



## ESSER Reduced Class Size; SEA Survey Report: November 2021

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

November 2021

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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 were sent to principals of schools with K-2 classrooms, K-2 teachers, and SEAs. 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. Because this is the first report and the SEA /reduced class size program has only been in effect for one quarter of the year, these results do not reflect the effectiveness of this program and merely show a baseline for the reports to come.

### Key Findings

- 36% of principals indicated that SEAs were having to substitute teach for other classrooms rather than provide instructional support for their assigned classroom teacher.
- 71% of principals reported that SEAs are only providing instructional support (rather than doing instructional tasks) when the classroom teacher is giving instruction, however teachers and SEAs report this figure to be around 35%.
- Of the principals that indicated turnover in the SEA position, 75% reported that SEAs are leaving for a better job, mostly to fill teacher vacancies either in their own school or at other schools.  
Of teachers with SEAs, 60% reported that their SEA is providing whole group instructional support every day, and 50% reported that their SEA is helping with small groups daily. 85% of teachers report that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable.
- Half of open-ended responses from SEAs mentioned that they are being pulled from their assigned class to substitute for other classes.
- According to teachers and SEAs, when classroom teachers are providing instruction, SEAs are most often monitoring the lunchroom, substituting for another classroom, or providing non-instructional academic support, such as helping with testing or monitoring computers. These tasks are most often assigned to SEAs by principals or school administrators.
- 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 Specialized Educational Assistants (SEAs) Principal survey was first sent out to all principals of schools that have the K-2 grade band on September 30, 2021. In all, 68 principals began the survey, with 67 answering the questions about if their school has SEAs. Seven principals said they did not and gave reasons for why their school does not; 3 answered that their school is not supposed to have them, and 2 answered that they are supposed to have them but they are either in the hiring process or need to begin the hiring process. Two others mentioned that they do have SEAs in their building, but they do not have enough. These 7 respondents were then removed from the survey because they



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indicated that they did not have SEAs in their building and the rest of the survey included questions about said SEAs. This left the survey pool with 59 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 were in their school; the median response was 6 positions. Ninety-eight percent of principals either agreed or strongly agreed that they had a clear understanding of the role of an SEA. Around 92% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that SEAs provide students with valuable instructional support, and 93% agreed or strongly agreed that SEAs are an integral part of their classrooms.

### 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. Of note, 71% answered that their SEAs only provide instructional support when their classroom teacher is giving instruction. The second highest response was subbing for another classroom at 35%. (Because principals could check multiple boxes, the percentages given will exceed 100%.) Many principals mentioned this issue in the open-ended responses. One principal noted, “Due to teacher vacancies and absences, SEAs are asked to cover classes because substitute teachers have not been available.” While this was mentioned several times, many indicated that this is not ideal and that they prefer to have SEAs in their assigned classrooms, but due to staffing shortages, they are having to make do with SEAs covering classrooms rather than helping to support their assigned classroom teacher.

Figure 1.

