitators' Role**

#### **Develop coaches' knowledge about SEAL in advance of their work with teachers**

*"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, as would a timeline of what and how best [to] support each strategy after its introduction."*

#### **Build relationships before coaching**

*"It takes time to build relationships, and it takes more time to coach. It also takes support of the site administrator and district administrators."*

*"Teachers [are] unwilling to have someone they are unfamiliar with come into the classroom."*

#### **Manage coaching responsibilities**

*"As a coach, and when there's not much support staff, you are pulled in many different directions and it is hard to find enough time to go into the classroom."*

*"In a small district, the 'burden' of preparing for, facilitating, and following up from Unit Development Days encroached upon availability to coach, co-plan, model, etc. Also, the materials management piece in Year 2 became an excessive time burden without clerical support."*

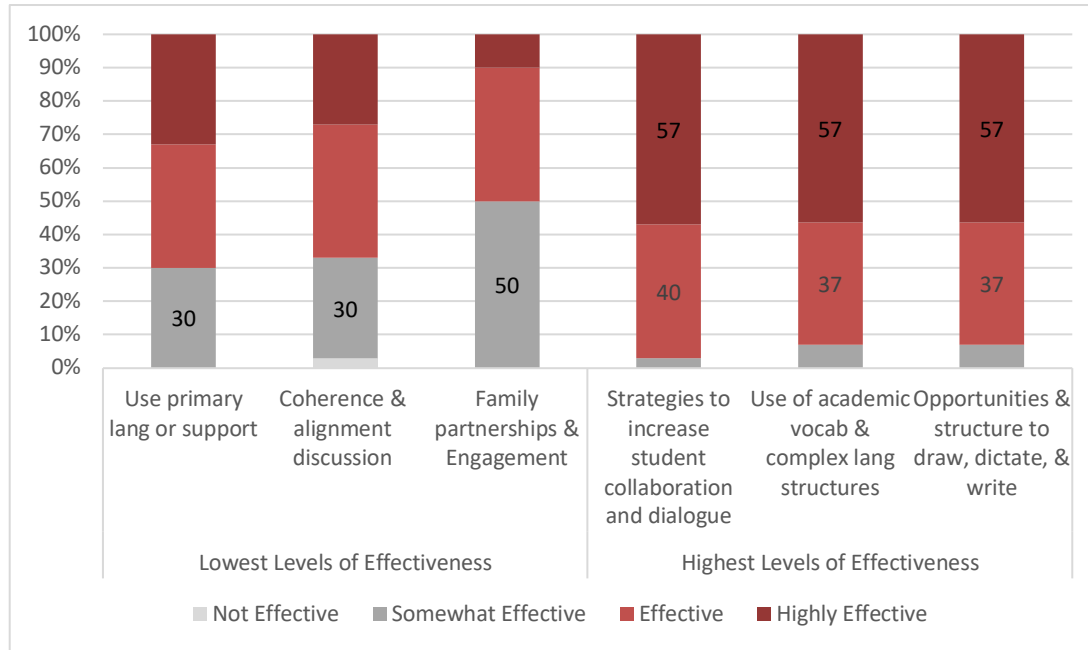
### **Part Four: Perceived Effectiveness for Classroom and School-Level Implementation**

In this section, the findings highlight the level of implementation of the SEAL Model and respondents' perceived effectiveness to influence classroom- and school-level implementation. Figure 8 demonstrates the lowest and highest survey items in relation to the SEAL Depth of Implementation (DOI) tool (see Section 2 – Attachment O for full survey results). The DOI tool consists of six focus areas that align with SEAL's Foundational Principles and Eleven High Leverage Practices. They include: (1) Leadership, (2) Professional Learning, (3) Curriculum, (4) Instruction, (5) Environment, and (6) Family Partnerships. See Section 2, Brief 1 for more information about the SEAL DOI Tool and Study. Figure 9 and Figure 10 present the highest (57%) and lowest (30%) survey items related to Coach-Facilitators' perceptions on the effectiveness of their functions and school-wide impact.

