



ESSER Reduced Class Size; SEA Survey Report: March 2022

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

March 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, second, and third waves of surveys.

Key Findings

- 57% of principals report that SEAs are only providing instructional support (rather than doing non-instructional [NI] tasks) when the classroom teacher is giving instruction. This response is 8 percentage points higher than quarter 2.
- Teachers and SEAs report the above figure to be 42 and 37%, respectively. This teacher response is 21 percentage points higher than quarter 2, and the SEA response is 17 percentage points higher than quarter 2.
- Of the principals that indicate turnover in the SEA position, 75% report that SEAs are leaving for a better job, mostly to fill teacher vacancies either in their own school or at other schools (down 6 percentage points from Q2).
- Of teachers with SEAs, 66% report that their SEA is providing whole group instructional support every day, and 61% report that their SEA is helping with small groups daily. 89% of teachers report that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable.
- Just under 60% have been in the same classroom the entire time they have been employed as a SEA.
- 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.

Response Rates by Role

The third quarter survey was sent out starting on March 2, 2022 to all principals of elementary or K-8 schools, K-2 teachers, and SEAs. Eighty-three principals responded to the survey. Eight principals were removed from the survey dataset because they indicated they either do not have SEAs at their school (2 schools; alternative schools do not have SEAs assigned to them) or do not have enough SEAs for every K-2 classroom (6 schools). This left the survey pool with 75 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. Of the 967 District-managed teachers receiving the survey, 323 responded, meaning 33% of targeted teachers responded to the survey. The SEA survey was sent out



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to 592 SEAs and 320 SEAs completed the survey, resulting in a 54% response rate. Table 1 below shows the response rate over the three quarters.

Table 1. Response Rate by Role & Quarter

| Role | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Principals | 78% | 80% | 95% |
| Teachers | 43% | 31% | 33% |
| SEAs | 45% | 44% | 54% |

Principal Responses Overview

Principals reported how many SEAs are in their school; the median response was 6 positions. Ninety-seven percent of principals either agree or strongly agree that they have a clear understanding of the role of an SEA. Around 92% of principals agree or strongly agree that SEAs provide students with valuable instructional support, and 96% agree or strongly agree that SEAs are an integral part of their classrooms. Agreement went up by three percentage points for the last question between the first and the third quarter survey.

Non-Instructional Tasks

Principals were asked, "When their classroom teachers are providing instruction, which of the following tasks are being done by SEAs?" as well as who assigns the non-instructional (NI) tasks. Figures 1 and 2 below show these results. Figure 1 shows principals' responses from Quarter 1, Quarter 2, and Quarter 3 (Q1, Q2, and Q3). Of note, 97% answered that their SEAs provide instructional support, along with other tasks, when their classroom teacher is giving instruction. This is up eighteen percentage points from Q2 and 26 points up from Q1. More than half (57%) 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 33% (Because principals could check multiple boxes, the percentages given will exceed 100%). This decreased by seven percentage points from the second survey. Many principals mentioned this issue in the open-ended responses. Most of the NI tasks decreased between Q2 and Q3.



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Figure 1.