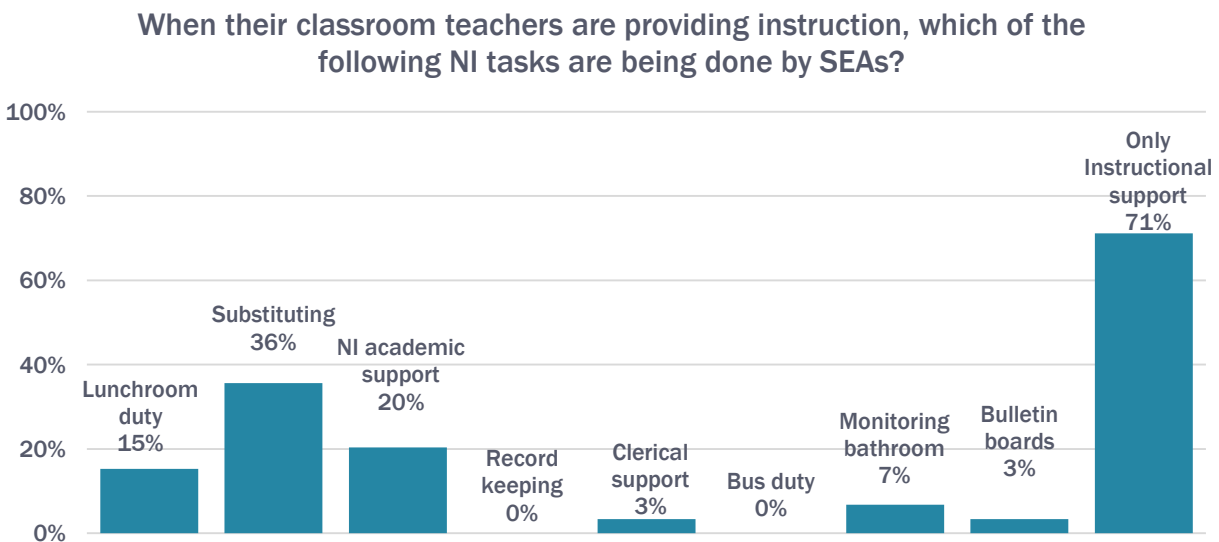


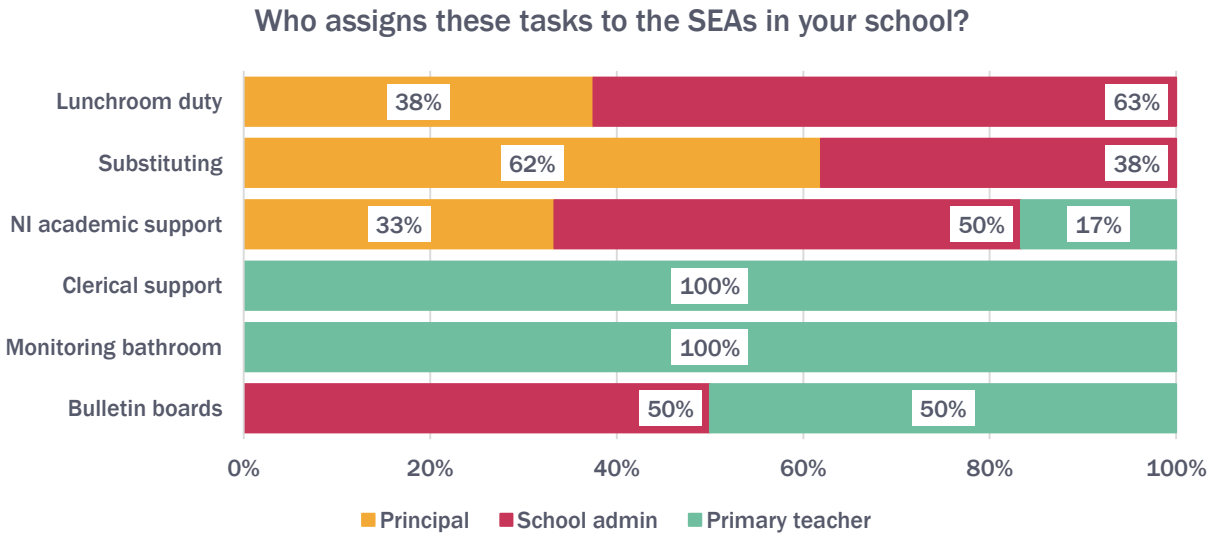
Figure 2 breaks down who assigns each of the tasks that apply from figure 1. Monitoring the lunchroom, subbing for other classrooms, and NI academic support (such as monitoring testing or labs/computers) were almost entirely assigned by the principal or by school administration. Clerical



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support such as making copies or monitoring bathroom breaks and/or hallways were entirely assigned by the classroom teacher.

**Figure 2.**

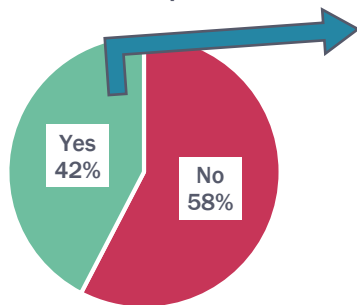


**Turnover in the SEA Position**

Principals were asked if there was turnover in the SEA position at their school. Figures 3 and 4 show the breakdown of principals that answered yes and no and some of the reasons given for this turnover. A little less than half of the principals indicated that there has been turnover in this position. Of those that reported turnover, 75% gave the reason 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 in which they were initially hired. Less than a fifth of principals reported that SEAs left due to their own or their family’s health concerns; some mentioned COVID-19 specifically while others did not specify. A little over 10% noted that their SEAs either never showed up or showed up for the first day and never returned. Many indicated in the open-ended responses that hiring and the onboarding process has been slow and has caused issues in filling these positions.

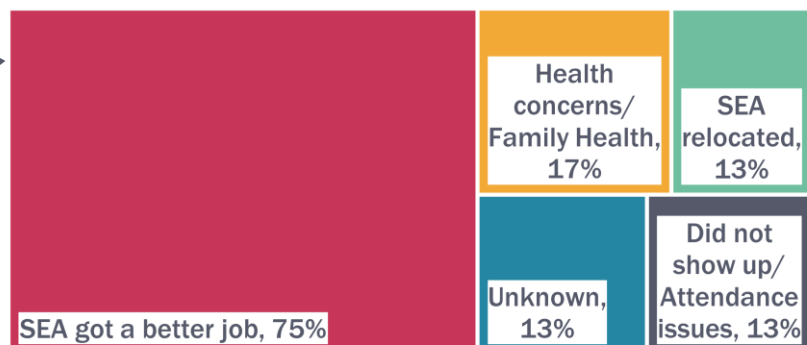
**Figure 3.**

Turnover at your school with the SEA position?



