

SEAL

Sobrato Early Academic Language PreK-3 Model



Powerful, Joyful, Rigorous Language and Literacy Learning

The
SOBRATO
Family Foundation

June 2018

INTRODUCTION

SEAL is a preschool through third grade program of the Sobrato Family Foundation. SEAL is designed to build the capacity of preschools and elementary schools to powerfully develop the language and literacy skills of young English Learner children, and to close the academic achievement gap by fourth grade. It is also a model of language-rich, joyful and rigorous education for all children.

SEAL develops rich, powerful language and literacy in the context of delivering a full academic curriculum. SEAL classrooms are alive with language! Language and literacy education are woven into all aspects of the school day. Children use high-level, complex language to talk about what they are learning, ask questions, make predictions, and think through solutions to academic and social problems and tasks. Teachers model rich, expressive language and create environments where academic vocabulary and concepts come to life. Students actively collaborate, solve problems, and engage in whole- and small-group activities as they pursue and construct knowledge based upon science and social studies standards. Books in multiple languages are easily accessible, and student-produced work and writing adorns the walls.



Teachers model rich, expressive language and create environments where academic vocabulary and concepts come to life.

For young English Learners, SEAL creates the learning conditions that build language and literacy skills necessary for participation in the academic world and the world at large. Whenever possible, SEAL promotes the development of biliteracy, affirming and supporting home language for English Learner children and families, and developing high levels of proficiency in both Spanish and English. For all students, the SEAL classroom brings to life the rigor and richness called for by the Common Core Language Arts standards, the California English Language Development standards, the California ELA/ELD Framework, the California Preschool Learning Foundations and curriculum frameworks, and the 2017 California English Learner Roadmap policy.

WHY SEAL? ADDRESSING A NEED

English Learners represent the fastest growing student population in the United States, now numbering over five million (double the enrollment just 15 years ago). These students must learn English while mastering increasingly rigorous grade-level academic content taught in English. The vast majority of English Learners (four out of five) who enter U.S. schools are Spanish speakers. These children are eight times more likely to drop out of school than their non-Hispanic, native English-speaking peers. In California, close to half of English learners who enroll in kindergarten are likely to become “Long Term English Learners” who accrue irreparable academic gaps as they move through school, and never develop the levels of English proficiency necessary for academic success. As the nation implements 21st century Common Core era standards, the urgency of putting into place powerful schooling that prepares English Learners for college and career readiness is greater than ever. Quality early education for these dual language learners that addresses all areas of development – socio-emotional, relational, linguistic, cognitive – is needed to set an early foundation for learning and success.

Tackling these academic challenges requires educational programs, curriculum and instruction that address head-on the language barriers faced by English Learners. School leaders need models of research-based programs and approaches that will establish a powerful foundation in language and early literacy for their English Learners. Teachers need resources and training to turn their classrooms into environments where English learners thrive. Parents need information and channels to connect to their children’s schooling and become partners with teachers in supporting the language, literacy and cognitive development needed for school success.

In response to these needs, the Sobrato Family Foundation developed the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) model. Designed by Dr. Laurie Olsen, a national expert in English language learner education, and piloted initially in California’s San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, SEAL pulls together the most current research on effective practices and implements the knowledge base from effective school improvement. It focuses on meeting the demands of the Common Core era standards while addressing the needs of English Learners, their parents, and their teachers. And, SEAL works with all classrooms and teachers PreK-3 in a school to create a coherent, articulated and collaborative system of high quality primary grades education.

The Goal of the SEAL Model

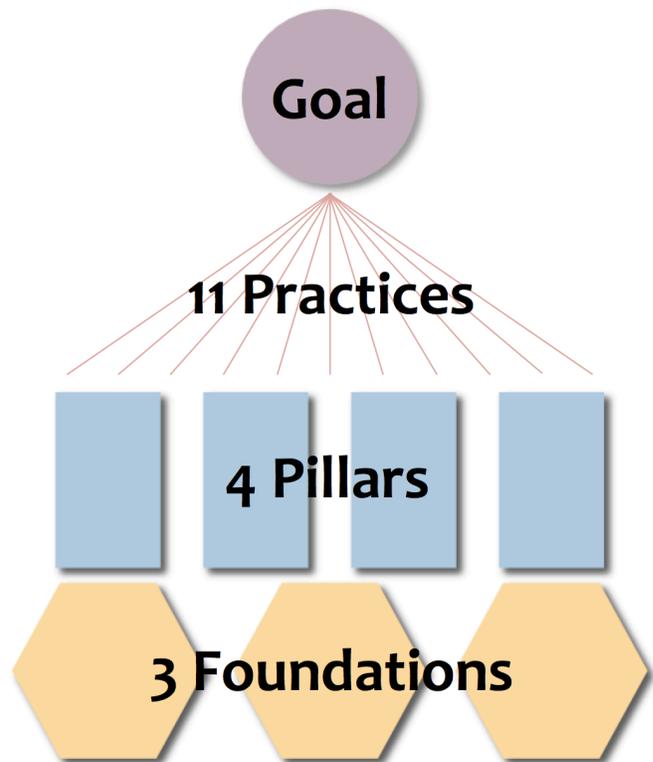
To develop academically proficient and literate students who love reading and writing, express themselves articulately in two languages, are joyful and confident learners, and are active participants in their learning.

Taking a PreK-3 perspective, SEAL starts English Learners with a language-rich preschool and Transitional Kindergarten program that prepares them for kindergarten. The kinder program builds seamlessly from this preschool experience, developing the skills and language foundation needed for academic success in grades 1–3 and beyond. It is an articulated approach that knits together early childhood education and primary grades in a coherent pathway to academic success.

While the initial impetus for the model was to address the needs of English Learners, the approach has been found to be powerful for all students because of SEAL’s implementation of the Common Core standards that scaffolds all students into rigorous language and academic literacy, and meaningful, deep engagement with academic content.

Three elementary schools and thirteen feeder preschools in two California school districts (Redwood City School District and San Jose Unified School District) piloted the SEAL model beginning in 2008. These SEAL pilot sites were 95% minority enrollment, including 90% Hispanic and 70% English learner populations. The schools serve more Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and English language learners compared to other schools in their districts and in the state. The preschool programs in pilot sites included state-funded and community-based preschools. Positive results from the longitudinal evaluation that tracked the progress of students in the pilot sites attest to the power of the model to close longstanding achievement gaps and to accelerate language proficiency.

Now, viewing SEAL as both a compelling response to English Learner needs and an exciting vehicle to enact Common Core era standards for all students, additional districts throughout California are replicating the model. Early childhood educators see SEAL as a model that aligns instruction and curriculum between early childhood and the primary (K–3) grades, preparing children in a developmentally appropriate manner for kindergarten and a successful academic journey in the primary grades. Primary grade teachers are excited by the level of student engagement and the high-level production of language they witness among children in SEAL pilot classrooms. Educational leaders seeking to close the achievement gap for English Learner and Latino children look to SEAL as a model that ramps up the rigor and effectiveness of early literacy education, and speaks (finally) to the challenges of overcoming persistent gaps between English Learners and others. District leaders find SEAL to be a model for supporting meaningful instructional change and building coherence and articulation across the system.



This publication presents:

- **3 research foundations** behind the SEAL model,
- **4 components (pillars)** of the SEAL model,
- **11 high leverage pedagogical practices** put in place through SEAL,
- the approach to SEAL replication and implementation, and
- a summary of findings to date on the impact of the SEAL model.



THE THREE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SEAL MODEL

The SEAL model is a response to the persistent achievement gap facing English Learners in U.S. schools. It was designed drawing upon the research on preventing the creation of Long Term English Learners, and enacts the research on effective English Learner practices. These two bodies of research, together with an analysis of the challenges of implementing Common Core era standards, establish the foundation for the SEAL model.