**Coach-Facilitators' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of SEAL implementation**

**Figure 8**

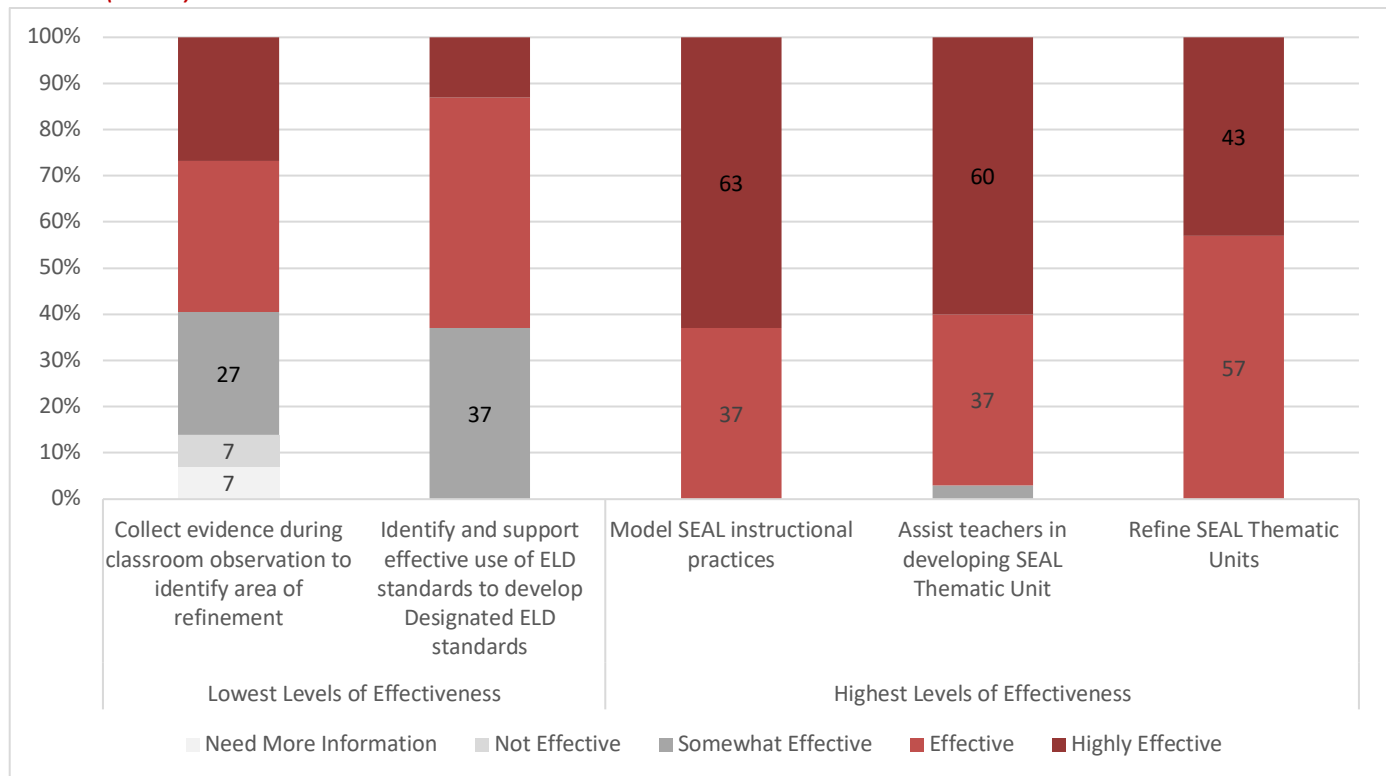
*Perceived Impact of SEAL Depth of Implementation in Target Areas, Highest and Lowest Items (N=30)*



**Depth of Implementation:**  
 The lowest items (from L-R) mapped onto Area 6 Family Partnerships, Area 4D Instruction, and Area 1 Leadership.  
  
 The highest Items (from L-R) mapped onto Area 5 Environment, Area 4A, and Area 4 Instruction.