**Figure 4.**

Reasons for Turnover





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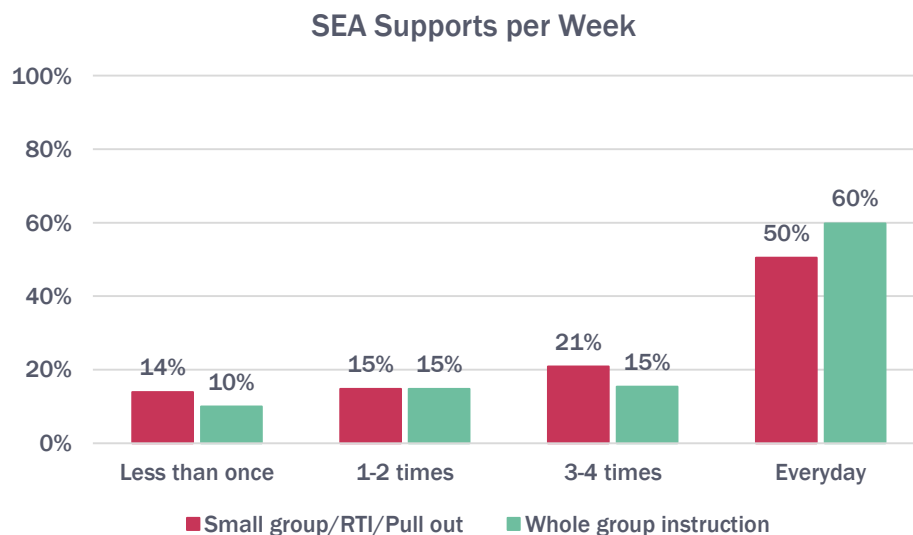
### Teacher Responses Overview

K-2 teachers were sent a direct email link to their survey beginning on October 18, 2021. The number of surveys sent out were 1,184 and the total number of responses were 469, meaning 40% of targeted teachers responded to the survey. There were 418 responses from District-managed schools with a response rate of 43%. Eighty-six of the 88 District-managed schools had teachers who responded to the survey (98% response rate for schools). Twenty-two charter schools had responses, counting for 51 of the responses.

The median class size of the teachers who responded was 21, and 76% of teachers reported that they have a SEA assigned to their classroom currently. When looking at only District-managed schools, this percentage goes up to 82%. Over 75% of teachers indicated that they teach all core subjects; the other quarter of teachers report that their class rotates to another room for certain core subjects. Seventy-nine percent of teachers who teach all subjects have a SEA in their classroom. This was the same percentage for teachers who rotates classes and teach ELA, however, only 51% of teachers who only teach math had a SEA in their classroom. If teachers indicated that they did not have a SEA in their classroom, they were asked a few follow up questions and then their survey ended early because the rest of the questions pertained to how SEAs worked in the classroom.

Teachers were asked how often their SEA supports small group (RTI and pull out) and whole group instruction in their classroom within a week. Half of teachers indicated that their SEA supports small group instruction daily, and 60% reported whole group support daily as well. Figure 5 shows how often SEAs provide support per week.

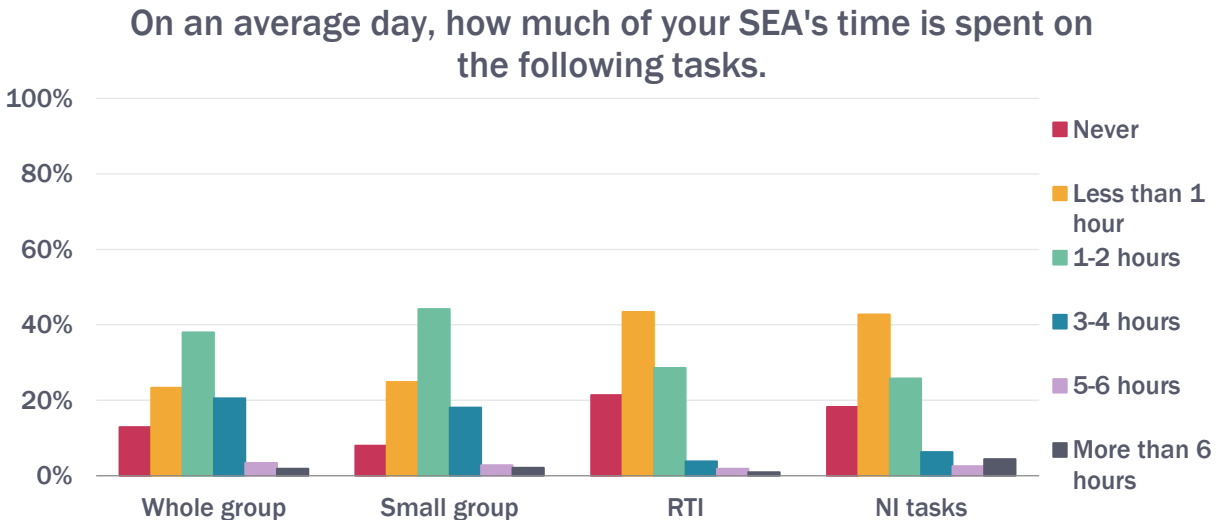
Figure 5.



