



ESSER Reduced Class Size; SEA Survey Report: February 2022

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

February 2022

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ESSER Reduced Class Sizes Program Outcome Goals

- Outcome 1: Increase student mastery
- Outcome 2: Decrease K–2 Teacher Vacancies
- Outcome 3: Improved culture and climate
- Outcome 4: Increase graduate rates

Evaluation Overview Statement

The Research and Performance Management office disseminated three surveys to gather data on how well Kindergarten-Second Grade Specialized Educational Assistants (K-2 SEAs/SEAs) are being leveraged throughout the District. These surveys are sent to principals of schools with K-2 classrooms, K-2 teachers, and SEAs at the end of every quarter. The following report shows details of schools and classrooms with high and low implementation, as well as barriers that are hindering schools and classrooms from leveraging their SEAs in the best way possible and compares the results of the first and second waves of surveys.

Key Findings

- 49% of principals report that SEAs are only providing instructional support (rather than doing non-instructional tasks) when the classroom teacher is giving instruction; however, teachers and SEAs report this figure to be 25 or 16%, respectively.
- Of the principals that indicate turnover in the SEA position, 81% report that SEAs are leaving for a better job, mostly to fill teacher vacancies either in their own school or at other schools (up 6 percentage points from Q1).
- Of teachers with SEAs, 65% report that their SEA is providing whole group instructional support every day, and 55% report that their SEA is helping with small groups daily. 92% of teachers report that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable.
- When SEAs are able to be in their assigned classroom and help with instruction, the written comments from teachers, principals, and SEAs are overwhelmingly positive.

Principal Responses Overview

The principal survey was sent out to all principals of schools that have the K-2 grade band on January 5, 2022. Of the 93 principals who were sent the survey, 70 principals completed it (response rate of 75%). Two principals were removed from the survey dataset because they indicated they did not have enough SEAs for every K-2 classroom. This left the survey pool with 68 principals who responded to questions about how well they understand the SEA position as well as how they believe the position is being implemented in their school. This report will only focus on the implementation of the SEA position in the classroom during instructional time.

Principals reported how many SEAs are in their school; the median response was 6 positions. Ninety-eight percent of principals either agree or strongly agree that they have a clear understanding of the role of an SEA. Around 94% of principals agree or strongly agree that SEAs provide students with valuable instructional support, and 95% agree or strongly agree that SEAs are an integral part of their classrooms. Agreement went up by two percentage points for the last two questions between the first and the second quarter survey.



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Non-Instructional Tasks

Principals were asked, “When their classroom teachers are providing instruction, which of the following non-instructional (NI) tasks are being done by SEAs?” as well as who assigns these tasks. Figures 1 and 2 below show these results. Figure 1 shows principals’ responses from Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 (Q1 and Q2). Of note, 79% answered that their SEAs provide instructional support, along with other tasks, when their classroom teacher is giving instruction. This is up eight percentage points from the first survey. Around half (49%) of principals reported that their SEAs only provide instructional support, excluding all other listed tasks. The next highest response is subbing for another classroom at 40% (Because principals could check multiple boxes, the percentages given will exceed 100%). This percentage increased by four percentage points from the first survey. Many principals mentioned this issue in the open-ended responses. One principal said, “As much as possible we have them assigned to specific K-2 classrooms and they assist students. However, we have to use them as subs because so many teachers out due to Covid.”

Figure 1.