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

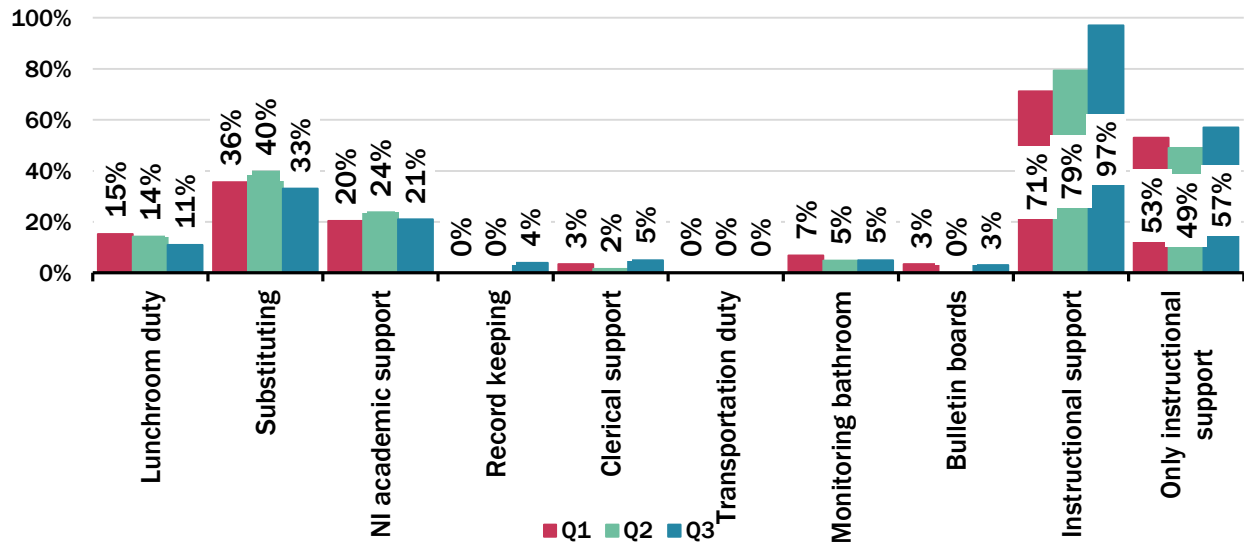
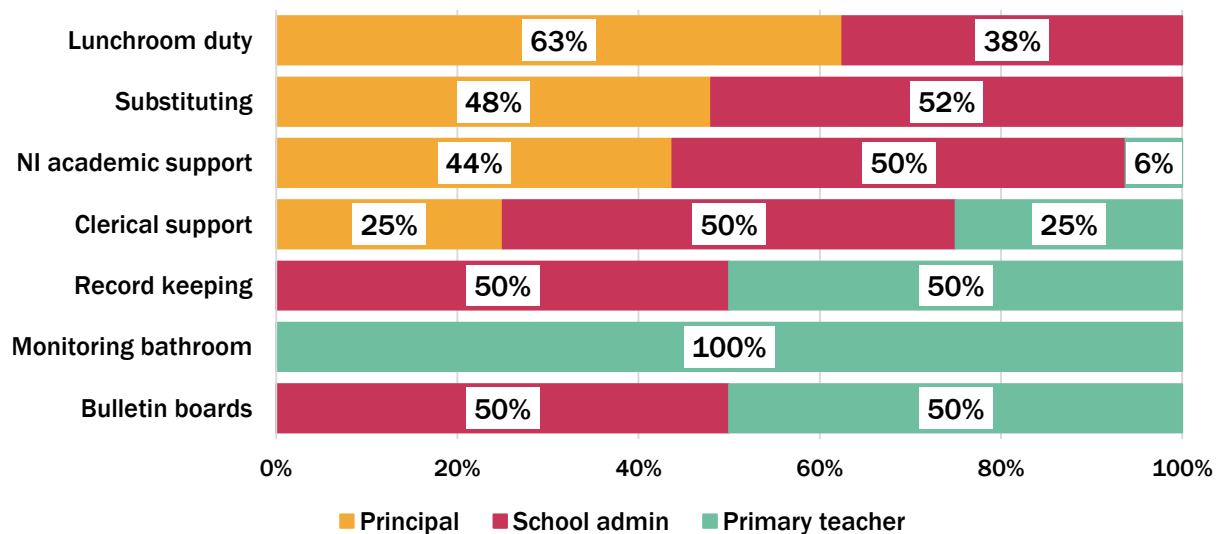


Figure 2 breaks down who assigns each of the tasks that apply from figure 1; figure 2 only contains the responses from the Q3 survey. Monitoring the lunchroom, subbing for other classrooms, and NI academic support (such as monitoring testing or labs/computers) are almost entirely assigned by the principal or by school administration. Principals reported that five of the seven NI tasks were at least half of the time assigned by the school administration. Monitoring bathroom breaks and/or hallways was reported as being entirely assigned by the classroom teacher.

Figure 2.

Who assigns these tasks to the SEAs in your school?





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Turnover in the SEA Position

Principals were asked if there was turnover in the SEA position at their school. In the previous report, 44% indicated that they have had turnover; this has gone up by twenty-two percentage points. Figure 3 and 4 show the turnover breakdown; figure 3 showing those who mentioned having turnover in the pink as 'yes' (n=48), and figure 4 showing the reasons given for said turnover (n=58; this question was allowed for multiple options to be chosen and ten principals chose two answers). Of those that reported turnover, 75% 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. Of the ten principals who mentioned two reasons, all at least mentioned the reason of the SEA being offered a better job.

Figure 3.

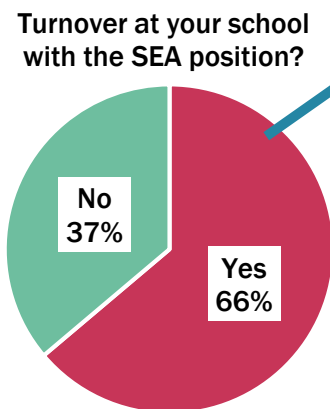
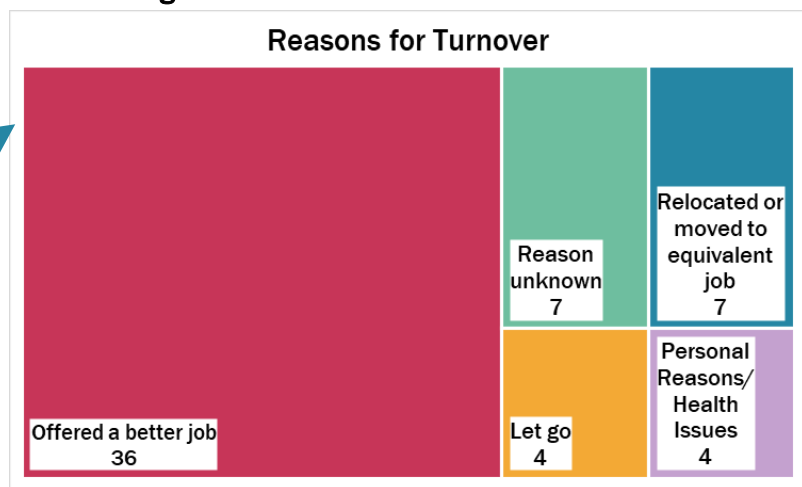


Figure 4.