Next, teachers were asked about the hours their SEA spends on specific activities. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of hours dedicated to the following tasks: whole group instruction, small group instruction, RTI, and NI tasks. Sixty-four percent and 67% of teachers said that their SEA spends at least one hour a day on whole group instruction and small group instruction, respectively.

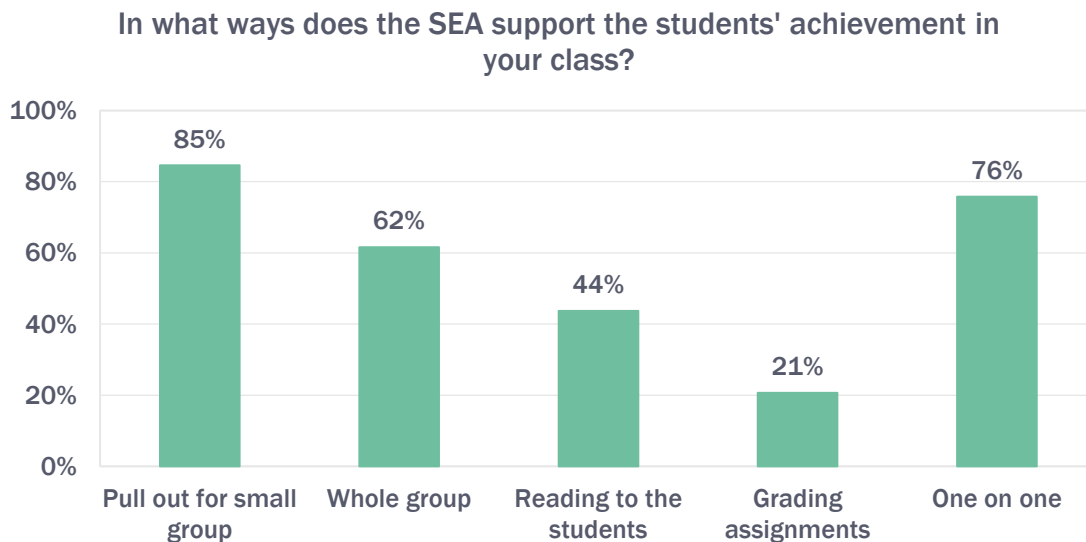


**Figure 6.**



Eighty-five percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their SEA's support during whole group instruction is valuable. In a separate question, the majority of teachers reported that their SEA helped with small groups, whole group support, and one-on-one work with students. Figure 7 shows these supports below.

**Figure 7.**



**Non-Instructional Tasks**

Fifty-one percent of teachers reported that when they are providing instruction to their class, their SEA is sometimes pulled to monitor the lunchroom. Another 45% indicated that their SEA might be substituting for another classroom. Only 36% of teachers reported that their SEA only provides instructional support when they are teaching. It is important to note that teachers are only reporting



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on their one SEA that is assigned to them, yet when this question is directed at principals, they had to account for all of the SEAs at their school. Figure 8 shows the break down of teacher’s insights on what NI tasks their SEAs do while they provide instruction.