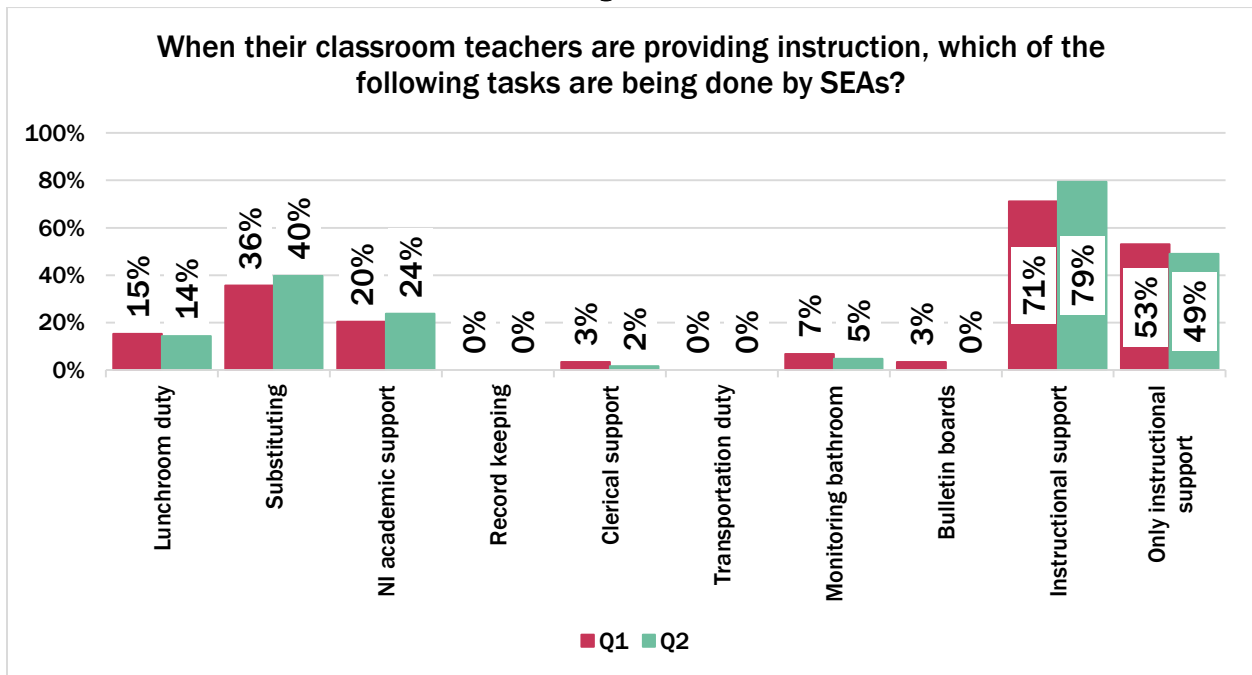
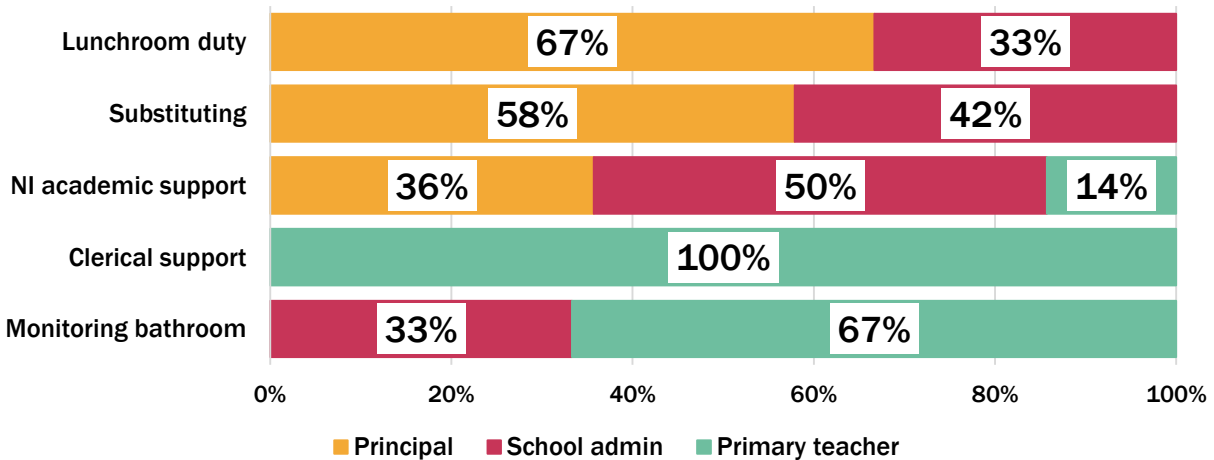


Figure 2 breaks down who assigns each of the tasks that apply from figure 1; figure 2 only contains the responses from the Q2 survey. Monitoring the lunchroom, subbing for other classrooms, and NI academic support (such as monitoring testing or labs/computers) are almost entirely assigned by the principal or by school administration. Clerical support such as making copies or monitoring bathroom breaks and/or hallways are mostly assigned by the classroom teacher.



Figure 2.

Who assigns these tasks to the SEAs in your school?



Turnover in the SEA Position

Principals were asked if there was turnover in the SEA position at their school. In the previous report, 42% indicated that they have had turnover; this has gone up by two percentage points to 44%. Of those that reported turnover, 81% said that their SEAs have gotten a better job; most mentioned that these SEAs have been promoted to full time teachers either at a different school or within the school they were initially hired.

Teacher Responses Overview

K-2 teachers were sent a direct email link to the survey beginning on January 3, 2022. Of the 968 District-managed teachers receiving the survey, 299 responded, meaning 31% of targeted teachers responded to the survey.

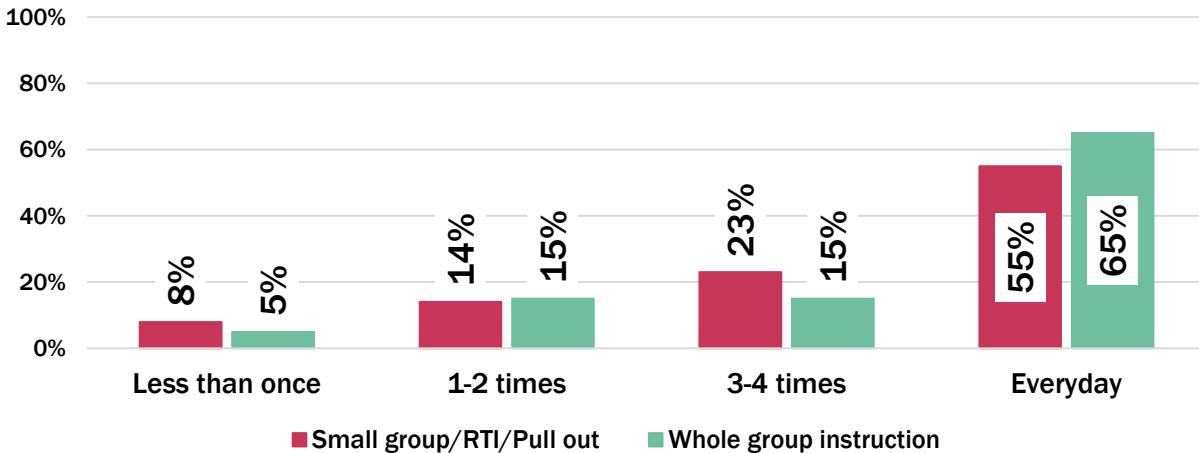
The median class size of the teachers who responded was 21, and 74% of teachers (222) reported that they have an SEA assigned to their classroom currently. Seventy-nine percent of teachers indicated that they teach all core subjects; the other 21% of teachers reported that their class rotates to another room for certain core subjects. Seventy-seven percent of teachers who reported teaching all subjects have an SEA in their classroom. Seven-nine percent of teachers who rotate classes and teach ELA reported having an SEA in their class. However, only 54% of teachers who only teach math have an SEA in their classroom. Teachers indicating that they do not have an SEA in their classroom were asked a few follow up questions and then excluded from the rest of the questions pertaining to how SEAs worked in the classroom.