Foundation #1

Research on Preventing the Creation of Long Term English Learners

Approximately half of the young English Learners who enroll in California schools in kindergarten face year after year of struggling academically and falling further and further behind because they do not adequately comprehend what is being taught in a language they have not yet mastered. Along with compounding academic gaps and academic failure, these “Long Term English Learners” fail to attain the English proficiency needed to participate and succeed academically in school. They remain “stuck” at a level of basic oral fluency, able to use English for social purposes, but limited in expression and struggling with the academic English needed for school participation. Despite dreams of going to college and finding success in the U.S. culture and economy, many are unable to complete high school requirements or graduate. Weak in English, these students typically are increasingly weak in their home language as well. By middle school, they have limited vocabulary and weak language skills in both English and the home language. There is a clear connection between students schooling experiences, language development and academic achievement.

The patterns that result in the creation of Long Term English Learners begin in preschool and kindergarten and continue throughout the primary grades:

- Language and literacy curriculum designed for native English speakers that is inadequate to address the needs of English Learners
- Neglect of the home language
- Exposure only to simplified, watered-down language and literature
- Inadequate support for English Learners to be able to participate actively, resulting in entrenched coping patterns of student passivity, non-engagement and silence
- Inadequate modeling, scaffolding and support that compounds gaps in comprehension
- Narrowed curriculum that does not provide social studies or science, and results in a decontextualized approach to language and literacy development as well as compounds a knowledge gap
- Inconsistent programs and approaches to English Learner support from year to year resulting in gaps

SEAL was designed, in part, to address these lapses in school practices. To begin, SEAL centralizes science and social studies through an integrated thematic approach that situates language development in and through the process of children learning about their world. Children in SEAL classrooms study

science and social studies as well as language arts, math and the arts. SEAL emphasizes active student engagement and participation, with multiple high-leverage pedagogical practices that provide opportunities and support for all students to be meaningfully involved contributors.

SEAL ensures regular exposure to high-level, expressive, precise and complex language through the books that are selected for read-alouds, the language that teacher's model, and the vocabulary that is explicitly taught. Teaching strategies help children understand how the language works, and how to make it their own. Writing, drawing and dictation, and active engagement in oral language are centerpieces of the SEAL approach. Moreover, SEAL is insistent on the value of bilingualism and affirming home language and culture. In bilingual and dual-language classrooms, a high bar is set for rigor in the home language and careful attention is paid to the transfer and simultaneous development of English along with home language. Finally, SEAL stresses articulation and alignment across grade-levels to provide English Learners with a consistent and coherent process of language development from year to year to avoid the gaps that are so harmful to vulnerable students.



SEAL emphasizes active student engagement and participation.

Foundation #2

Enacting the Research on Effective English Learner Practices

In the past decade, an explosion of research has appeared on effective practices for English Learner education, as well as research on young dual-language learners and dual-language development. A major meta-analysis compiled by the Congressionally mandated National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth provided an important synthesis of what is known about effective practices. In 2010, the California Department of Education also released a set of commissioned papers from lead researchers nationally, *Improving Education for English Learners: research-based approaches*. And in 2016, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine released *Promising Futures*, summarizing the knowledge base about effective schooling for English Learner/Dual Language children birth to 18. Across these reports, there is remarkable convergence of findings, providing guidance for educators. Because there is still a disturbing gap between research and practice, SEAL seized upon the new research as a foundation for the model. Eight key research findings from the field of effective English Learner practices inform the SEAL model:

Quality early childhood education makes a significant difference, reducing disparities between groups, and resulting in better schooling outcomes for children once they enter kindergarten.

While most children benefit from high quality preschool education, the gains are greater for low-income, Hispanic and English Learner students. The period in a child's life, from ages 3-8 years is a crucial developmental phase for language and cognitive development, especially for dual language learners. The SEAL model was designed, therefore, as a PreK-3 approach to leverage the importance of the preschool year and to address the need for coherence and articulation across this important developmental phase.

An emphasis on oral language is an essential element of an effective language development program for young children and for English Learners.

Oral language is the foundation for other domains of language and for literacy (reading, writing). Extensive and intentional oral language development is a foundational piece of successful literacy development approaches. It is through producing the language that children make it their own. And yet, according to the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth, oral language is often and has increasingly been overlooked in language arts curriculum and literacy instruction. SEAL emphasizes multiple and frequent structured opportunities for students to be engaged in talking about what they are learning, thinking, wondering and doing. The amount, type and quality of student talk are a mark of good instruction and a hallmark of SEAL classrooms. Children’s oral language is closely related to what they hear. Therefore, SEAL teachers model rich, expressive language exposing children regularly to academic vocabulary and ways of using language that extend the linguistic range and possibilities for children.

An explicit focus on academic language is needed.

Academic language is the formal language of schooling, text and academic participation. It is the language used in school to help students develop content knowledge, and the language they are expected to utilize to convey their understanding of that knowledge. It is different from the informal language used in daily aspects of a child’s life. Academic language develops in the context of engaging with academic content and encountering academic text. SEAL is intentional in the approach to selection of high-level academic vocabulary and discourse patterns that will be taught within a thematic unit, and utilizes high-leverage pedagogical practices that engage children in analyzing academic language and using it in multiple ways. For young children, “academic language” is also about developing complex, precise language for naming and talking about their world and experiences. For this reason, SEAL emphasizes helping children learn the vocabulary of the socio-emotional realm, and the language they need to express themselves in interactions with others.



The amount, type and quality of student talk are a mark of good instruction and a hallmark of SEAL classrooms.

Language develops in context, not in isolation.

Language and cognition go hand in hand. Thinking and understanding are made possible through language – through having the words to codify thought. While some early literacy skills can be

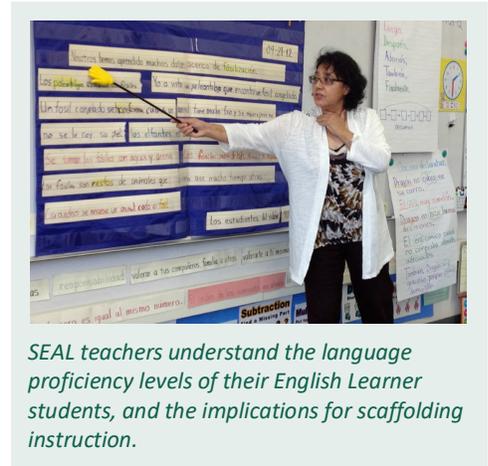
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developed in isolation through decontextualized lessons, language actually develops most powerfully when it is in the context of learning about and interacting with the world because this is when language has function and meaning. Academic language and literacy are most powerfully developed, then, where the background knowledge and academic concepts associated with the language are also being constructed. Everything that happens in a school day is an opportunity for language development. And, language development needs to be occurring across the curriculum. For young children in particular, learning and language occur through making connections. Young children also develop language through play and social interactions – facilitated in an enriched and interactive environment. For this reason,

SEAL approaches curriculum through the creation of thematic units, carefully designed learning environments, and many opportunities to use the language in context. Integrated instruction and thematic approaches provide multiple perspectives and “ways in” to understanding. And through thematic connections across the curriculum and the school day, students have more opportunities to use the new language they are learning and approach it from varying viewpoints.

English Learners definitely require specific and additional instructional supports and specially designed instruction in order to access, comprehend and participate effectively in school.

Called “sheltered” or “scaffolded” instruction, these approaches offer differentiated support for English Learners based on their level of English. In scaffolding instruction for English Learners, teachers use a variety of graphic organizers, realia and visuals to boost comprehension. They recognize the need to bridge from student experience and cultural referents to the material that is being introduced by beginning with familiar content.



SEAL teachers understand the language proficiency levels of their English Learner students, and the implications for scaffolding instruction.