**Figure 8.**

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

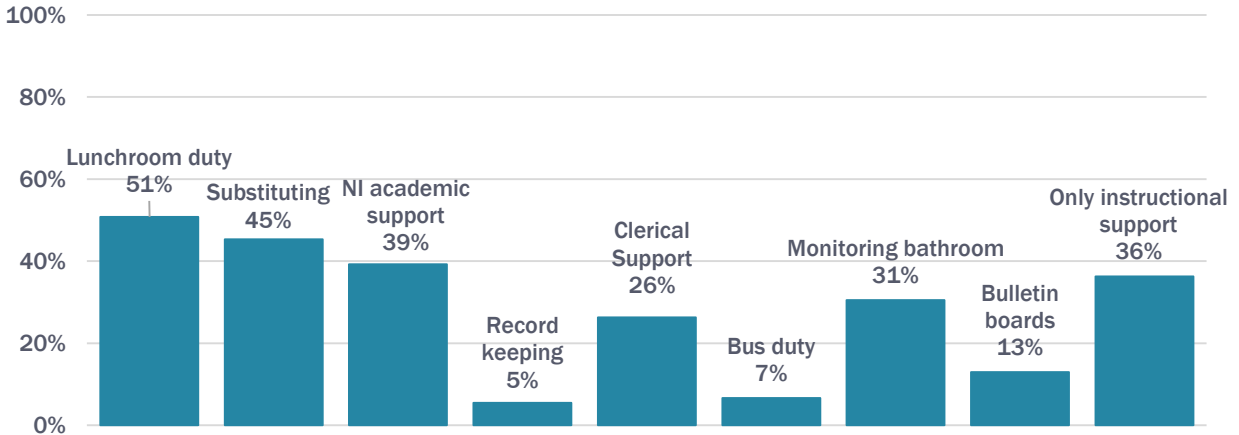
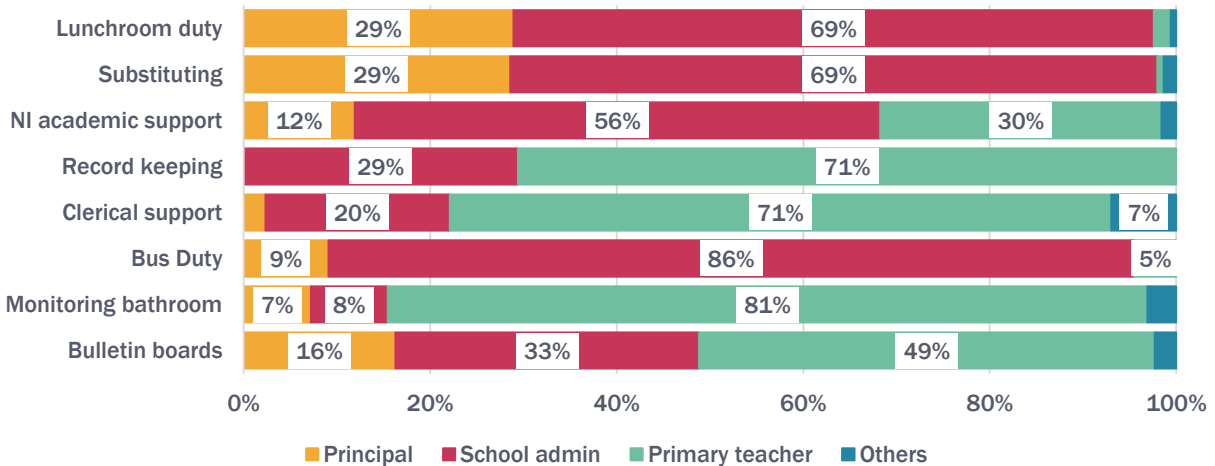


Figure 9 shows the breakdown of who assigns these tasks to their SEAs. NI academic support and creating bulletin boards seem to be tasks that many people are assigning to SEAs, while lunchroom duty, substituting for other classrooms, and bus duty seem to be given out by the principal or school administration. Record keeping, clerical support, and monitoring bathroom breaks and hallways are tasks assigned by the teacher.

**Figure 9.**

Who assigns these tasks to the SEAs in your school?





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### SEA Responses Overview

The SEA survey was first sent out to SEA on October 18, 2021 to 615 SEAs. 277 SEAs completed the survey, resulting in a 45% response rate. Out of the 87 District-managed elementary and K-8 schools that should have SEAs, 79 schools had SEAs respond to this survey for a 91% response rate for schools. Over 55% of SEAs indicated that they began in this role either during the summer or on the first day of school. Another 28% reported that they began in August, but after the first day of school. Around 38% stated that they have been assigned to more than one classroom this year.

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 just under 4.4 years. Over 40% of SEAs who responded to this survey attended the SEA Summer Learning Experience in June. Twenty-two percent indicated that they have a paraprofessional certification. When asked what subjects they provide support for, 87% reported helping with ELA and 76% reported helping with math. Figure 10 below shows the break down of SEAs in the three grade levels. Kindergarten has more SEAs by a slight margin. Figure 11 shows how many hours SEAs provide instructional support to students. Nearly 50% of SEAs indicated that they spend at least 5 hours of their day giving instructional support to students.

Figure 10.