Teacher Responses Overview

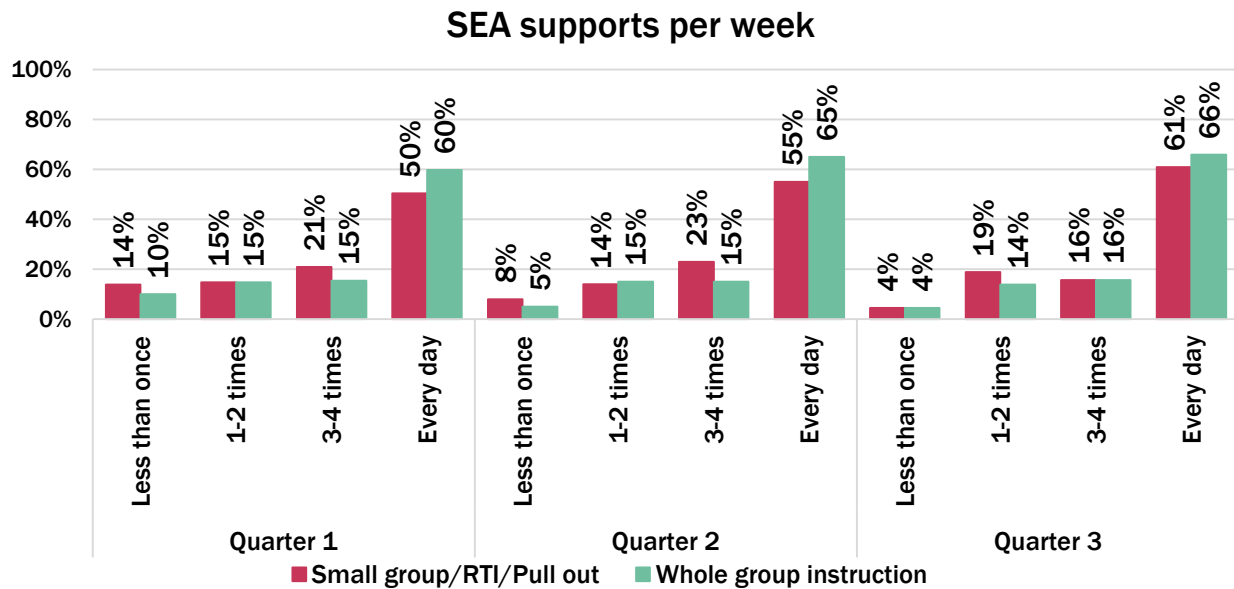
The median class size of the teachers who responded was 21 students, and 74% of teachers (239) reported that they have an SEA assigned to their classroom currently. Of those 239 who have an SEA, 38% reported that they have had an SEA for the entire year. Seventy-six percent of teachers indicated that they teach all core subjects; the other 24% 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-one percent of teachers who rotate classes and teach ELA reported having an SEA in their class. However, only 48% 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. Eight-four teachers (26%) said they do not have an SEA in their classroom currently; of those 84, 53% of them said that they have not had an SEA at all this year.

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. Sixty-one percent of teachers indicated that their SEA supports small group instruction daily, and 66% reported whole group support daily as well. Figure 5 shows how often SEAs provide support per week. The percentages of the daily category have increased each quarter.



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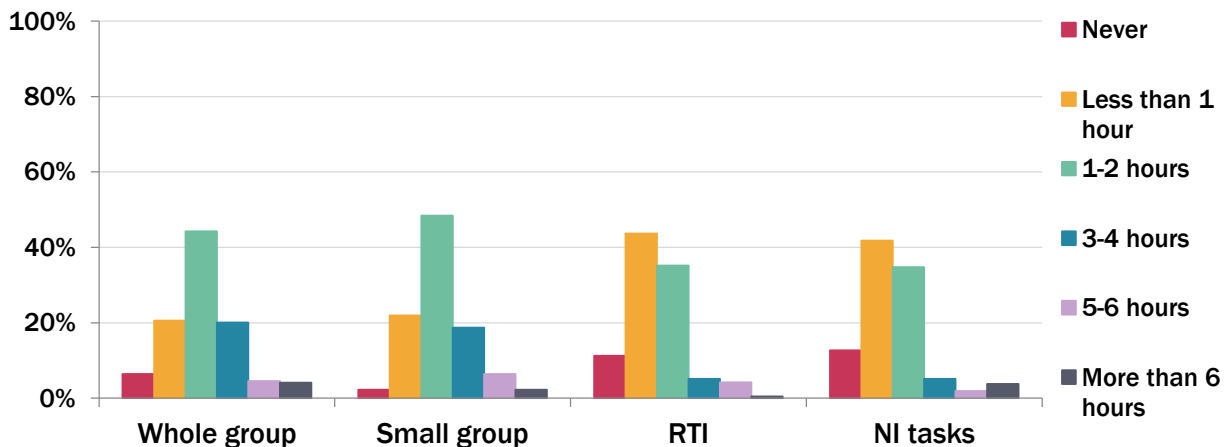
Figure 5.



Next, teachers were asked about the hours their SEA spends on specific activities in an average day. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of hours dedicated to the following tasks: whole group instruction, small group instruction, RTI2-A, and NI tasks. Seventy-three percent and 76% 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 nine percentage point increase from Q2 in whole group instruction, but a three percentage point decrease in small group instruction since Q2. It should be noted, however, that there was a 12 percentage point increase from Q1 and Q2 in small group instruction.