Teachers model what is being expected and provide clear directions, construct hands-on and interactive learning activities, offer sentence frames and discourse formats to enable students to participate in talking about the lessons, and use home language support to bolster comprehension, etc. The print-rich and content-rich environment includes academic vocabulary walls, language frame charts, and exemplary writing samples to clarify and bolster student participation. SEAL teachers understand the language proficiency levels of their English Learner students, and the implications for scaffolding instruction. Taking into account this knowledge, teachers select and sequence tasks, model and produce guided practice, and construct questioning and supports for their students – utilizing a variety of strategies for differentiation.

Dedicated and intentional English language development instruction and curriculum advances knowledge of and use of English, and continues to be needed until English Learners reach English proficiency.

The purpose of ELD is to help English Learners learn and acquire English in their zone of proximal development to maximize their capacity to engage successfully in academic instruction in English. It is designed specifically to advance an English Learner’s knowledge and use of English in increasingly sophisticated ways – aimed toward participation in academic English. This requires building a knowledge of how English works, and providing the opportunities and supports for students to practice and apply such knowledge in the speaking, listening, reading and writing domains. California’s new English Language Development standards are aligned to the Common Core Language Arts standards, and meant to be used in tandem with those standards – for differentiation and language development across the curriculum, as well as in dedicated ELD curriculum. SEAL supports implementation of both Designated and content-based ELD instruction using the new standards, as well as the planning and implementation of Integrated ELD throughout the curriculum.

Development of the home language in addition to English is critical because it contributes to growth in both English and the child’s home language and provides life-long benefits.

A child’s home language is a crucial foundation for cognitive development, learning about the world, and emerging literacy. The use and development of a student’s home language and culture increases academic achievement, promotes a sense of belonging and connection to school, positively affects family relationships and inter-generational communication, and increases confidence and motivation. The best foundation for literacy is a rich foundation of language—extensive vocabulary, experience with expressive language, active practice using language, etc. This can often be more easily developed in the child’s strongest language. The sophistication developed in their strongest language is then transferred into the new language – English. A quality early childhood education approach for dual language children sets a foundation of rich and complex linguistic skills in the home language. Studies have found that children have more extended and complex vocabulary and language skills if their home language continues to develop throughout the age 3-8 developmental phase. Furthermore, English Learners make more academic progress when they have the opportunity to learn in both languages. Systematic, deliberate exposure to English plus an ongoing development of the home language leads to the highest achievement in both languages by the end of 3rd grade and beyond. Additionally, there is no loss in English development as a result of developing the home language.



The use and development of a student’s home language and culture increases academic achievement, promotes a sense of belonging and connection to school, positively affects family relationships and intergenerational communication, and increases confidence and motivation.

The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth states: “The research indicates that instructional programs work when they provide opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their first language. Studies that compare bilingual instruction with English-only instruction demonstrate that language minority students instructed in their native language as well as in English perform better, on average, on measures of English reading proficiency than language-minority students instructed only in English.” Home language loss occurs quickly among children schooled in English-only instruction. The loss of home language has potentially negative long-term consequences for the English Learner child’s academic, social and emotional development, as well as family connection. Given the many advantages of bilingualism and biliteracy—intellectual, cultural, economic and familial—this knowledge is essential for families in making decisions about language programs for their children. SEAL works with schools to strengthen bilingual and dual language programs, clarifying research-based program design and working with teachers to implement effective approaches to the development of the two languages. The SEAL approach builds a school climate supportive of bilingualism, and establishes supports for parents related to raising bilingual children and supporting biliteracy.

Strong relationships between home and school are a cornerstone of powerful early education.

Effective programs build strong home-school partnerships and support parents as a child’s first teacher. Linguistic and cultural congruity between home and school supports children’s development (social, emotional, cognitive and language) and learning. Two-way partnerships between home and school are essential to creating that congruity—drawing upon the knowledge, expertise and cultural capital of families as assets. While the educational involvement of families is important in children’s lives throughout their schooling years, in the early years of development, family culture, home language and

family engagement are absolutely central for healthy development. Young children learn best in a safe, affirming environment that respects and integrates the home culture and language, recognizes the key role of a child’s culture and language in her development, and supports young children in bridging across and integrating home and school contexts. Yet English Learner parents typically face language, cultural and economic barriers to such involvement. Schools in which English Learners achieve to high levels are typically characterized by active parent and community engagement, supported with programs that build parent leadership capacity. Effective school approaches intentionally create inclusive, welcoming and supportive conditions for English Learner family engagement. The SEAL model has a major focus on parent and school partnerships that includes parent education, supports for parent involvement in school, and activities that engage families in academic content.

Foundation #3

Seizing the Opportunity and Addressing the Demands of the Common Core Standards and new generation science standards

New Common Core Standards have been voluntarily adopted by most states across this nation as a shared set of benchmarks defining college and career readiness in English Language Arts and Mathematics. These rigorous standards articulate high expectations for students, and are driving a new era in curriculum, teaching pedagogy and assessments. They are the new reality that any school improvement effort needs to address. For SEAL, the Common Core Standards are an opportunity to strengthen the schooling of English Learners, by providing the framework for a rigorous education that will prepare them (as all students) for the 21st century. However, the new standards also increase the urgency of defining how English Learners will be supported to master this new rigor. Without attention to English Learner needs, the Common Core standards could become the proverbial nail in the coffin of educational access and opportunity for English Learners – exacerbating the barriers and achievement gaps that have characterized the education of English Learners for far too long.

Fortunately, the Common Core Standards support many aspects of what we know is needed for English Learners, and they open the door for implementation of powerful approaches that have been difficult to implement in the past. There are five aspects of the Common Core standards that have particular relevance to the design of SEAL. Key among those are:

1. *The Common Core Language Arts Standards call for attention to literacy and language across the curriculum, and for explicit focus upon the vocabulary, oral language and discourse patterns essential to participation in academic work.*

The new standards call upon teachers to develop an understanding of literacy and language as it applies across all curricular areas, and to utilize strategies to promote active student engagement with language in the classroom throughout the day. Academic language develops in the context of learning academic subjects. Students learn to talk about and write about history, to talk about and write about science, through a focus on language within those academic disciplines. The kind of decontextualized focus on language skills that has been the approach in the past is no longer sufficient. From the approach of ELD as a separate and peripheral curricular area, the new standards define ELD as occurring BOTH in a designated specific ELD curriculum AND as an “integrated ELD: approach to addressing English Learner needs across all academic subjects. The focus on language development is no longer just the responsibility of the English Language Arts block or the ELD curriculum during one discrete part of the day, but is now a responsibility across the day. SEAL positions language development across the school day, in and through all activities and curricular areas.

2. *The Common Core Standards call for collaboration and teamwork as a key component of instruction.*

This understanding of the role of “language in action” necessitates more project- based and inquiry- based teaching and learning, and for the active use of language in the context of inquiry and collaborative work. Too often, the experience of English Learners in U.S. classrooms has been an experience of silence – they speak little, participate minimally, are seldom called upon because they lack sufficient English skills for participation. For ALL students, the Common Core standards envision a different kind of active engagement, calling for collaboration and teamwork as a key component of instruction. The new standards recognize that preparing students for college and career in the 21st century requires that they develop skills for collaborative engagement in academic work. This skill development begins in preschool and develops through the years. Collaborative discussions (one-on-one, small group and whole class) on grade appropriate academic topics, texts and issues are all expected in the era of the Common Core. The new ELD standards aligned to the Common Core include a major section addressing the language skills for *Interacting in Meaningful Ways*, with a sub-focus on collaborative uses of language for exchanging information and ideas. SEAL emphasizes active student engagement, and the development of skills of collaboration and teamwork.