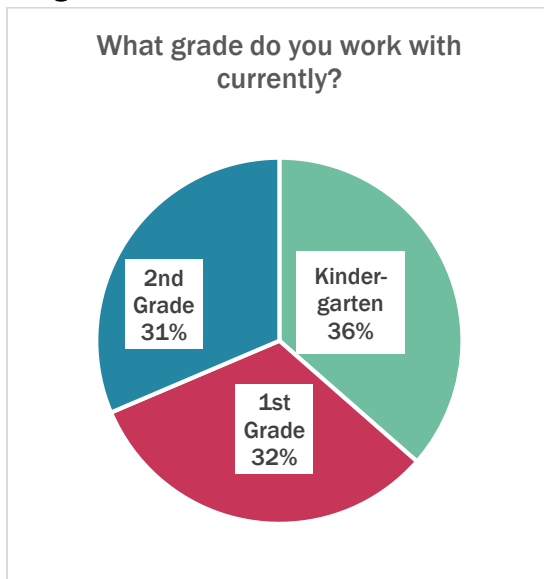


Figure 11.

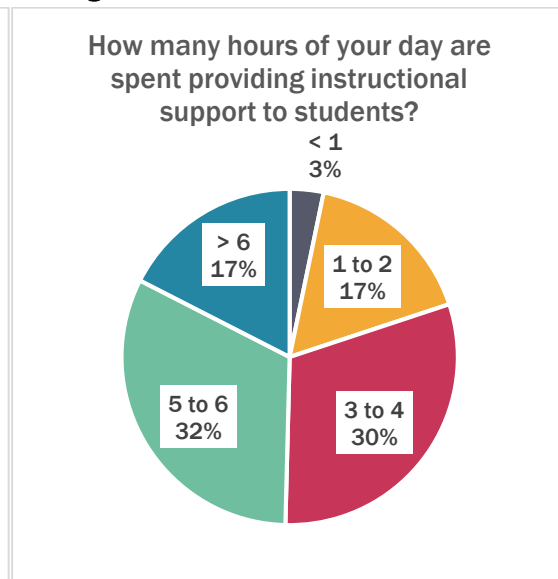
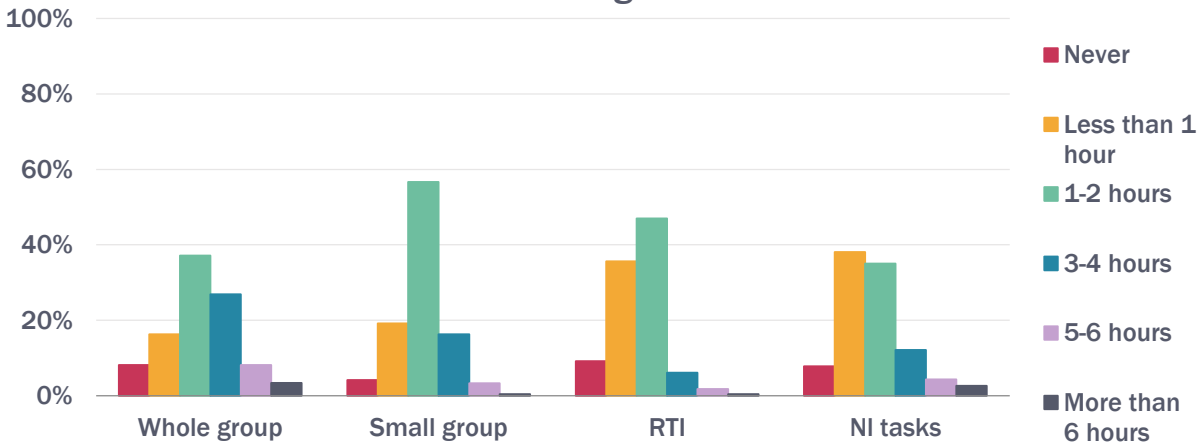


Figure 12 displays how SEAs break up their time throughout the day. Around 20% of SEAs indicated that they are involved in non-instructional tasks at least 3 hours or more on an average day. Nearly 60% reported that they help with small group instruction for 1-2 hours a day.