Teachers were asked how often their SEA supports small group (RTI2-A and pull out) and whole group instruction in their classroom within a week. Fifty-five percent of teachers indicated that their SEA supports small group instruction daily, and 65% reported whole group support daily as well. Figure 3 shows how often SEAs provide support per week. Both of these supports increased by five percentage points since the previous quarter.



Figure 3.

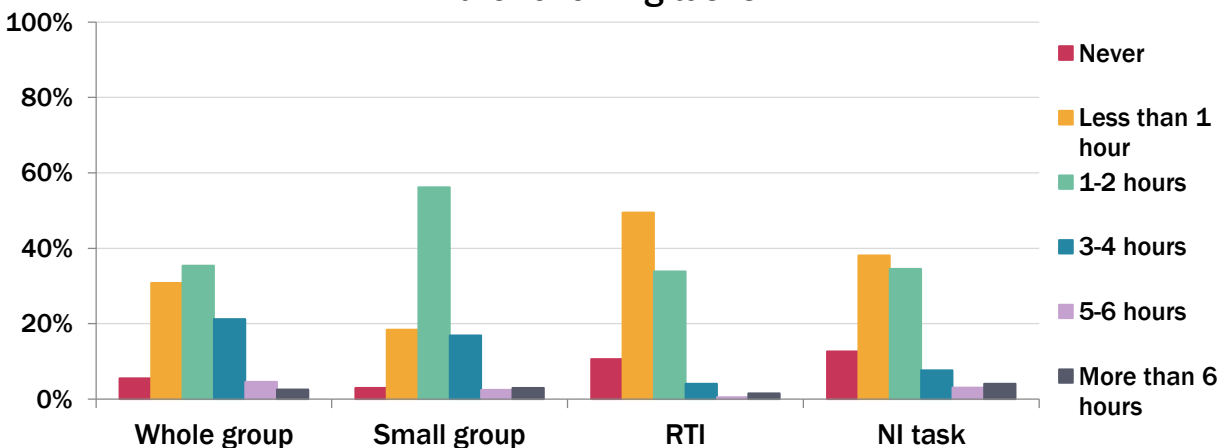
SEA supports per week



Next, teachers were asked about the hours their SEA spends on specific activities. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of hours dedicated to the following tasks: whole group instruction, small group instruction, RTI2-A, and NI tasks. Sixty-four percent and 79% of teachers said that their SEA spends at least one hour a day on whole group instruction and small group instruction, respectively. This shows a four percentage point decrease from the first quarter survey in whole group instruction, but a twelve percentage point increase in at least one hour of small group instruction since the first quarter.

Figure 4.

On an average day, how much of your SEA's time is spent on the following tasks.



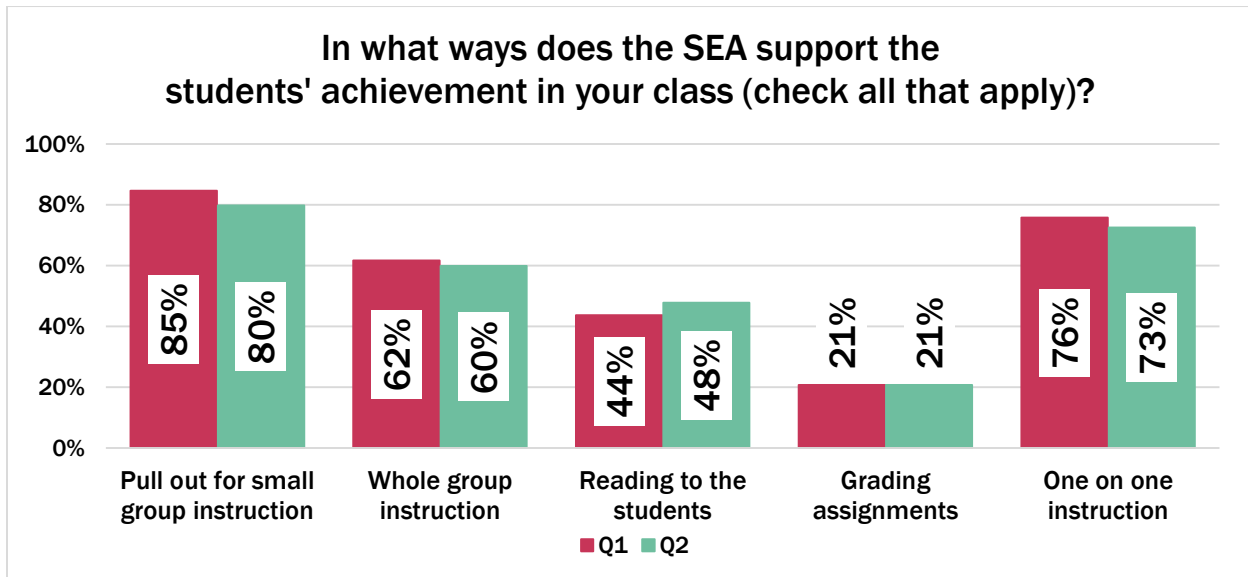
Ninety-two percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable; this is an increase of seven percentage points from the last survey. Similarly, 91% of teachers reported that SEAs provide valuable support during small groups. In a separate question, the majority of teachers reported that their SEA helps with small groups, whole group