3. *The Common Core Standards call for engagement with more complex text.*

Common practices now include relegating English Learners to overly simplified text. This is no longer acceptable. Rather, the text to be used for academic study will be complex. The language and literacy demands of the Common Core are high. Currently many English Learners are not achieving even the low-bar of CELDT proficiency or the academic language needed for redesignation. The focus on academic language has been inadequate, the provision of ELD has been generally weak statewide, and both teaching and curriculum materials have been insufficient for moving English Learners to the levels of English needed for successful academic engagement. Meeting the demands of the new standards is not simply a matter of increasing the complexity of text. What is needed is to increase the support strategies used to help students cope with complex text. To ramp up instruction to get English Learners to the bar of linguistic complexity called for in the Common Core Standards requires a major intensification, strengthening and focus on English Language Development and scaffolding strategies across the curriculum to provide English Learners access to the Common Core. Implementation of the Common Core will require both investment in materials that more appropriately provide the scaffold into academic rigorous text, and changes in teaching practices so that students are provided support for engaging with more complex text. SEAL incorporates a focus on rigorous, complex language and text engagement – with a set of teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches that support English Learners to engage with that more rigorous material.

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4. *The Common Core Standards position academic language development within the study of history, social science and academic disciplines.*

In response to testing pressures, California schools have greatly narrowed the curriculum that English Learners receive to just language arts and math. With little or no social studies, science, history and arts students do not build the necessary background knowledge to engage with academic text. English Learners will need instruction that builds the background knowledge needed to comprehend the references, cultural knowledge and academic concepts in more rigorous and complex text. Time needs to be spent in the curriculum building background knowledge. We cannot assume that English Learners have that knowledge. The Common Core requires that we take the time to build it, end the narrowing of the curriculum and ensure English Learners receive a full curriculum. The SEAL model builds thematic units around the science and social studies standards, and emphasizes building background knowledge and comprehension around academic concepts through making connections to student experience, hands-on activities, realia, field trips, docent visits, and teaching strategies that bring content to life.

5. *The Common Core standards call for an increased focus on oral language, speaking and listening.*

The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth found that oral language development was critical as a foundation for literacy, but was being increasingly overlooked in literacy curriculum and teaching. The Common Core Standards rectify this unbalance. The standards include Speaking and Listening for all students. The new standards call for developing student skills in presenting ideas orally and working in groups to construct and negotiate meaning. This is a major shift from the teacher-directed, primarily teacher-talk nature that has been the norm in most classrooms. Teachers now need to structure opportunities and then support students to actively engage in one-on-one, small group and whole group discussions. They will need to design collaborative tasks that require students to participate actively in linguistically rich discussions. The Common Core Standards view language as action – a vehicle for constructing meaning, negotiating meaning, expressing ideas, and accomplishing academic tasks. The new ELD standards aligned to the Common Core focus on, among other things, interpretive uses of language (and skills of active listening) and productive capacities, which involve the development of speaking skills. The SEAL model begins with a major emphasis on oral language development, and utilizes the Common Core speaking and listening standards as a major tool in planning lessons and the scope and sequence of thematic units.



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In sum

In these ways, SEAL is closely aligned to the new Common Core Language Arts standards and the new California ELD standards. While SEAL was designed and piloted before the adoption of the new California ELA/ELD Framework, the model is a close fit and enacts directly the guidance in that Framework. As districts begin the task of implementing the standards, one thing stands out as an imperative: teachers are key to ensuring that English Learners have access to the Common Core Standards. And for this, they need professional development, planning time and support. It is essential that teachers receive meaningful and well-designed professional development that focuses on scaffolding strategies to ensure access, differentiating instruction for maximum participation, ways of working with the linguistic demands of academic text that build understanding of how English works, and embedding language development across the curriculum. Highly effective professional development empowers teachers through coaching, lesson study, collaborative planning, and a well-designed rollout of strategies to implement the Common Core. The SEAL approach to implementation incorporates this type of strong infrastructure of professional development and support for teachers.



Teachers are key to ensuring that English Learners have access to the Common Core Standards. And for this, they need professional development, planning and support.



THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE SEAL MODEL

Utilizing the foundational research cited previously, and the analysis of the opportunities and demands within the Common Core standards, the SEAL Model coalesces around Four Pillars:

1. Pillar #1: A focus on rich, powerful, precise and academic language
2. Pillar #2: Creation of an affirming and enriched environment
3. Pillar #3: Articulation across grades, and alignment of the preschool and K–3 school systems
4. Pillar #4: Strong partnerships between parents and teachers

Pillar #1

A Focus on Rich, Powerful, Precise and Academic Language throughout the curriculum

A child’s ability to grasp concepts, communicate articulately, and comprehend their world directly relates to the amount and complexity of words in their grasp. The SEAL model’s focus on academic language has four critical aspects.

First, the development of rich and complex oral language is the foundation for literacy.

Oral language is critical to literacy. To develop language, children need many opportunities to listen and to speak. In fact, the vocabulary a child develops in the preschool years is predictive of their later language skills and future success with reading. In producing language, children process ideas, develop conceptual understanding, and construct knowledge. Verbal interaction helps build the academic language used in school and develops literacy. In SEAL classrooms, teachers stimulate the talk that allows language learners to explore and clarify concepts, name their world, and describe what they see. The SEAL classroom is rarely quiet. A hallmark is the amount, quality, and focus on student talk.

Second, the simultaneous development of English and home language is sought whenever possible.

Children’s brains are wired for the developmental tasks of learning to speak, use and master language. Spanish-speaking English Learners undertake these tasks straddling two language worlds. The strongest foundation for academic success and high levels of literacy for these young, dual-language learners is the development of both their home language and English. Bilingualism offers cognitive, social, and economic benefits. In a SEAL classroom, children are exposed to rich, expressive language in English and Spanish, promoting bilingual development. A minimum of 50% of the day’s instruction occurs in the home language.

Depending upon the district-defined model of instruction and the grade level, students receive a minimum of 20% in English. The two languages are kept separate to provide children with authentic models in each language. New, complex concepts are taught in the home language. Dedicated English Language Development instruction occurs daily. In those SEAL classrooms where it is not feasible to teach bilingually, teachers still affirm bilingualism by: providing books and homework in both English

and in the home languages of the children; exposing students to languages other than English using basic phrases and songs; and offering parents suggestions for engaging in language and literacy experiences with their children in their home language.

Third, SEAL advocates a text-rich curriculum and environment that engages children with books and the printed word to develop confident and motivated learners who appreciate and love reading and writing.

Children become proficient readers and writers when these skills are developed through exposure to a variety of written materials, genres, and meaningful text. In SEAL classrooms, books, posters, and other printed materials are visible and accessible in English and in the home language of students. Around the room, materials contain rich language, objects are labeled, and children’s work is prominently displayed.

Fourth, language is developed in the context of an enriched and full thematic curriculum.

Language develops not only when an explicit language arts curriculum is taught. A comprehensive program of academic language development recognizes the importance of immersing students in a full curriculum—in science, social studies, math, and the arts—in addition to explicit and direct language arts instruction. Academic language develops as students learn academic concepts – as they read about and hear about academic topics, talk about and synthesize what they are learning, and make observations. As they undertake these tasks, learners develop key vocabulary and conceptual understanding, and learn the structures and forms of language used to talk about specific content. Children learn the language of hypothesizing, observation, and description as they talk about science and the language of positing opinions, questioning, and talking about social patterns as they study social studies. Rather than relegating language development solely to a language arts instructional block, teachers in SEAL classrooms focus on intentional language development as they teach all academic content and as they create thematic connections across the curriculum. Teaching thematically enhances comprehension, increases opportunities for exposure to and use of academic language, and facilitates making connections to previous experience and knowledge.



Rather than relegating language development solely to a language arts instructional block, teachers in SEAL classrooms focus on intentional language development as they teach all academic content and as they create thematic connections across the curriculum.