**Figure 12.**

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

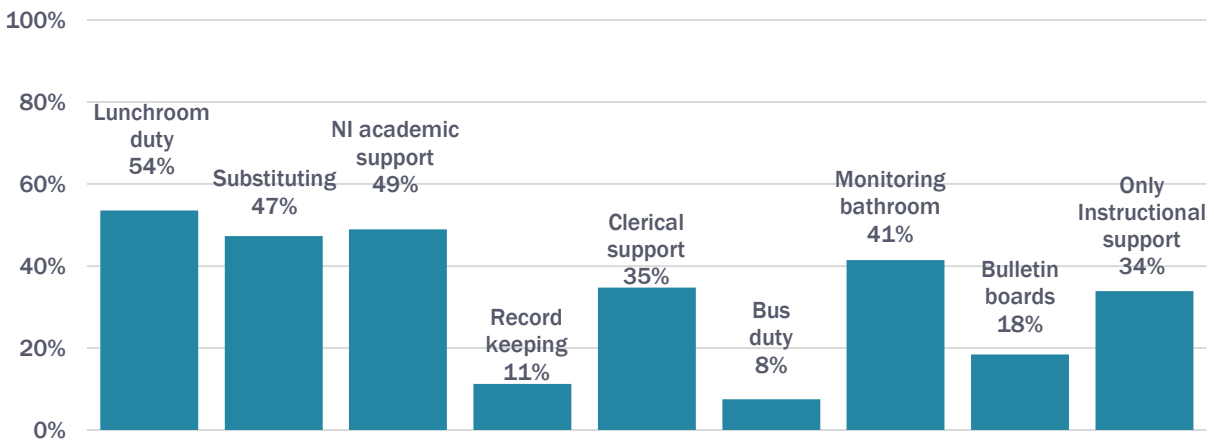


**Non-Instructional Tasks**

Figure 13 shows what SEAs report they are doing when their classroom teacher is providing instruction. This more closely aligns with what teachers reported. SEAs indicate 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 third of SEAs indicated that they only provide instructional support. This is a stark contrast from 71% of principals reporting that their SEAs only provide instructional support.

**Figure 13.**

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



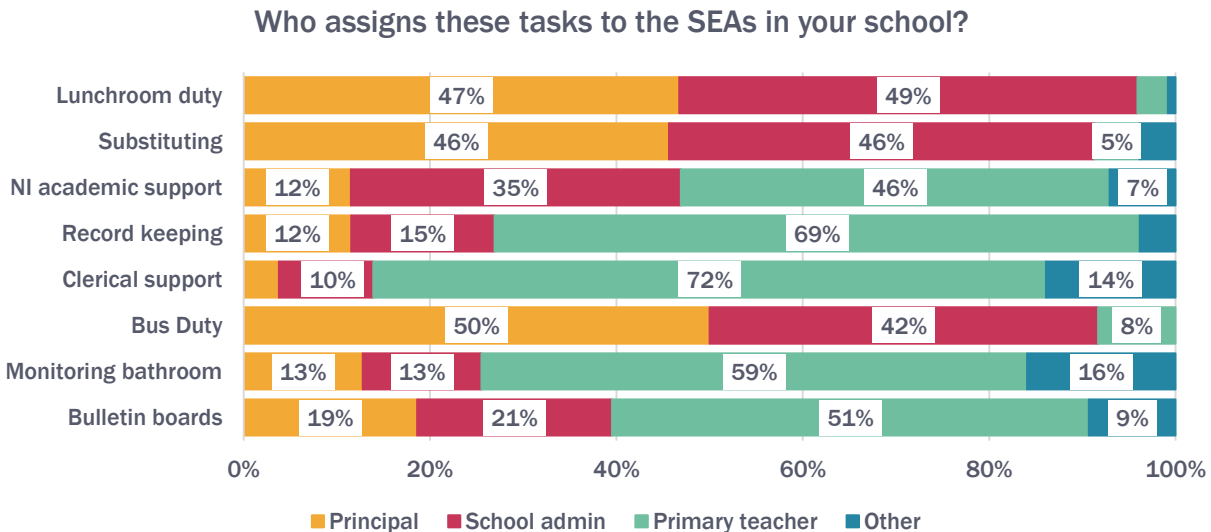




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SEAs reported that most often their principal or school administration asks them to monitor lunchrooms, substitute classes, and help with bus or transportation duty, whereas their teacher is the one who assigns tasks such as record keeping, clerical support, and monitoring the bathroom. The breakdown of these assignments is shown in figure 14. It is also something to note that SEAs report doing more tasks and at a higher percentage than principals reported. These tasks include bus/transportation duty, record keeping, monitoring bathrooms, and creating bulletin boards.

**Figure 14.**



At the end of the survey there was space for SEAs to give an open-ended response about what is challenging about their position. There were 136 responses that were then coded; 90 were found to be valid responses (examples of non-valid responses would be: “n/a”, “none”, etc.). Nearly half (48%) of these responses mentioned having to substitute for other classrooms, work with students in other grades, or do other tasks that take them out of their assigned classroom. Of these responses 84% indicated that these SEAs are rarely, if ever, in their assigned classrooms. Over 20% mentioned that student behavior was the most challenging part of their job. Although many seemed frustrated in the open-ended comments about having to do things that were not academic support, 96% of SEAs agreed or strongly agreed that they believed their work positively impacts the students’ achievement.