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support, and one-on-one work with students. Figure 5 shows these supports below from both Q1 and Q2. Between Q1 and Q2, teachers reported that most of these supports have decreased slightly, with small group instruction decreasing the most by five percentage points. Reading with the students increased by four percentage points.

Figure 5.



Non-Instructional (NI) Tasks

Forty-three percent of teachers reported that when they are providing instruction to their class, their SEA is sometimes pulled to monitor the lunchroom; this is eight percentage points lower than the first survey. Forty-four percent of teachers indicated that their SEA might be substituting for another classroom. This is one percentage point higher than reported in the first survey. Thirty-eight percent of teachers reported that their SEA provides instructional support along with non-instructional tasks when teachers are giving instruction. This is two percentage points higher than the first survey. Only a quarter of teachers indicated that their SEAs only provide instructional support when they are teaching. This figure is up by six percentage points from the first survey. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of teachers' insights on what tasks their SEAs do while they provide instruction in both Q1 and Q2.



Figure 6.

When you are providing instruction, which of the following tasks is your SEA engaging in?

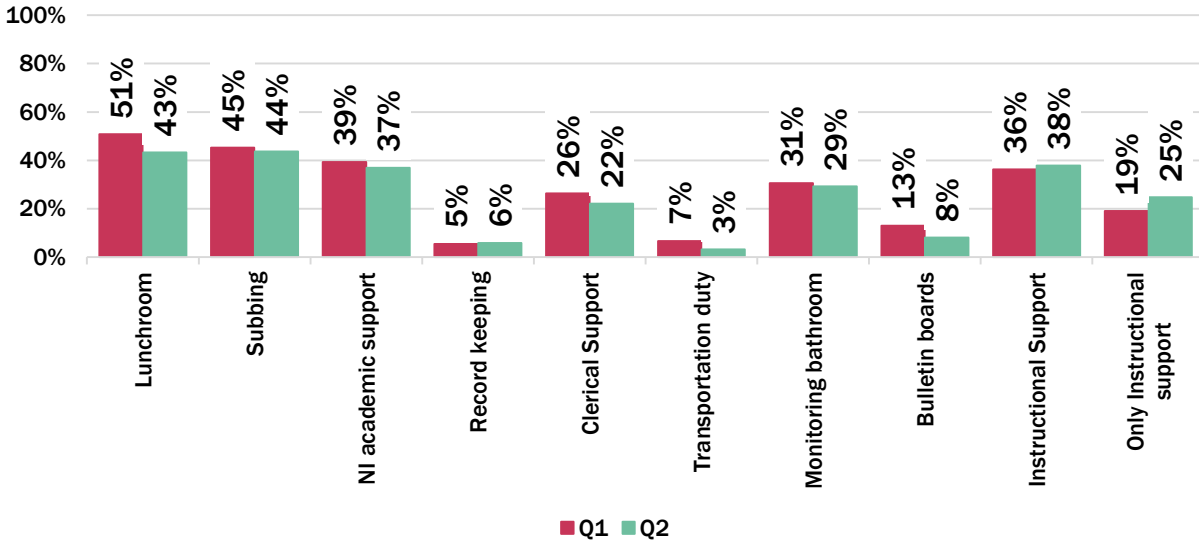
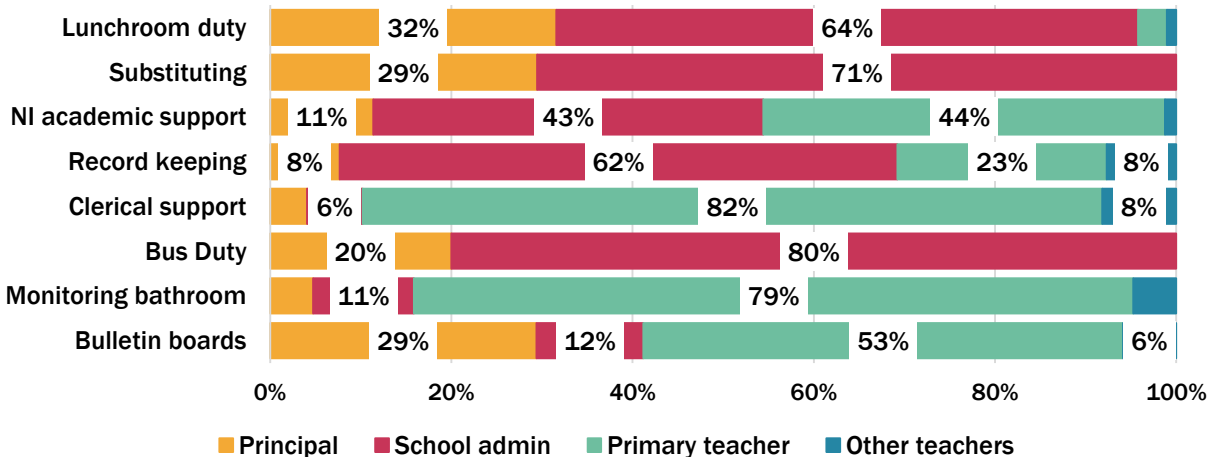