Pillar #2

Creation of an Affirming and Enriched Environment

Children learn best where they feel safe, supported, and affirmed; where they are provided with support for developing social skills; and where they can engage respectfully with each other. Building self-identity and skills for social interaction, as well as learning appropriate school behavior, are major developmental tasks for young children. A safe, affirming, and enriched environment helps children understand and respect differences, learn the vocabulary for social interaction, and value diversity. In SEAL classrooms, teachers recognize that how children learn to relate to each other is a primary point of social learning and development. Strategies for building an affirming environment include:

- Pictures, posters, books, and realia that reflect the cultures and languages of students and their families
- Explicit teaching of language for expressing feelings, supported by opportunities to problem solve and interact respectfully with peers
- Facilitated discussions (e.g., use of Persona dolls and class meetings) that focus on children’s concerns, address social dynamics, and create forums for talking about the classroom environment
- Focus on pro-social, inclusive behaviors by teaching, emphasizing, and acknowledging clear standards of social behavior and class norms
- Explicit emphasis on the value of bilingualism, which supports the use of children’s home language to talk about their identity, their families, and their culture
- Classroom set-up to support inquiry and hands-on engagement with content, and to support interaction and collaboration

Pillar #3

Articulation Across Grades, and Alignment of the Preschool and K–3 Systems

Birth to age eight is a crucial period in a child’s development of language and cognition. Quality preschool helps prepare students for kindergarten and has the potential to reduce disparities and longstanding achievement gaps between student populations. While a well-designed preschool does improve children’s social and cognitive skills, these gains can dissipate as children advance beyond kindergarten. A growing body of research shows that English Learners can continue to make gains when schools connect PreK to kindergarten and primary grades through a coherent PreK–3 program that aligns standards and curriculum around a shared vision of early language development. Rather than view the preschool task as preparing children for K–12, the SEAL PreK–3 model views preschool as an articulated and connected schooling experience. SEAL strategies to align Preschool with kindergarten include:

Rather than view the preschool task as preparing children for K-12, the SEAL PreK-3 model views preschool as an articulated and connected schooling experience.

- Shared professional development for preschool and kindergarten teachers on language development for young dual language learners
- A Summer Bridge program that provides extra support to children and families, smoothing the transition from one school system to another
- Cross-grade level dialogues between preschool and kindergarten teachers to learn about each other’s curriculum, instruction, concerns, and needs
- Kindergarten visits for preschool children and families to familiarize them with new teachers and schools
- Use of similar instructional approaches across PreK–3 so children become socialized in the practices of active engagement and language use early and consistently

The process of alignment and articulation continues up through the grades. All teachers co-teach in the Summer Bridge program with teachers of other grade levels. Special topic institutes bring teachers together in professional learning dialogues across grade levels. Observations and visits are facilitated across grade levels. These strategies facilitate a common vision of schooling across the preschool through third grade, and continuity of strategies.

Pillar #4

Strong Partnerships Between Parents and Teachers

Strong partnerships between families and schools support academic success. This is particularly true for young English Learners for whom the school's language and cultural environment differs from that in their home. Teachers need to understand the cultures and communities of their students and create an environment that integrates home and school contexts. This ensures that children and parents feel accepted and included. As their children's first teachers, parents need information to support learning at home and to be active in their child's schooling.

In a SEAL school, parents are encouraged and supported to foster their child's academic and language development, to involve themselves with the school, and to develop their own literacy. SEAL strategies include:

- Providing workshops for parents on: supporting language and literacy development at home, raising dual-language learners, and the importance of home language and culture
- Offering a book bag loan program that sends literature and non-fiction books home with children to read with their parents
- Providing English as a Second Language classes for parents, offered at the school site
- Instituting volunteer systems that recruit and train parents as classroom volunteers
- Designing visitation opportunities that regularly invite parents to visit the class or school to see children perform, to view children's work, and to participate in various family activities
- Utilizing regular and multiple forums for teacher-parent communication including weekly newsletters, posted photos of class activities, bulletin boards, home visits, family homework projects related to themes being studied, and parent-teacher conferences
- Offering guidance for teachers in creating classroom environments and activities that incorporate the cultures and community experiences of their students, and that allow students to connect their life at home to their life at school
- Displaying photos of children and their families on the walls of the classrooms
- Planning family science and literacy nights that bring whole families to school to engage in interesting, fun, and high-level academic activities



ELEVEN HIGH-LEVERAGE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Eleven high-leverage instructional pedagogical practices (implemented in all SEAL classrooms) ensure that all Four Pillars are addressed as part of the educational program in all grades. The eleven practices are:

Practice #1

Complex, Expressive, Precise Academic Vocabulary and Language Development

Children need to be exposed to and learn the vocabulary and ways of using language that are specific to reading, writing, and academic discourse. (This differs from the social language they develop in more informal settings.) To develop students' high-level language and literacy skills, deliberate and precise vocabulary instruction must begin in preschool and continue throughout K–12. At the preschool level, SEAL teachers identify key vocabulary as they plan thematic units. Kindergarten through third grade SEAL teachers examine grade-level standards and district curriculum to identify high-level academic vocabulary words. They utilize a variety of materials and strategies to teach these words (e.g., photographs, visuals, realia, drawings, demonstrations, experiential activities). Students have multiple opportunities throughout the day to practice and use new vocabulary. Learning language extends beyond vocabulary to include language functions, structures and discourse patterns. Every thematic unit focuses on a specific language function (e.g., description, compare and contrast, cause and effect) immersing children in the grammatical structures and ways of putting language together to talk about ideas.

Practice #2

Structured Oral Interaction and Academic Discourse

In a SEAL classroom, the goal is to have more student talk than teacher talk. Students utilize a variety of language structures and are encouraged to ask questions. Strategies such as “Think- Pair-Share,” “Heads Together,” and “10/2” provide students time and support to practice new vocabulary and concepts through structured, purposeful interactions with peers. Teachers carefully craft discussion prompts and high-level questions to engage children in generating and using academic language. Songs and chants are used to teach the content, incorporate the vocabulary students are studying, and offer an opportunity to practice using new vocabulary in a low-risk environment, which increases children’s ease with and ownership of academic vocabulary while building fluency and rhythm in producing language. Additionally, well-planned learning centers enable children to independently engage in academic discourse with their peers.



Songs and chants are used to teach the content, incorporate the vocabulary students are studying, and offer an opportunity to practice using new vocabulary in a risk-free environment.

Practice #3

Exposure to Rich Literature and High-Level Informational Text

Reading instruction helps children learn the mechanics of reading. But they become readers and learn to love reading as they engage with books that interest them. Students in a SEAL classroom are provided multiple opportunities to engage with text in a variety of genres and to make choices about the topics of the texts. Classroom libraries include rich literature in students' home languages. These multilingual books include high-interest graphics, rich vocabulary, student-written books, and leveled text. Teachers use a variety of story telling strategies and story retell activities to develop student comprehension and to teach story structure and elements (e.g., setting, characters, and plot). Materials such as puppets, flannel boards and graphic organizers support story retell and paraphrasing. Students learn to relate prior knowledge to a story, confirm predictions, and generate and respond to questions. In the youngest grades, dramatic play centers provide ongoing, independent opportunities for children to dramatize stories. Children's drawings and writing retell narrative stories. During independent or free-choice time, children look at and read books they select. In SEAL classrooms, a print-rich environment also provides students with multiple opportunities to "read the room" and be immersed in language.