Figure 6.

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



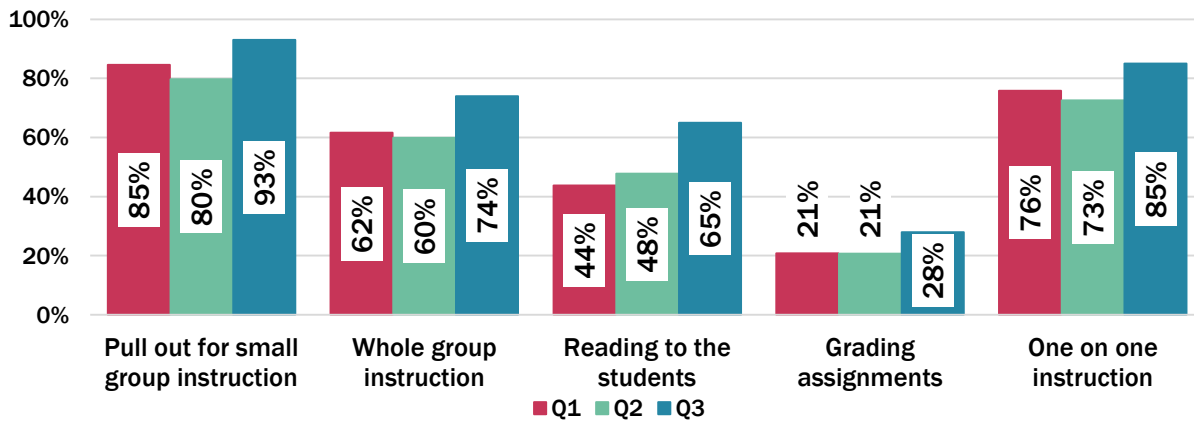


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Eighty-nine percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable. Similarly, 92% of teachers reported that SEAs provide valuable support during small groups. In a separate question, the majority of teachers reported that their SEA helps with small groups, whole group support, reading to the students, and one-on-one work with students. Figure 7 shows these supports below from Q1, Q2, and Q3. Between Q1 and Q2, almost all of the supports decreased in percentage points, however, between Q2 and Q3, all but one support went up by at least 12 percentage points. Reading with the students increased the most with 17 percentage points.

Figure 7.

In what ways does the SEA support the students' achievement in your class
(check all that apply)?



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 consistent with Q2, but eight percentage points lower than Q1. Forty-four percent of teachers indicated that their SEA might be substituting for another classroom. Almost all of the tasks were similar in response to Q2. The most startling shift came from those who indicated that their SEA provides instructional support. This task increased by 46 percentage points. This indicates that 84% of teachers report that their SEA helps with instructional support while they are giving instruction. However, because this question allows for multiple responses, most of these responses also show that their SEA sometimes does other tasks while teachers are giving instruction. Figure 8 shows in the last column those who only selected that their SEA helps with instructional support. This jumped considerably from Q2 to Q3 with 17 percentage points.



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Figure 8.