Figure 7 shows the breakdown of who assigns these tasks to their SEAs from the teachers' perspective. NI academic support and creating bulletin boards seem to be tasks that staff in many roles are assigning to SEAs, while lunchroom duty, substituting for other classrooms, and bus duty seem to be given out by the principal or school administration. Clerical support, and monitoring bathroom breaks and hallways are tasks often assigned by the teacher.

Figure 7.

Who assigns these tasks to the SEAs in your school?





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SEA Responses Overview

The SEA survey was sent out to 620 SEAs on January 3, 2022. 275 SEAs completed the survey, resulting in a 44% response rate. SEAs were asked how many years (including the current year) they have been an educational assistant; the median answer is 2 years and the average is just under 4.5 years. Twenty percent indicated that they have a paraprofessional certification. A little over 60% have been in the same classroom the entire time they've been employed as a SEA. When asked what subjects they provide support for, 92% reported helping with ELA and 75% reported helping with math. Figure 8 below shows the break down of SEAs in the three grade levels. Nearly 40% of SEAs surveyed are assigned to Kindergarten. Figure 9 shows how many hours SEAs provide instructional support to students. Forty-seven percent of SEAs indicated that they spend at least 5 hours of their day giving instructional support to students.

Figure 8. What grade do you work with currently?

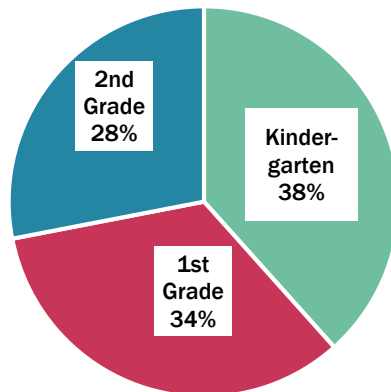


Figure 9: How many hours of your day are spent providing instructional support to students?

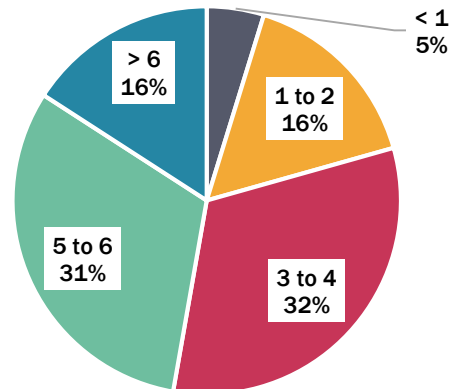
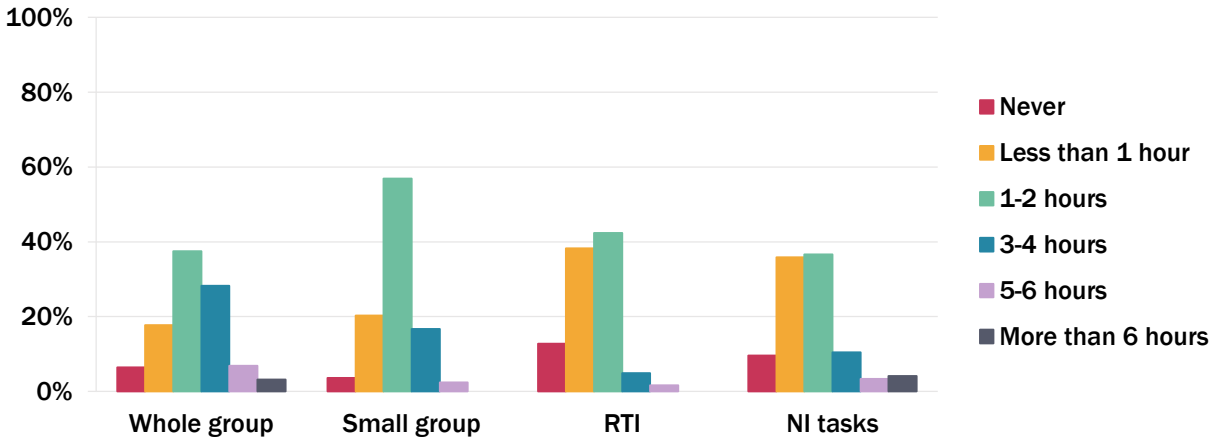


Figure 10 displays how SEAs break up their time throughout the day. Eighty-two percent of SEAs reported that they spend two hours or less on NI tasks during an average day. Nearly 40% of SEAs indicated that they work on whole group instruction three hours or more on an average day, while 76% spend at least 1 hour or more on small groups per day.