**Barriers/Areas of Improvement Open-Ended Responses**

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

**Principal responses:**

- “Only thing that’s challenging at the moment is filling the positions.”
- “Hiring the required amount of SEAs needed.”
- “It’s challenging to keep a constant flow in their assigned classroom due to teachers’ absences.”
- “The most challenging area has been waiting for additional assistants to be onboarded and report to work. This has caused some imbalance in the level support in classes.”
- “Keeping them in the classroom during instructional time and supervision.”



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- “I wish I had one for every classroom K8.”
- “Since this is funded through the grant, we should have been provided SEAs for all KK-2nd grade classrooms instead of being forced to use our gen Ed assistants in that capacity. Since we had to put our gen Ed assistants in the classroom, we don’t have staff to cover classrooms, copy for 3rd-5th grade, help with intervention in 3rd-5th grade, cafeteria duty....which is putting more on the 3rd-5th teachers and admin.”

### Teacher responses:

- “Our schedules fluctuate from day to day. SEAs are pulled for various "jobs" throughout the school. We are also currently sharing one SEA among 3 teachers.”
- “My school has consistently pulled SEAs to cover classes, the front desk, and cafeteria duty. It is hard to get a plan in place for the SEA's time when her schedule keeps changing.”
- “It is difficult for assistants to model teacher instruction because they are stretched thin. We have two assistants for kindergarten.”
- “I find it challenging not knowing if she's available on my assigned day.”
- “I would like more time to be able to plan with my SEA.”
- “Having to provide resources for the SEA to use is challenging.”

### SEA responses:

- “I want more training to ask questions and give scenarios to enhance my role as SEA.”
- “Having to substitute makes it challenging to be effective with our small groups and being able to be consistent with students in general with our regular classroom teachers.”
- “Being under staffed is very challenging and it takes away the time that I could be assisting a struggling student or students.”
- “The K-2 SEAs at my school are assigned additional non instructional tasks such as cafeteria duty which takes us out of the classroom for a considerable amount of time.”
- “TIME. Having time to provide/participate in the small/whole group as I should with my assigned teacher/class because of having to divide my time among other classes, either substituting, progress monitoring/testing or cafeteria duties.”
- “I think I could be utilized more strategically. “
- “Truthfully, I don't feel that there is anything about the SEA position that is going well. We are being used as lunchroom monitors, substitute teachers, RTI trackers, and many other duties. Many that we did not sign up for. Coming to work is like the unknown now. I never know what position I will hold for that day. It's truly draining.”

### Positive Aspects Open-Ended Responses

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

### Principal responses:

- “It brings me chills to see how integral the support SEAs provide is. You can really see students making progress.”
- “It's great having them as a second teacher in each classroom. It's also really beautiful to see two adults working with students to ensure that they receive the quality education that they deserve.”
- “The SEAs are valuable assets that help to keep students focused on learning.”



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- “The additional support for small group instructional and going well as we trying to recover from the learning loss due to the pandemic.”
- “Teachers and students at our school are excited to have the additional support during whole and small group instruction. SEAs are assisting with monitoring individual students who are struggling during class. Our SEAs report to school daily and are a very integral part of the k-2 classrooms.”

### Teacher responses:

- “At this time, all is going well. The dynamic between the two of us is working. I feel that my students are so fortunate to have two of us in the classroom.”
- “He is doing very well working with my students that need extra work time/help with instruction.”
- “It is helpful to have another adult in the room to help with small groups.”
- “She is very observant of the students strengths and areas that still need assistance. She is good about accommodating to each individuals needs.”
- “It is WONDERFUL having someone else in the classroom who can work one on one and in small groups. The students benefit from having 2 adults in the room doing instruction!”
- “I appreciate having support from my SEA helping to monitor my class and working with students on non-mastered skills.”
- “He is a great asset to the classroom. He and I working as a team is truly affecting academic gains in my classroom.”
- “Great support in reinforcing learning.”

### SEA responses:

- “I just love this position! It makes me feel so good knowing my intervention group is improving daily!”
- “I do not work directly with student for literacy; however, I do see much improvement among the students that I do have small groups with during their math. I have used the strategies provided during the PD training.”
- “The small group sessions are going well. The students love it.”
- “The students are benefiting from additional classroom support.”
- “I enjoy working one on one with students that need even more help after my groups. To see them learn because I took the extra time is rewarding.”
- “It definitely helps the teacher/student ratio. I think it's good for teachers and students to have that extra assistance.”
- “I enjoy learning about wonders and finding new and creative ways to educate the children.”
- “I really enjoy feeling like I am helping make a difference in the children's learning and also just getting to bond and build relationships with them so that they enjoy learning and coming to school everyday.”