Practice #4

Purposeful, Interactive Read-Alouds and Meaningful Text Engagement:

Teachers in SEAL classrooms read aloud a variety of text related to classroom themes. Read-alouds are carefully selected to build vocabulary and model rich and expressive language. These read-alouds are prefaced with anticipatory activities that allow students to make predictions, draw connections between their own background experience and the text, and practice comprehension skills related to using visual cues, questioning, and monitoring. Reading is thoughtfully accompanied by high-quality discussions. Teachers and students talk about books and engage in summarizing, predicting, and synthesizing what students have read; Students model and use language to respond to and think about books they hear. Books are regularly read multiple times, allowing students to check their comprehension and make connections. Multiple readings also deepen children's familiarity with the text-structure, promote awareness of the author's craft and use of language, and facilitate vocabulary development to deepen writing.



Books are read multiple times, allowing students to check their comprehension and make connections.

Practice #5

Authentic Writing for Purpose

Reading and writing are closely related. From the beginning of their school experiences, children are be engaged in actively producing text. "Children as authors" enables students to see the connection between their own words and text. What they say can be written down, and what they write can be read. Beginning in SEAL preschools, children draw pictures and dictate to adults, who record their words. SEAL classrooms have writing centers (with paper, pencils, notebooks, envelopes, mailboxes, etc.) to encourage children to write. Students in SEAL classroom learn the power of the written word and use

writing for a variety of authentic purposes. Academic notebooks, daily journals, and collaborative writing are opportunities to use writing for authentic purposes. Student writing is laminated and bound, and placed in the classroom library, often times accompanied by photos from the classroom so children literally “see” themselves in books and as writers.

Practice #6

Dramatic Play and Hands-On, Inquiry Based Learning

Young children learn through play and the opportunity to act out concepts, roles and stories related to themes and literature. Dramatic play offers a unique opportunity for students to practice and own academic vocabulary in a low affective environment. SEAL preschool through first grade classrooms include areas where props, equipment, puppets, and realia related to thematic units encourage dramatization, dialogue and play. As children move up through the grades, dramatic play areas give way to research and inquiry centers stocked with realia, photos, equipment and tools for research to encourage them to work with others to discover and deepen learning. SEAL classrooms also promote the use of language through role-playing, dramatization and Readers Theater.

Practice #7

Graphic Organizers and Visuals

The SEAL classroom uses graphic organizers, color-coding, and visuals throughout the day. Visual constructs, such as tables, timelines, web diagrams, flow charts, and Venn Diagrams (to name a few) teach children to organize information, clarify concepts, compare and contrast information, conceptualize sequence, and categorize and classify. For English Learners, these are essential scaffolds to display the relationships between ideas in visual formats. Graphic organizers are used by students as a tool to organize oral presentations and writing. Authentic graphics, images and realia help make academic content understandable and relevant.

Practice #8

Continuous Checks for Comprehension and Performance Tasks

Teachers in SEAL classrooms continually check whether and how well students understand concepts and skills. Teachers utilize multiple question formats, signal responses, and visuals to allow students to demonstrate comprehension and application. These checks for comprehension occur throughout a lesson, not just at the end – facilitating adjustment of the lesson to clarify concepts and meet student need. Students are provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning more formally through performance-based tasks and culminating activities designed to allow students the choice to capitalize upon their individual learning modalities. End of unit performance tasks are designed to engage students in demonstrating knowledge of content, acquisition of skills, and mastery of the language. Celebrations of learning and reflection on growth are central to these opportunities.

Practice #9

Collaborative Practice and Skills of Teamwork

Students engage regularly in small group inquiry, cooperative learning, discussion and activities designed to promote building upon each other's ideas, share and integrate information, and develop skills of working together to achieve an academic purpose. Small groups activities are important contexts for language practice and use. SEAL classrooms are organized to maximize collaborative work, enabling teachers to pull small groups for differentiation and targeted instruction. In preschools, free choice, playtime and centers are all opportunities for children to develop the skills of interaction, sharing and working together.



Practice #10

Language Development Through Arts Infusion

In SEAL classrooms, students are exposed to the arts – both for the enrichment the arts provide, and as an opportunity to develop language. Students learn the precise language of talking about and engaging in the arts, and develop expanding realms of expression that are available only through the arts. Arts integration enriches the thematic units.

Practice #11

The World in the Classroom

Education in a SEAL classroom is relevant. Teachers use multiple strategies to invite children to talk about their lives and to bring their experiences into the classroom as part of developing understanding about the world. Children's cultures and identities have a place in the curriculum and in the physical environment of the classroom. Teachers support strong identity development and promote the skills and capacities for children to live respectfully in a diverse world. Teachers plan units to include real world connections so students see the value in their new knowledge. Teachers seize upon events in the community and the world as resources for the curriculum, utilizing technology as well as human resources to connect children to a broader global, diverse world. As children learn about a subject, they also learn about its relevance in the world and the future roles they may play that relate to that subject.

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE: SEAL IMPLEMENTATION

SEAL implementation is a multi-year process of capacity building and system alignment. Based upon lessons from the fields of instructional improvement, school reform and implementation science, the SEAL model is characterized by the following:

SEAL combines an explicit English Learner focus within a larger frame of increasing quality and rigor for all students.

For decades, school reform efforts sought to raise achievement and close achievement gaps through a variety of models. In the process, much was learned about what does and does not work in comprehensive school reform, restructuring and school improvement. One lesson is that sound reform strategies do not automatically or inevitably lead to high quality English Learner programs or outcomes. In fact, almost all efforts pursued under a general banner of “good practice for all,” despite large public

The SEAL model focuses explicitly on the unique needs of English Learners, while simultaneously addressing the language needs of all students and the systemic conditions of teaching and learning.

and private investments, largely miss the mark with regards to English Learners. Because English Learners have needs specific to overcoming barriers of language, schools which enroll English Learners need to incorporate into their school improvement efforts explicit attention to those English Learner needs. Conversely, efforts targeting English Learner achievement that do not address the broader context of school practices, beliefs and structures have largely failed to achieve sustained outcomes because they did not adequately address issues of system alignment, ownership, culture or coherence. The SEAL model focuses explicitly on the unique needs of English Learners, while simultaneously addressing the language needs of all students and the systemic conditions of teaching and learning. The English Learner focus is infused and integrated in how teaching and learning occur throughout the day and for all students. The benefits to all students are an enriched, rigorous

and intentional language development approach with scaffolds for participation for all students. SEAL works with schools and districts to more clearly define the English Learner program and to focus attention on the needs of English Learners, as well as builds a collaborative culture of improvement among all teachers across all classrooms

SEAL addresses systemic alignment and works school-wide.

Innovations take hold and are sustained when they are built into the life of a school, and are not “owned” by just some teachers or identified with one program. While many instructional improvement efforts focus on a select group of teachers who are interested and volunteer, SEAL works with all teachers at a grade level, and with all grade-levels preschool through third grade. It is less about individual teacher change than it is about building school capacity, coherence and culture for embracing this more rigorous and language-intentional approach to teaching. The model is implemented, therefore, in the preschool program and in the primary grades, in bilingual classrooms as well as English-taught programs within the school – knitting shared vision, strategies and approaches across the settings while addressing the specific challenges and needs of each program. This has several impacts. First, the consistency and coherence of approach needed by English Learners is assured through such articulation

across the grades. Second, the approaches become built into “how we do second grade at this school,” “how we approach literacy at this school,” how we work with English Learners at this school.” Third, teachers who are trying new instructional strategies and working to realign curriculum have the support of colleagues. Finally, approaching the task of school improvement through a systems lens, SEAL facilitates more coherence in policies, administrative systems, assessments and decision-making through Leadership development and technical assistance support.

SEAL provides a strong Infrastructure for delivery of high-quality comprehensive professional development and support for instructional improvement.

Mastering a complex set of new instructional strategies and curricular approaches takes time, resources and support for teachers. Professional development modules and workshops are important venues for reading and discussing research and learning new strategies. However, they are not by themselves sufficient to support actual implementation in the classrooms. Teachers need planning time to consider how to incorporate the strategies into their instruction.