Figure 10.

On an average day, how much of your time is spent on the following tasks.

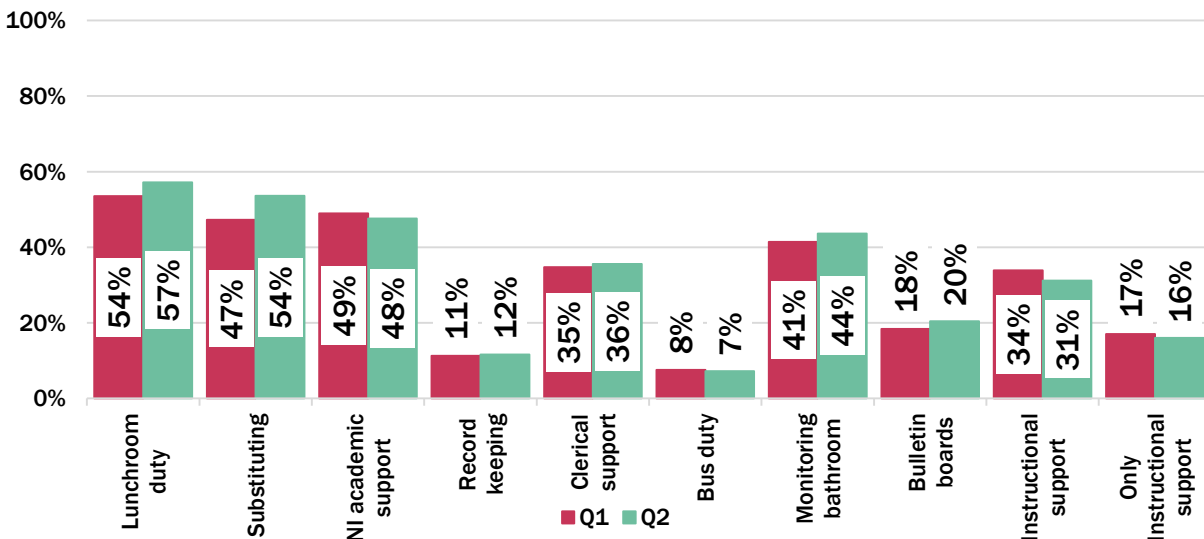


Non-Instructional Tasks

Figure 11 shows what SEAs reported they are doing when their classroom teacher is providing instruction. This more closely aligns with what teachers reported. SEAs indicated that their NI tasks most often include monitoring the lunchroom, substituting for other classrooms, giving NI academic support such as helping with testing or monitoring computers, and monitoring bathroom breaks or hallways. A little less than a third of SEAs indicated that they are providing instructional support, while 16% reported that they are only providing instructional support during this portion of the day.

Figure 11.

When their classroom teachers are providing instruction, which of the following tasks are being done by SEAs?





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SEAs reported that most often their principal or school administration ask them to monitor lunchrooms, substitute classes, and help with bus or transportation duty, whereas their teacher is the one who mostly assigns tasks such as record keeping, clerical support, and monitoring the bathroom. The breakdown of these assignments is shown in figure 12. SEAs reported doing more NI tasks and at a higher percentage than principals reported. These tasks include bus/transportation duty, record keeping, and creating bulletin boards.

Figure 12.

Who assigns these tasks to the SEAs in your school?