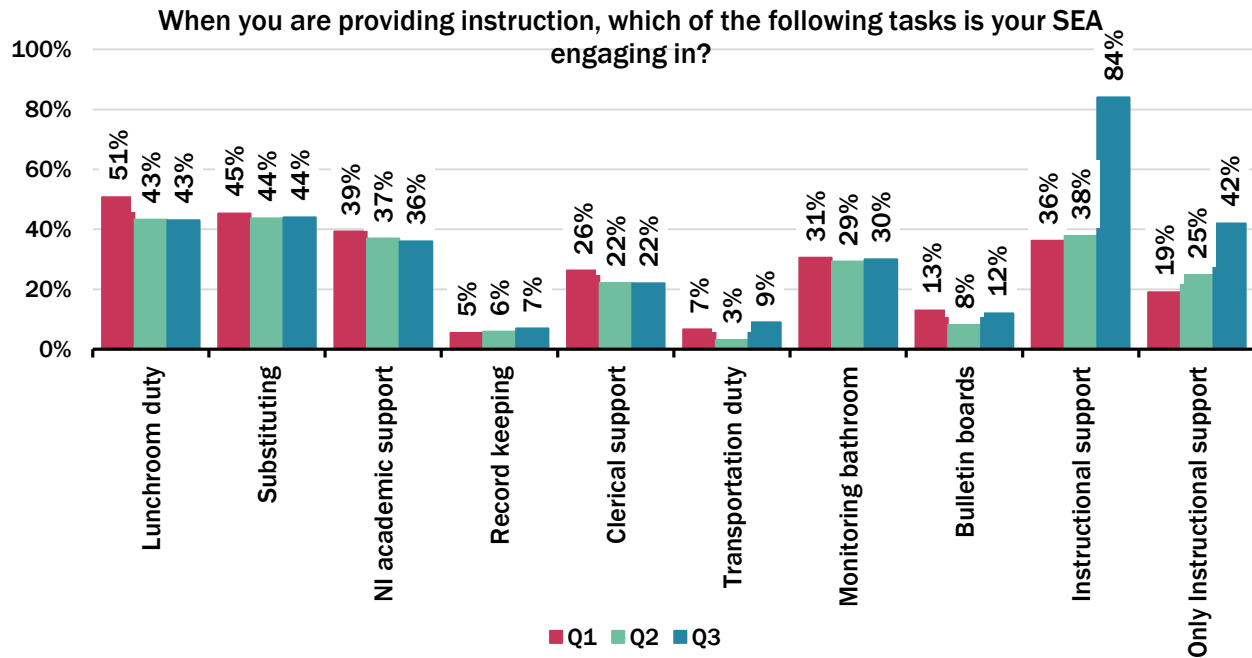
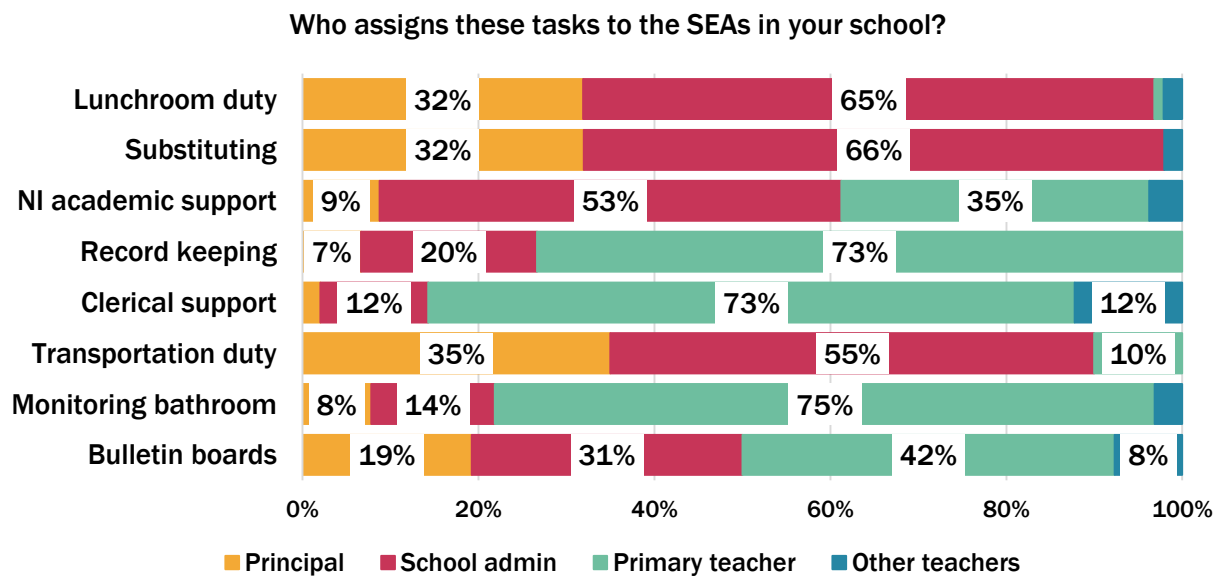


Figure 9 shows the breakdown of who assigns these tasks to their SEAs from the teachers' perspective. NI academic support and creating bulletin boards seem to be tasks that staff in many roles are assigning to SEAs, while lunchroom duty, substituting for other classrooms, and transportation duty seem to be given out by the principal or school administration. Clerical support, record keeping, and monitoring bathroom breaks and hallways are tasks often assigned by the teacher.

Figure 9.





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SEA Responses Overview

SEAs were asked how many years (including the current year) they have been an educational assistant; the median answer was 2 years and the average was 5 years. Twenty percent indicated that they have a paraprofessional certification. Just under 60% have been in the same classroom the entire time they have been employed as a SEA. When asked what subjects they provide support for, 93% reported helping with ELA and 81% reported helping with math. Table 2 shows how SEAs reported helping with these subjects over the three quarters. Nearly 40% of SEAs surveyed are assigned to Kindergarten; 33% are assigned to 2nd grade classrooms, and 29% are in 1st grade classrooms. Figure 10 shows how many hours SEAs provide instructional support to students. Forty-five percent of SEAs indicated that they spend at least 5 hours of their day giving instructional support to students.

Table 2.

| Subjects SEAs help provide instructional support | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| Subject | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 |
| ELA | 80% | 92% | 93% |
| Math | 69% | 75% | 81% |
| Social Studies/History | 28% | 29% | 32% |
| Science | 27% | 29% | 32% |
| Non-core subjects | 16% | 12% | 12% |

Figure 10.