Teachers need opportunities to see the practices being modeled in their own classrooms. Teachers need encouragement to try new strategies. They need constructive feedback from a knowledgeable and supportive coach and from colleagues. The SEAL process of implementation employs a comprehensive instructional improvement approach. A series of cycles over a two to three-year period incorporates professional development sessions, individual coaching, and collaborative planning with colleagues. Specifically, the professional development infrastructure includes:

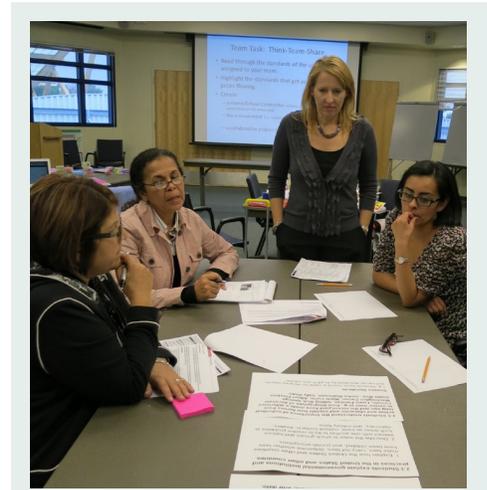
- A dedicated SEAL Coach/Facilitator who works with all teachers to maximize the consistency and coherence of instruction and to encourage collaborative and reflective practice.
- Professional Development modules and special topic Institutes which bring together district staff, administrators and teachers across SEAL sites, building a shared understanding of the framework and research behind the SEAL model, while creating a robust community of SEAL practitioners.
- A Summer Bridge program that allows for intensive professional development for teachers as well as enriched language development for children; co-teaching during Summer Bridge allows teachers to try out new strategies, observe and support each other, and build a shared understanding of SEAL’s approach.
- Classroom demonstrations, modeling, and coaching by the SEAL Coach/Facilitator and other members of the SEAL team to help individual teachers implement SEAL strategies.
- Instructional and curriculum planning sessions facilitated by the SEAL Coach/Facilitator to review curriculum standards, plan thematic units, and analyze the core program to determine where intensive language development strategies can be employed. Teachers share student work and talk about observations of student language use.
- Reflection and Implementation tools to help SEAL teachers assess the degree to which each of SEAL’s four pillars is present in their classrooms and school.

SEAL emphasizes reflective practice, collaborative discourse, continuous improvement, and teacher creativity.

The bedrock for instructional improvement and for the implementation of SEAL High-Leverage Pedagogical Practices is teacher understanding about how language develops, the needs of English Learners and dual-language learners, and about the optimal schooling conditions that foster learning. SEAL teachers learn strategies, but they learn them in the context of reading research, discussing and

making meaning about why those strategies are effective and when and for whom they might be used. Purposely, SEAL does not define a specific toolkit of mandatory instructional activities, nor does SEAL provide a set curriculum.

Rather, SEAL facilitates a process of teachers working collaboratively to design thematic units around basic principles of standards-based planning and with clarity about the components that must be addressed. Teachers come to know and understand the standards they are teaching, and why. They learn how to construct lessons and select from an array of strategies that will address the language needs and intentionality about language development that ensures participation, comprehension and access for their English Learners. Teachers bring to the table their knowledge, wisdom and creativity – contributing to the collaborative task of designing powerful, exciting and rigorous thematic units with their colleagues.



Teachers bring to the table their knowledge, wisdom and creativity – contributing to the collaborative task of designing powerful, exciting and rigorous thematic units with their colleagues.

SEAL provides leadership development and support for site and district administrators in centralizing the needs of English Learners and managing a complex instructional and curricular change process.

SEAL understands the crucial role of site and district leadership in supporting and managing a complex change process. A series of regional convenings as well as district specific meetings engage administrators in building their own understanding of the needs of English Learners, deepening knowledge of the SEAL model, peer dialogue about the challenges inherent in supporting teachers through instructional and curriculum change, and opportunities to build a toolkit of skills related to being an instructional leader and sustaining reforms. Tools are provided to enable administrators to lead the process at their sites.

SEAL customizes and adapts to local conditions, building on strengths and addressing the specific needs and realities of each school community.

SEAL is not a program. Instead, it is an approach to system alignment, instruction and curriculum planning that results in the powerful language development that English Learners (and all students) need for long-term academic success. Such planning uses the SEAL lens, framework and tools to identify local strengths, gaps and needs, and to customize the SEAL implementation process for a school community. This process begins with The Getting Started Institute which includes site and district leadership, charged with examining their current practices and outcomes, and customizing a SEAL implementation plan to the strengths and needs of each site.

The standard set of professional development modules are tailored to address specific areas of need, or to incorporate a relevant initiative already underway. Throughout SEAL implementation, support is provided to site and district leadership to identify and respond to new English Learner challenges, refine English Learner program models, and further adapt the SEAL model to provide the most targeted and relevant support. As part of this customization, SEAL can work with existing district-adopted language arts, math, science, social studies and English language development curriculum. SEAL also works within the parameters of any mandated minutes and pacing guides that may govern the delivery of curriculum.

This is done through infusing intentional language development instructional strategies and pedagogical practices into the existing core curriculum programs in ways that both enrich and maintain the integrity of those programs, and through the creation of SEAL standards-based thematic units that build upon existing curriculum to integrate science and social studies standards. This two-pronged approach requires that teachers know the standards they have to teach, understand the language development process, and possess a repertoire of instructional and pedagogical practices. Teachers gain these competencies through SEAL’s sustained professional development opportunities.

SEAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES: PROGRESSION

The SEAL professional development series begins with the Teacher Launch and then a series of six two-day Modules that are delivered over a two-year period. Grade-level “Unit Development and Planning” days occur between Modules where teachers work in grade-level teams across school sites, with the support of their coach-facilitators.

An initial two-day **Teacher Launch** establishes a common understanding of the SEAL Model, it’s research foundations, the replication and implementation plan, and engages grade-levels in utilizing Next Generation Science, History-Social Science and Common Core standards to create a yearly plan of integrated thematic units. All modules engage teachers in reading research together, learning strategies, classroom demonstrations, reflection and planning.

Module I: Oral Language	Module II: Intentional, Academic & Complex Language	Module III: Collaborative Practices & Teamwork	SUMMER BRIDGE	Module IV: The World in the Classroom & Authentic Writing	Module V: Meaning Making & Effective Expression	Module VI: Celebration & Joy in the Classroom	SUMMER BRIDGE
Key content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on oral language, related to literacy • CCCS Speaking and Listening & related Standards • Strategies to support oral language development and discourse 	Key content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ELD standards, integrated & designated • Graphic organizers • Language functions • Strategies to engage analytic language, and to differentiate scaffolds for English Learners 	Key content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration, teamwork, 4Cs • Visual arts standards • Arts integration • Parent Partnerships • Cooperative learning strategies, and use of centers and structured team tasks 			Key content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity, diversity, student voice • Stages of writing development • Authentic writing 	Key content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA/ELD framework & relationship between meaning-making, language development, content knowledge, effective expression and foundational skills • Shared research, literature studies, deconstructing text 	
YEAR ONE				YEAR TWO			

Preschool teachers attend special, separate Module II and Module IV sessions explicitly designed to address the early childhood education contexts and the needs of preschool children.

SEAL IMPACT

Dr. Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, a national expert in dual-language education, conducted a longitudinal evaluation of the five-year SEAL pilot in San Jose and Redwood City schools from 2009 - 2014. Using a combination of assessments commonly used in preschools and elementary grades, along with additional language and family literacy practices assessments, the evaluation answered three questions:

- What is the impact of the SEAL model on family literacy practices?
- To what degree does the performance of SEAL students improve?
- How does the academic growth of SEAL students compare to demographically similar students?