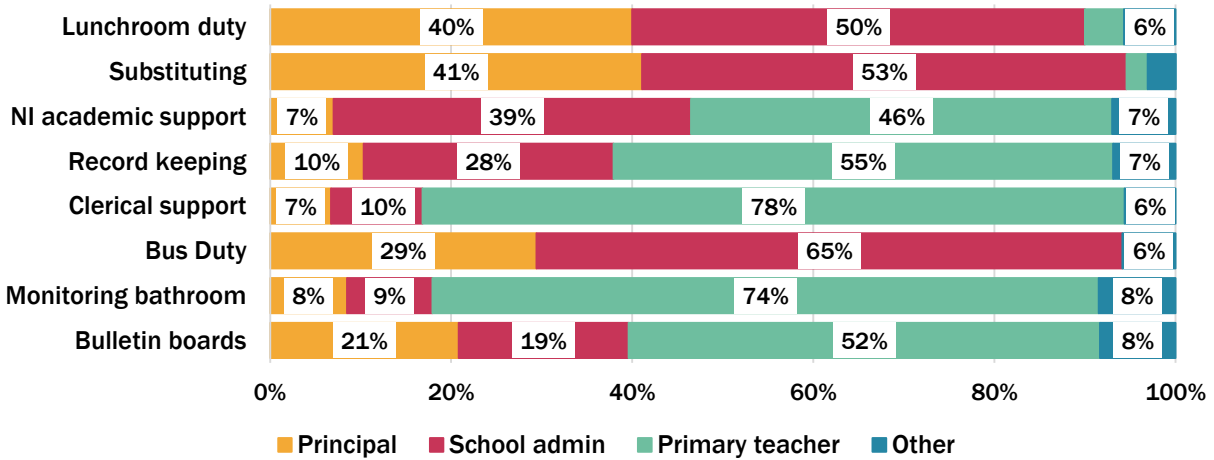
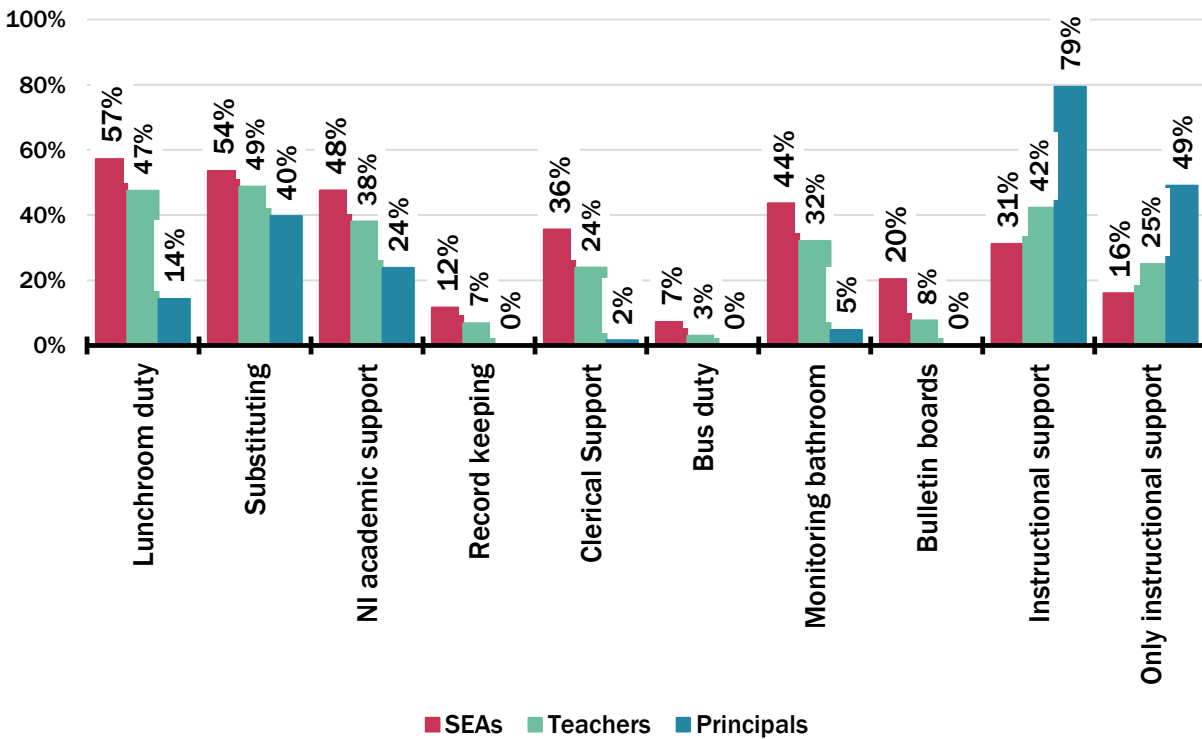


Figure 13 shows the comparison of NI tasks that SEAs do, based on what SEAs, teachers, and principals reported for Q2. SEAs and teachers reported at a much higher rate that SEAs do NI tasks when their primary teacher is giving instruction. Again, this could be because principals are considering the whole of their school, while teachers and SEAs are reporting on their own experience in the classroom. Of note, 49% of principals reported that their SEAs only help with instructional support, while only 16% of SEAs reported the same. Conversely, 57% of SEAs reported that they monitor the lunchroom during instructional time while 14% of principals indicated that their SEAs do this task.



Figure 13

When their classroom teachers are providing instruction, which of the following NI tasks are being done by SEAs?