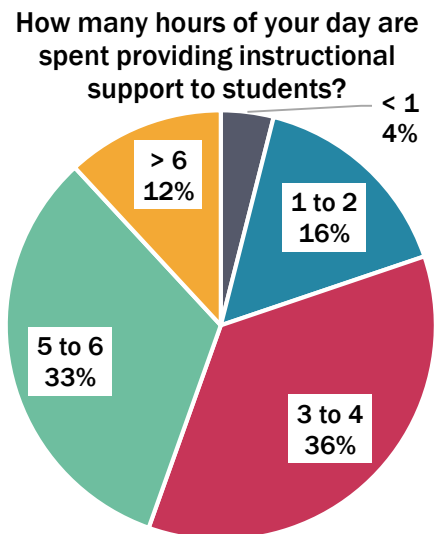
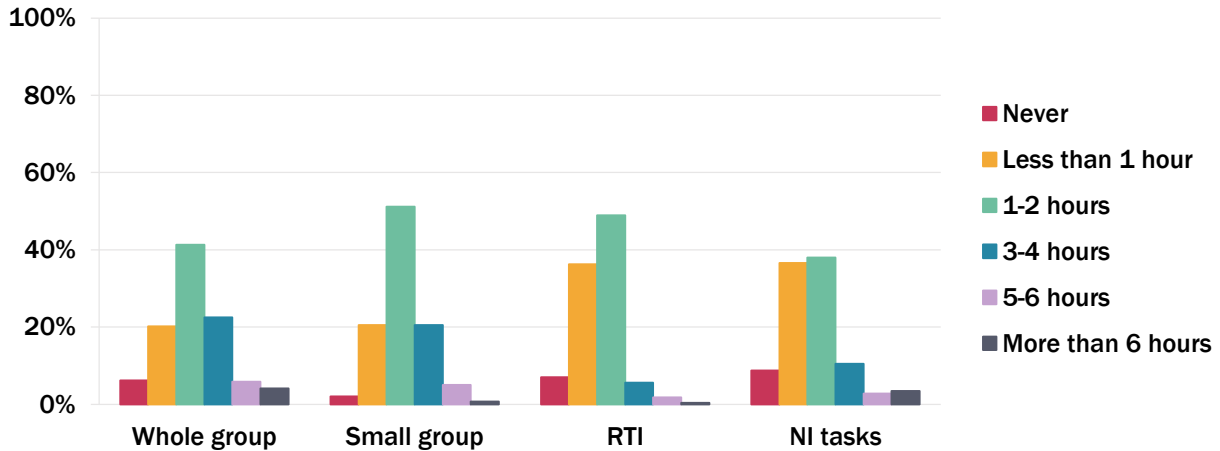


Figure 11 displays how SEAs break up their time throughout their average day. Eighty-three percent of SEAs reported that they spend two hours or less on NI tasks during an average day. Seventy-four percent of SEAs report that they help with whole group instruction at least one hour or more on an average day and 76% report the same for small groups.



Figure 11.

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



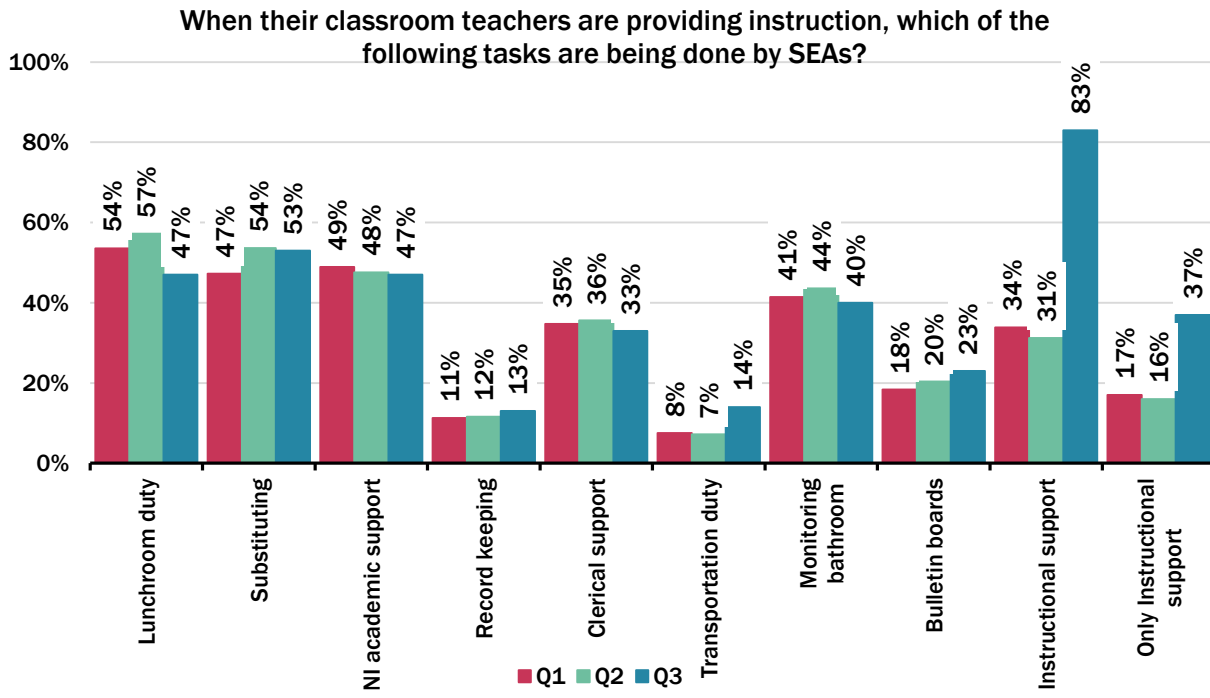
NI Tasks

Figure 12 shows what SEAs reported they are doing when their classroom teacher is providing instruction, comparing Q1, Q2, and Q3. 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. Providing instructional support rose by 52 percentage points between Q2 and Q3. This dramatic increase indicates that SEAs are getting more time in the classroom to help their primary teacher. While this figure shows all who chose providing instructional support including those who chose other tasks, the indicator of those who only chose instructional support also went up notably by 21 percentage points.