This summary of findings is based upon data on 422 students whose entire schooling was been in SEAL classrooms, and 309 Partial SEAL children who received one or two years of the SEAL program in elementary grades, but did not attend SEAL preschool. Comparison groups included demographically similar students in the same districts who were not in SEAL classrooms, as well as student data from national databases and research studies.

Impact Findings

1. *SEAL has a significant impact on parents and literacy activities at home.*

SEAL students in the pilot sites came from homes with very low incomes (\$27,384 per family of four on average) and very low parent education levels (85% with a high school diploma or less – far lower than the California state average). One-third of SEAL parents had six or fewer years of formal education.

Most had at least rudimentary literacy skills in Spanish, but few had basic English literacy or oral language skills. However, as a result of involvement with SEAL, half of SEAL parents read books with their child on a daily basis and regularly engaged in literacy-related activities. In comparing the frequency with which SEAL family members read or told stories to their kindergarten children with a national sample of Hispanic parents and college-educated parents (of any ethnicity), SEAL kindergarten parents were more likely to engage in these literacy-related activities than the national sample of Hispanic parents and as likely as the college-educated parents. These results indicate that even with low levels of Spanish literacy and education, SEAL parents (with the help of SEAL workshops and teacher-parent conferences) were able to engage with their children in activities that help promote language and pre-literacy skills.

One-third of SEAL parents in the pilot had six or fewer years of formal education. Most had at least rudimentary literacy skills in Spanish, but few had basic English literacy or oral language skills. However, as a result of involvement with SEAL, half of SEAL parents read books with their child on a daily basis and regularly engaged in literacy-related activities.

2. *SEAL had a statistically significant impact on student growth and development in language, literacy and cognition.*

SEAL students (across cohorts and grade levels) consistently made statistically significant growth (gaining at least one level and usually more) on each measure of language and literacy (in Spanish and in English), as well as cognition and social skills on the CDRDP-PS California preschool assessment, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and the PreLAS assessment of language. They made good progress towards English proficiency. All cohorts surpassed state set accountability targets for moving up levels on CELDT towards English proficiency.

3. *SEAL students consistently outperformed demographically similar comparison groups in growth and achievement, especially in areas related to language and literacy.*

While SEAL students began preschool with very low levels of language proficiency in their home language and little-to-no English (lower than their comparison peers), after just one year of SEAL preschool they entered kindergarten scoring equal to or higher than the comparison group on the PreLAS language assessments and on the CELDT. By the end of preschool, one in three were age-appropriate fluent in Spanish. By the end of kindergarten, half were fluent. In comparison to demographically similar groups, these results indicate that SEAL students were at least as strong (and in many cases much stronger) in language and literacy growth and achievement. In addition, preschool teachers unanimously reported that, as a result of using SEAL strategies, they saw students using language and understanding academic content at a much higher level than previously expected. Kindergarten teachers universally reported that children entering kindergarten from a SEAL preschool classroom had much higher and more active language skills than they typically experience. These patterns repeat themselves from grade to grade. Overall, SEAL students either closed gaps or surpassed comparison students, despite beginning school with very low levels of language and early literacy, and coming from homes with disproportionately lower parent education levels and higher poverty levels.



Kindergarten teachers universally report that children entering kindergarten from a SEAL preschool classroom have much higher and more active language skills than they typically experience. These patterns repeat themselves from grade to grade.

4. *There is evidence that even one year of SEAL provides benefits in comparison to non-SEAL students, and that cumulative years of SEAL education provide even greater benefits.*

The evaluation compared Full-SEAL students with Partial-SEAL students to examine the comparative benefits of one year of SEAL with the cumulative effect of multiple years of SEAL. Students with even one year of SEAL showed benefits over students with no SEAL, but students who were Full-SEAL had greater growth and achievement.

5. *The SEAL approach changes teacher practices and increases the use of research-based language development strategies.*

SEAL is a complex instructional and curricular model that requires significant teacher commitment and effort to implement. From the pilot's inauguration, the SEAL model elicited high levels of teacher

interest, active participation, and buy-in. Measures of implementation show that building capacity and implementing the full SEAL model at a grade level takes more than one year for most teachers. While the

*... 95% of teachers report
“SEAL has had a major positive
impact on my teaching.”*

great majority of teachers made significant progress towards SEAL implementation in their first year of involvement, all needed a second year of intensive support to reach full implementation. By the end of their first year, 80% of the classrooms reflected SEAL’s hallmark instructional approaches, environments, and thematic curriculum as defined by the Four Pillars of SEAL and the High Leverage Pedagogical Practices. By

the end of the second implementation year 95% of the classrooms showed such evidence. In addition, 95% of teachers reported “SEAL has had a major positive impact on my teaching.”

6. *The SEAL model produces higher levels of curriculum articulation, increased student engagement, and deepened relationships across the preschool and K–3 systems.*

Preschool and kindergarten teachers cite increased PreK–kindergarten communication and curriculum alignment as a major impact of SEAL. In pilot sites, the learning environments and instruction across the two levels reflected a shared vision of language development and the implementation of aligned strategies. The number of preschool parents who requested enrollment in the kindergarten classrooms on campus has increased. Interviews with school and district leaders also cited increased involvement of preschool personnel and preschool families in the life of the school, and attribute this shift to the SEAL model.

ONGOING RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Based upon the experience and success of the five-year SEAL pilot, a replication approach for bringing the model “to scale” was designed to maximize the most powerful aspects of SEAL in a systematic and efficient approach to implementation. This new phase of expansion coincided with major changes in state and federal assessment responding to a new generation of standards and new accountability climate. For these reasons, and because SEAL replication is now occurring in a wide variety of community and school contexts, the Sobrato Family Foundation is supporting additional research and evaluation.

An external evaluation of SEAL Replication began in Fall 2015 with a broad research agenda focusing on multiple aspects of SEAL as a systemic change initiative across 12 districts.

- This evaluation is focusing on the impacts of the SEAL Replication Model on **student** achievement, language development (both English and Spanish), active engagement/participation in the classroom, and closing the achievement gap using preLAS and LAS Links, CELDT/ELPAC and SBAC data.
- The evaluation includes studies of the impacts of the SEAL Replication Model on **teacher** instructional **practices** and curriculum design through the collection of observation data, self-assessment surveys, and a Depth of Implementation protocol.
- The evaluation also focuses on the impacts of the SEAL Replication Model on **district systems** of policies, curriculum, articulation and alignment across PK-3, English Learner program design, and consistency of practices across school sites, and collects lessons about **effective implementation**, replication, and scale-up in a variety of contexts.

Research partners are Loyola Marymount's Center for Equity and Excellence for English Learners (CEEL) headed by Dr. Magaly Lavadenz, and Wexford Associates headed by Dr. Sheila Cassidy.

CONCLUSION

SEAL offers a model of intensive language development that builds a foundation for early language and literacy – beginning in preschool and continuing through the primary grades. SEAL’s Four Pillars, High-Leverage Pedagogical Practices, and approach to instructional and curricular improvement and alignment offer a concrete framework to educators engaged in the urgent task of preventing students from becoming Long Term English Learners and crafting preschool and primary grade programs capable of closing the achievement gap for English Learners.

Closely aligned with the Common Core standards and using those new standards as a foundation for integrated thematic unit planning, SEAL demonstrates how the Common Core era of standards can be implemented in ways that embrace English Learners as full participants. The additional pay-off is in the benefits accrued to all students in SEAL classrooms— a 21st century, rigorous education that is interesting, joyful and affirming.



SEAL demonstrates how the Common Core standards can be implemented in ways that embrace English Learners as full participants.

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SEAL

Sobrato Early Academic Language PreK-3 Model



Interested in partnering to bring this program to your school or district?

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Visit sobrato.org to view “SEAL: An Introduction”
[10 min video presenting the SEAL Model]

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