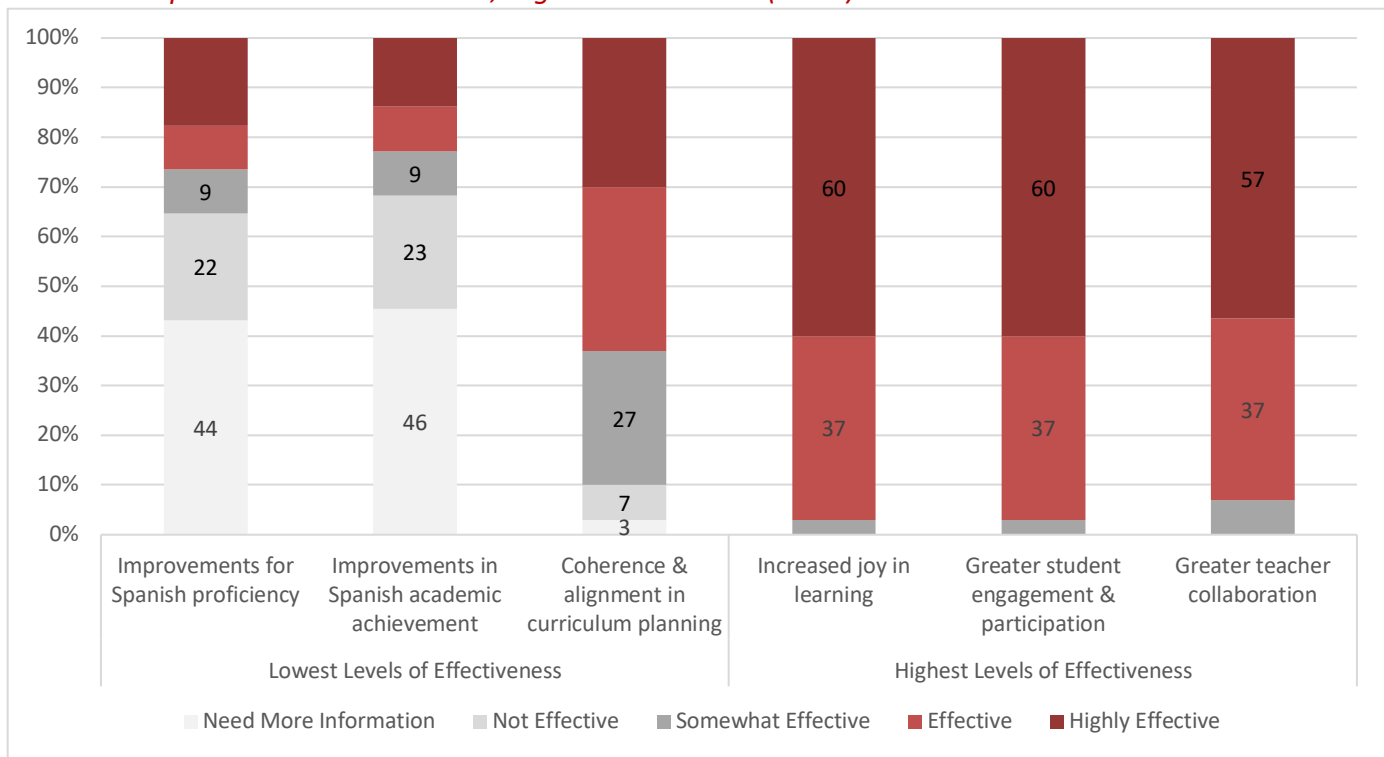
**Figure 9**

*SEAL Coach-Facilitators' Self-Perceptions (or confidence) on Areas of Coaching Effectiveness - Highest and Lowest (N=30)*





**Figure 10**  
**Perceived Impact as Coach-Facilitator, Highest and Lowest (N=30)**



Note. Number of respondents ranged from 22–30, based on applicability of some items (e.g. Improvement for Spanish proficiency)

SEAL Coach-facilitators’ insights about how to increase implementation of the SEAL Model at high levels are revealed in the following finding, accompanied by representative quotes from the field:

**Finding 2. Collective Knowledge and Ownership at the Systems-Level Increases Degree of SEAL Model Implementation**

**Leaders’ deeper understanding of the SEAL Model**

*“Clear understanding of how the SEAL strategies build on and relate to one another. Clear understanding of the role of Performance Tasks in informing instruction during the six-week unit...Awareness of potential pitfalls of strategies and implementation beforehand.”*

**District support and involvement are key**

*“Plenty of trainer support and more importantly, district support—both financially and otherwise.”*

*“[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.”*

## Part Five: Summary of Findings and Implications

The findings presented in this research and evaluation brief highlight SEAL Coach-Facilitators' professional development as well as their perspectives on the effectiveness to support the implementation of the SEAL Model at the school and classroom-levels. The following presents general findings and implications.

### SEAL Coach-Facilitators' Skills and Practices

- Meeting with other SEAL Coaches was the most frequent activity that supported Coach-Facilitators' professional learning, coaching skills, and SEAL implementation efforts.
- Coach-Facilitators most frequently conducted informal visits to observe, check-in, and provide support for obtaining resources and materials.

### Effectiveness of Coaching Support and Classroom and Site-Level Implementation

- Coach-Facilitators felt they were most effective when modeling SEAL instructional practices, refining SEAL thematic units, and assisting teachers in developing SEAL thematic units.
- Coach-Facilitators felt they had the most impact when promoting greater student engagement, teacher collaboration, and joy of learning.
- The highest levels of SEAL implementation aligned to the DOI included:
  - Strategies to increase student collaboration and dialogue (DOI Area 5 Environment),
  - Use of academic vocabulary and complex language structure (DOI Area 4A Instruction), and
  - Opportunities and structure to support language development through the use of draw, dictate, and write strategies (DOI Area 4C Instruction).

### Implications: Improving Support and Levels of Implementation

- Coach-Facilitators need assistance to address the barriers they encounter in supporting teachers. In particular:
  - Helping to build relationships with teachers, and
  - Balancing multiple roles.
- Coach-Facilitators' perception of their effectiveness can be addressed by deepening their knowledge of the SEAL Model and practices, helping to manage responsibilities, and leveraging school/district support.
- More opportunities are needed for Coach-Facilitators to collaborate with site and district leaders to support the implementation of the SEAL Model.

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



<http://www.wexford.org>



<http://soe.lmu.edu/centers/ceel>



<http://www.sobrato.com/SEAL>

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