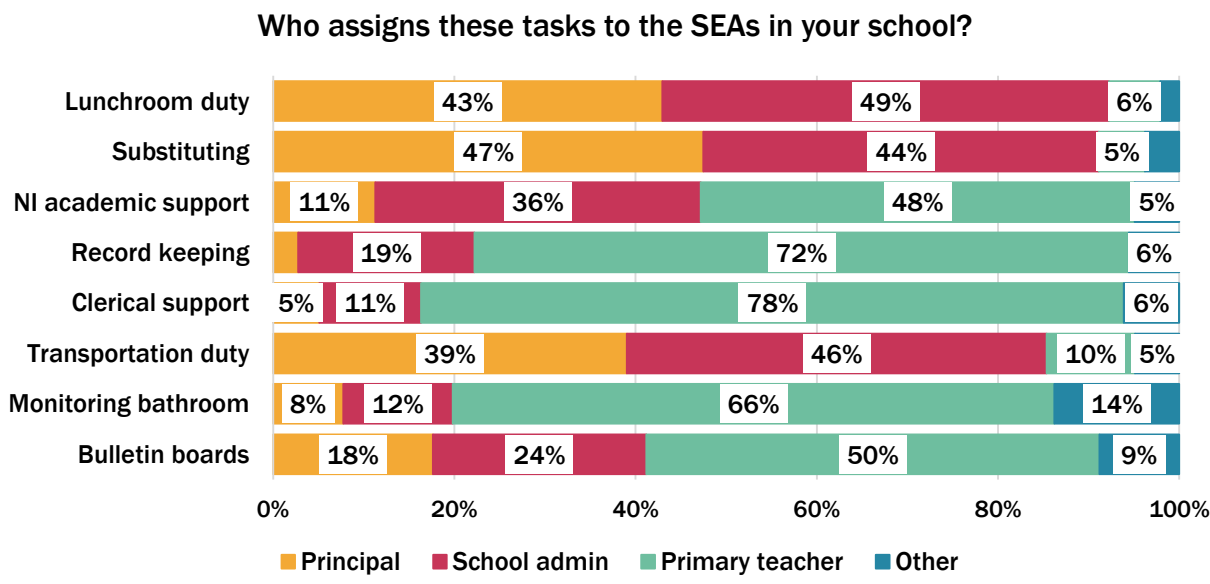
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Figure 12.



SEAs reported that most often their principal or school administration ask them to monitor lunchrooms, substitute classes, and help with 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 13.

Figure 13.

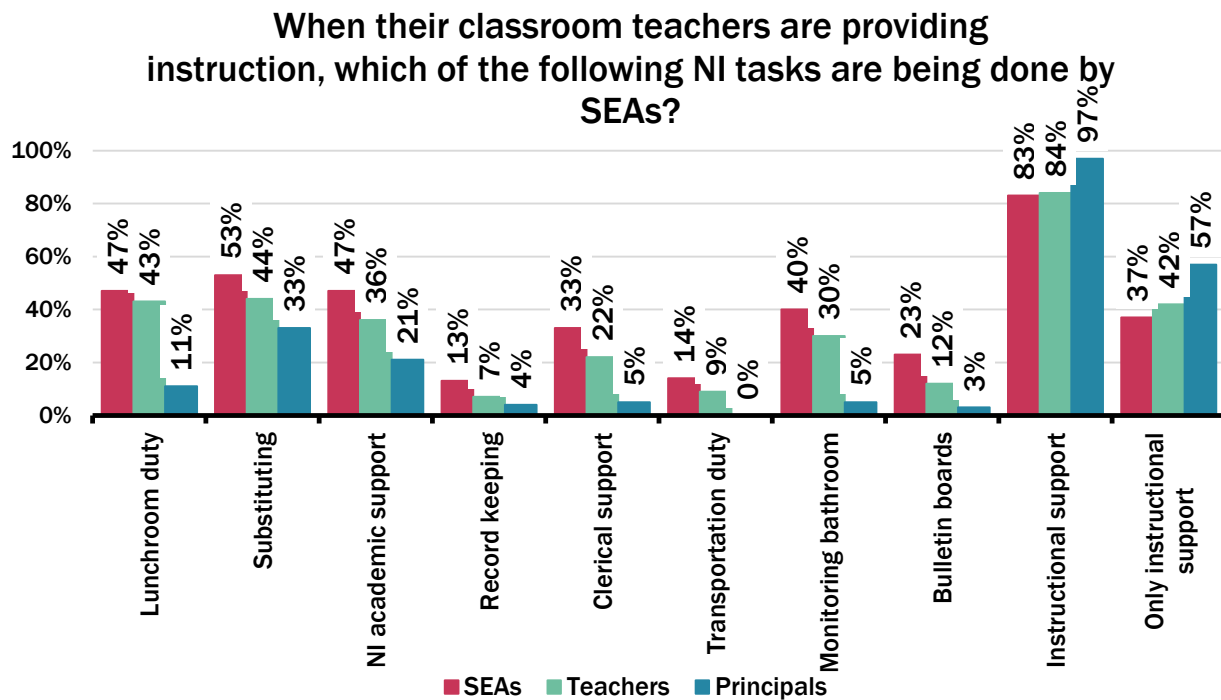




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Figure 14 shows the comparison of NI tasks that SEAs do, based on what SEAs, teachers, and principals reported for Q3. SEAs and teachers reported at a much higher rate that SEAs do NI tasks when their primary teacher is giving instruction. This could be because principals are considering the whole of their school, while teachers and SEAs are reporting on their own experience in the classroom. This quarter, SEAs, teachers, and principals are reporting more closely than before that SEAs are helping with instruction while the teacher is giving instruction. Of note, 57% of principals reported that their SEAs only help with instructional support, while 37% of SEAs reported the same, in comparison to 49% of principals and only 16% of SEAs in Q2. SEAs and teachers still report higher rates of NI tasks being done than principals do, but more than ever SEAs and teachers reported that providing instructional support was part of this time when teachers are giving instruction.