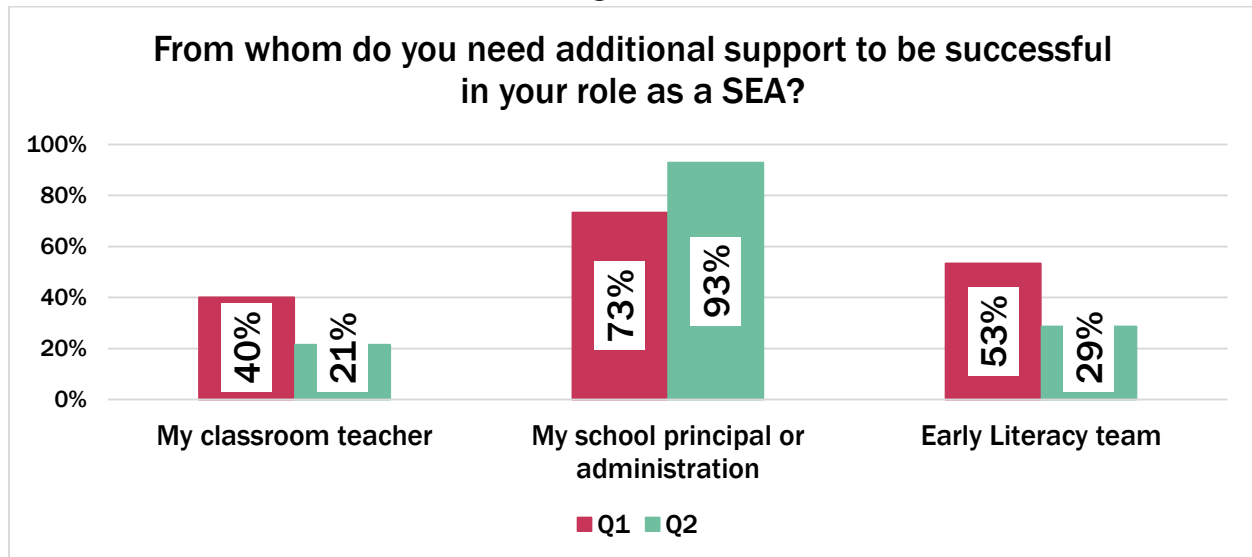


SEAs were also asked from whom they need additional supports to be successful in their role. In the first quarter survey, 73% said they needed more support from their school administration or principal, but in the second quarter survey, this figure went up to 93%. Their need for additional classroom teacher and the Early Literacy team support dropped by nearly twenty percentage points from the first survey to the second. Figure 14 shows the SEAs answers from quarter one and two. Eleven of the 16 open-ended SEA responses related to this question mentioned that they would like to be in the classroom and not used as a substitute or a monitor. The other five mentioned support such as ideas for activities during small group from their primary teacher.



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Figure 14.



Open-Ended Responses

At the end of all the surveys, there were two open-ended questions; one asked what is going especially well in the SEA program and the other asked what is particularly challenging about the SEA program.

Barriers/Areas of Improvement

The following are responses from principals, teachers, and SEAs about things that are challenging in this program.

Principal responses:

62% of the open-ended responses discuss being short-staffed, having to use SEAs as subs, not having enough SEAs, or having attendance/turnover issues with SEAs.

- "Unfortunately, it's extremely difficult to serve in the intended capacity since there is such a huge teacher shortage."
- "It's just been a challenge to get them onboarded and hired."
- "We would like more flexibility with using SEAs for additional duties."

Teacher responses:

- "My SEA has too many expectations placed upon her from outside the classroom."
- "Not having my SEA due to her having to substitute, which is very often."
- "Although my SEA is in my class most of the time, it is challenging to plan instruction when she is pulled out to sub last minute with no warning."
- "It's tough when she is pulled out for other duties. We have a system in place that relies on her lessons and it is thrown off when she is taken out for additional duties."

SEA responses:

There were 81 valid responses (examples of non-valid responses would be: "n/a", "none", etc.). Over half (52%) of these responses mentioned having to substitute for other classrooms, work with



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students in other grades, or do other tasks that take them out of their assigned classroom. Although many seem frustrated in the open-ended comments about having to do things that are not academic support, 95% of SEAs agree or strongly agree that they believe their work positively impacts the students' achievement.

- "We do not have time to do what we were hired to do because we are pulled elsewhere so much."
- "SEAs are not allowed to do the work they were hired for because we are for filling additional roles all of the times that has no involvement in student learning or instruction."
- "The challenge of being pulled away from the role of SEA of assisting student academically to perform other non-instructional duties."

Positive Aspects

The following are responses from principals, teachers and SEAs about things that are going well in this program.

Principal responses:

- "Their presence is valuable and they are providing great support. They are showing initiative." "The SEAs are an integral part of daily instructional support for students."
- "The SEA makes the class ratio smaller and students are more comfortable learning to read in a smaller setting."
- "More students are on task during small group rotations as the SEA is tasked with running a small group and will help teacher monitor students."
- "The SEA position is extremely beneficial and would be more helpful if we were not in a predicament of a staffing shortage."

Teacher responses:

- "Having my SEA has been a real game changer. Students have made leaps and bounds in learning to read by decoding, using phonemic awareness, phonics, and writing."
- "My SEA works well in small group and provides valuable support to the students."
- "He is task oriented and does a great job with the development of the students academically, emotionally and socially."
- "Having an extra support for small group and one-on-one instruction has been most helpful."

SEA responses:

- "My role as a SEA is going especially well because I am being provided with all the support and training to do my job. It is also preparing me to become a teacher in the near future."
- "My students have improved tremendously. I can see how much my small group instruction has helped them with their tests scores The work I do really supports the teacher and I feel that I am a great support around the school in general."
- "Small group intervention gives more insight on the student's area of strengths and weaknesses. The SEA role is essential, in order to assist in improving students understanding of content."
- "Developing relationships with the students and learning the way they learn best."



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Appendix

Response Rate Correction

The first and second quarter surveys were sent to all K-2 teachers within the District, including charter schools. However, charter schools are not included in the K-2 Specialized Educational Assistants program funded by ESSER. Because of this, the initial reporting for Quarter 1 showed a lower participation rate than was accurate. What is shown above for the Quarter 2 response rate is accurate. Here is the correction for Quarter 1: 1,184 teachers were initially emailed the survey link, and there were 469 responses for a response rate of 40%. Of the 1,184 teachers who were sent the survey, 978 of these teachers taught at a District-managed school, and 418 of these teachers responded to the survey. This increases the initially reported and inaccurate rate of 40% to a more accurate rate of 43%.