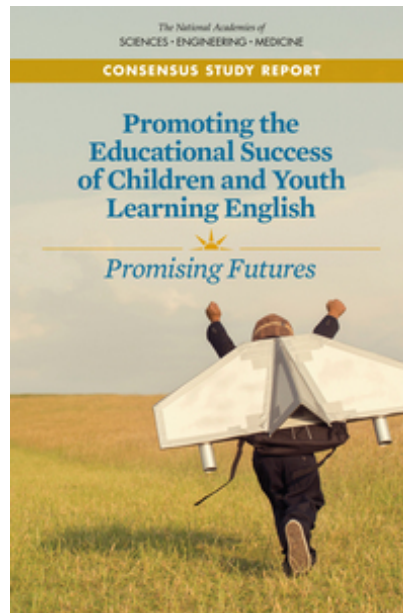


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## Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures



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# Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English

## *Promising Futures*

Committee on Fostering School Success for English Learners:  
Toward New Directions in Policy, Practice, and Research

Ruby Takanishi and Suzanne Le Menestrel, *Editors*

Board on Children, Youth, and Families  
and  
Board on Science Education

Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education

Health and Medicine Division

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**BOX 7-1**  
**Sobrato Early Academic Literacy (SEAL) Program**

SEAL is a promising approach that aims to connect ELs' pre-K experiences with the early primary grades, K-3, in both predominantly English and bilingual settings. As of the 2016-2017 school year, the SEAL model had expanded to 87 California schools in 16 districts, reaching more than 39,000 students (Sobrato Family Foundation, 2016). Based on Common Core State Standards and the California state preschool learning foundations, SEAL emphasizes language-rich instruction delivered through integrated thematic units that embed language development within the academic content of social studies and science, with a strong focus on oral language and vocabulary development and extensive parental engagement practices.

To promote an affirming environment and to support students' first language (L1), the SEAL model explicitly emphasizes the value of bilingualism and supports students' use of their L1 to discuss their culture, family, and identity. Building strong relationships between families and teachers is also an important component of the SEAL model. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the schools and to develop their own literacy to foster their child's development. Some of the strategies used to engage parents and families and build relationships between parents and teachers include providing classes in English as a second language for parents at the school, recruiting and training parents as classroom volunteers, communicating with parents regularly using multiple forms of communication, providing guidance for teachers on how to incorporate the culture and experiences of students from diverse backgrounds, offering book loan programs that provide students with books to read at home with their families, and conducting workshops for parents on how to support language and literacy development at home and on the importance of the L1 and the family's culture.

In 2015, an evaluation of the SEAL program examined the outcomes of Spanish-speaking students who participated in the SEAL preschool program and continued participating in the program in grades K-3. Outcome data focused on language, literacy, mathematics/cognitive, and social outcomes—components that are the focus of SEAL. After 5 full years of program implementation, the evaluation yielded the following findings (Lindholm-Leary, 2015):

- There was a high level of implementation of SEAL, with more than two-thirds of teachers being rated as high implementers. Further, there was no difference in level of implementation across school sites. While teachers were more likely to be rated as high implementers in classes with bilingual as compared with English instruction, the difference was not statistically significant.
- TSEAL students who received the full intervention from pre-K to grade 3 were compared with partial SEAL students who received the same in-

tervention in elementary school but did not participate in pre-K and may have had less elementary school experience with SEAL as well (only 1-2 years instead of 3-4). In assessments during grades 2 and 3, the English language proficiency, English reading/language arts, and math scores, as well as Spanish reading/language arts and math scores, of SEAL students who had participated in the program since kindergarten were significantly higher than the SEAL scores of students who had not.

- Developmental profiles (Desired Results Developmental Profile [DRDP], California English Language Development Test [CELDT], California Standards Test [CST], Standards-based Tests in Spanish [STS]) of SEAL students were compared with those of other groups, including district and state averages, to determine whether SEAL students were showing lower, similar, or higher performance growth on the assessments. In comparisons of the SEAL test scores with district and state averages, the SEAL scores, especially for children who had fully participated in the program from pre-K to grade 3, generally were comparable to or higher than the district and state averages. This was true at the pre-K level on the DRDP in language, literacy, and math; on the CELDT in comparisons with district and state peers (by grades 3 and 4); and on the CST and STS, on which full and sometimes partial SEAL students scored as well as or higher than district and state peers in reading/language arts and math.
- In the SEAL program, some parents choose to have their children instructed in structured English immersion (SEI) classrooms where instruction is predominantly in English, while others choose to have their children instructed bilingually. Overall, children who were instructed in SEAL SEI classrooms and those instructed in SEAL bilingual classrooms began at low levels on measures of language, literacy, and math and showed significant growth. In grades 1 and 2, students enrolled in SEI classrooms tended to score higher than students enrolled in bilingual classrooms. By grades 3 and 4, however, students receiving bilingual instruction scored similarly to or higher than students instructed in SEI classrooms.
- SEAL had a significant impact on parents and literacy activities in the home. Half of the SEAL parents reported reading to their children on a daily basis and engaging regularly in literacy-related activities. Parental engagement was significantly related to student outcomes.

These findings indicate that SEAL is a promising approach for developing English proficiency and subject matter learning based on the Common Core State Standards for low-income Hispanic/Latino students, including those living in immigrant families. A large-scale evaluation of SEAL using Common Core assessments is now under way with a representative sample of 7,000-10,000 SEAL students (Sobrato Family Foundation, 2016).