Figure 14.



Open-Ended Responses

At the end of each 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. For principals, a common theme was that there was turnover in the position, that it was difficult to fill the position with qualified applicants and to keep SEAs once the positions were filled, as discussed in the turnover section of the principal portion of this report. Another common theme was that principals feel as though they are put in a difficult position; wanting to respect the role and keep SEAs in their assigned classroom to help facilitate support groups and more one-on-



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one instruction, and needing people to cover full classrooms without having the substitute coverage needed.

Some teachers mentioned that they are having to share their SEA with one or more teachers. These teachers mentioned that sometimes they only get an hour every few days with an SEA. The most common frustration expressed was that SEAs get pulled from their classrooms randomly throughout the day. This makes it extremely difficult for teachers to plan their lessons, not knowing if they will have small groups or the extra help during whole group instruction.

The most common complaint among SEAs was inconsistency with their schedule. SEAs mentioned that they often do not know when they will get asked to do a task outside of their classroom. Similar to teachers' complaints, this causes issues within the classroom and is often outside of the scope of the intended job description of an SEA.

Principal responses:

- 59% of the open-ended responses discussed being short-staffed, having to use SEAs as subs, not having enough SEAs, or having attendance/turnover issues with SEAs.
- 33% of the open-ended responses discussed SEAs being under-trained, wanting extra PD for their SEAs, or that their SEAs are not taking the initiative that the principals believe they should.
- A few principals mentioned how it can be difficult to pair SEAs with teachers to ensure they work well together. One principal mentioned that they have their staff take a personality test to help assign SEAs to classrooms and that it has worked well so far.
- "Having to have them in lieu of substitute teachers was an issue but we have begun to receive subs for teacher absences during the 2nd semester."
- "The only challenge is having to choose between SEAs working with their particular grade level or having proper supervision of students."
- "The retention rate. Maybe a pay scale for those who have four year degrees comparable to a beginning teacher or that of the new substitute pay scale to retain the awesome ones who leave for higher salaries."
- "The SEAs would benefit from some in-person professional development opportunities. The PD opportunities need to also be offered to the teacher assistants that are serving in the same capacity as the SEAs."

Teacher responses:

- 57% of the open-ended responses were about how SEAs get pulled out of their primary classroom and of these responses, 28% specifically mentioned how these interruptions make lesson planning difficult.
- "It can be challenging when the teacher and SEA have created plans for the day to benefit students but cannot implement those plans as the SEA is pulled to cover other classes or do clerical duties for administration."
- "Not having my own assistant but instead having to share with another teacher. It means I only get her 2.5 days a week and a lot of that she spends in meetings or lunch duty or pulled to another classroom."
- "The most challenging aspect of the program is that a lot of teachers do not have SEAs, so there are days when she's only in my room for short periods of time."



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SEA responses:

- 44% of SEA open-ended responses mentioned being pulled out of their classroom to do other tasks such as substituting or lunch duty or having to be an assistant to multiple classrooms. 19% of responses mentioned student behavior was a challenging aspect of the job.
- “The school being short staffed causes a lot of stress. We are often assigned to different classes that are not within our grade level for weeks at a time sometimes. It makes it hard to focus on personal goals at work.”
- “Time. We don't have time for the most part to support or work with our teacher or students because we're constantly being asked to sub, cafeteria duty (morning/lunch) or progress monitor several classes.”
- “The cafeteria duty takes away from instructional time. I cover two lunch duties. Wiping down tables and collecting trash can be challenging, because more time is spent out of class than in class.”

Positive Aspects

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

Principal responses:

- “SEAs are extremely valuable and needed in all grade levels. Thank you for providing this extra assistance. Roles like this one will help us all make adequate yearly progress.”
- “Students are more willing to take risks learning to read in small groups. Teachers are more satisfied with the additional classroom assistance.”
- “Teachers enjoy having an additional set of hands to support planning and instruction. We have noticed that the KK students are learning more rapidly with this intensive support.”

Teacher responses:

- “In my classroom, we work well together. The students love her and her approach to teaching is absolutely great! She is kind and caring.”
- “My SEA and I have a great working relationship. She is always willing to help when needed. She prepares for small group instruction and checks in with me regularly on student progress. She is determined to make sure all students are prepared for 1st grade.”
- “My SEA is great at noticing which students are struggling and working with them in small groups to help them better understand the information.”

SEA responses:

- “I feel that I'm making a difference when it comes to our students' education. Makes me feel GOOD when a student who has been struggling finally gets it.....So rewarding!!”
- “I believe that we are creating a culture that respects and gravitates towards learning.”
- “I enjoy working with the children. Having an opportunity to see them grow and thrive in all subjects has been an absolute joy to watch.”