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SESIQ2 is the Supplementary Educational Services Integrated Quantitative and Qualitative Study of Implementation and Impact. Find out more at: www.sesiq2.wceruw.org



Understanding Supplementary Educational Services (SES): A Guide for Parents and Guardians

What are Supplementary Educational Services?

Supplementary Educational Services (SES) is a free tutoring program available to students in schools identified by your state as in need of improvement. Eligible students will be notified by their schools on how to enroll for additional help in academic areas such as reading, writing and math. Parents and guardians can choose a tutoring program that best fits their students' needs. A school becomes eligible for these services when they have not met the state's set of annual academic performance goals for two or more consecutive years. SES is a program under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act.

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SESIQ2 is a joint project of the Center for Health and Social Policy at Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and Value-Added Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We thank our funder, the Institute of Education Sciences (PR/Award number: R305A090301). For more information please visit www.sesiq2.wceruw.org. Contact the project at sesiq2@gmail.com or 1-855-471-1700

An Overview of Our Research

Our study, the Multisite Evaluation of Supplementary Educational Services, is an ongoing project that focuses on the following questions:

1. How does SES affect student achievement?
2. What are the different types of tutoring? Do these differences affect student achievement?
3. What specific parts of SES improve student outcomes?
4. What can lawmakers do to improve the program so that it has benefits for students?



This study examines supplemental educational services in five school districts: Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis. It is a mixed-methods study where we conduct program observations, interview people involved in the program at different levels, and evaluate statistical data. The data we are gathering consists of: test scores, attendance records, student demographics, tutoring observations, interviews, parent focus groups, and other pertinent documents.

Our focus groups with over 150 parents and guardians across five school districts suggest that many parents do not have enough information about SES services, or about the process as a whole. Parents noted that they did not get the necessary follow-up information about tutoring services in the enrollment process and further voiced their concerns about the implementation of the tutoring programs.

In response, this guide is meant to summarize the information from our study's results and answer basic questions about SES policy. Our goal is that parents are able to use results from the study and make a more informed choice for their students when selecting SES providers. Even though the information in this guide is based on the results from five districts, it is our hope that parents from other districts also may find the data useful when making decisions to participate and select an SES provider.

Q & A: What is SES?

What does AYP mean?

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a set of annual academic testing goals that schools must meet if they receive federal funding.

Why is my student eligible for SES?

Schools that do not meet their AYP goals for two years in a row are identified as "In Program Improvement" and are considered to be underperforming. Only schools that have failed to meet AYP for two years in a row are eligible for SES. Students in these schools who receive free or reduced-price lunch are eligible for SES.

Who provides these tutoring services?

SES providers can be any of the following:

- For-profit companies
- Non-profit groups
- Local community programs
- Colleges or universities
- Other national organizations
- Faith-based groups
- Public schools and districts

Some providers will offer services through in-person, small or large group instruction. Others will offer online instruction that students may access via a computer.

Which students participate in SES?

- All students from low-income families who attend Title I public schools in their second year of school improvement, in corrective action, or in restructuring may apply to participate. This includes elementary, middle, and high school students. Title I students at a private school may not participate in SES.
- The lowest achieving eligible students must be given priority if funds are not available to serve all of the students who are eligible to receive SES. For example, a district in our study mandated schools to open up services to 3rd grade and high school students first. Then the district opened up services for students with the lowest reading achievement scores.
- Students may not be denied services based on language, race, ethnicity, nationality, or learning difference.

Q & A: Finding the Right SES Program

What does SES instruction look like?

Instruction must take place outside of school hours, and in our research, most are in one to one or small group settings. Reading, writing and math are emphasized. From our study's observations, very little time is spent on homework help, whereas the majority

of instruction focuses on skill-building and/or preparing students for what is required on state tests.

Where does this tutoring take place?

Tutoring takes place at school, home, libraries, or community centers. It is up to the specific provider to establish where services will take place.

How much tutoring should my student receive?

Providers offer a range of hours of services based on how much they charge the district per hour. To ensure that your student makes the best use of SES, review the information and ask district staff and/or providers about the amount of hours your student can get based on how much the district provides and providers charge. The more hours your student receives, the higher their chance of raising test scores, especially if the provider offers 40 hours or more of tutoring in a school year.

How important is attendance?

Our study suggests that test scores improve based on the amount of hours students attended SES. In general, the more your student attends and takes advantage of SES, the higher her or his chances are of improving their standardized test scores.

How do other parents and guardians feel about SES?

In our study, parents generally appreciate the additional assistance that their children received in math, reading, and writing. However, parents and guardians voiced the need for more accessible information. Parents have also been frustrated with the enrollment procedures from both providers and districts. Parents would also like to see improvements in the implementation of services in the areas of scheduling, behavior management, and technical support, especially for online tutoring. Finally, they would like improvement in the communication between school districts, providers, and schools.

What if my student has special needs?

All eligible students, regardless of disability status, have access to tutoring through SES. SES providers

often advertise they can provide services for students with special needs and disabilities. However, from our research, SES instruction is not always adequate for students with special needs or disabilities. A major obstacle for providers, tutors, and researchers was identifying students with documented special education needs. The majority of tutors we observed and interviewed did not have access to Individual Education Plans (IEPs). If your student has an IEP, you can decide to share this document with your student's tutor if you think it would improve the tutoring experience. Ask providers about the level of training or information their tutors have for effective instruction of students with disabilities. You may want to talk to the district SES staff for options on choosing a provider for your student with a special need.

What if my student is an English learner?

Similar to students with special needs, there are SES providers advertising that they can provide services for English learners. Our research has indicated that SES instruction is not always adequate for the particular learning needs of English learners. Ask providers about the level of training or information their tutors have for effective instruction of English language learners. You may want to talk to the district SES staff for recommendations on choosing a provider for your English-learning student.

What are characteristics of a quality program?

There are a variety of types of SES services offered. Look for SES providers that offer smaller student to tutor ratios. Ask providers for the maximum amount of instructional hours your student can receive through them: the more the better and over 40 hours is most effective. Make sure your student's tutor provides the full amount of hours that were advertised.

Characteristics of Quality SES Programs

- Small group instruction
- Comfortable and quiet places to learn
- SES curriculum is connected to students' day school instruction
- Tutors are knowledgeable and experienced in subject areas and student learning needs
- Majority of tutoring session is spent on instruction
- Instruction is active and engaging
- There is frequent and positive communication between tutors, families, and schools
- Tutoring companies are responsive to families from registration through the end of tutoring
- Positive and engaging relationships are established between students and tutors
- Tutoring companies provide information about services in languages other than English

Other considerations include: supportive tutors, tutors that can answer your student's questions, regular and positive communication between tutors and student's regular teachers, and whether the location is conducive to engaged learning.

If your student has a learning disability or is an English language learner, make sure that the provider's tutoring staff is adequately trained in that area. Ask the provider for examples of how their staff has accommodated special needs and English learners in the past.

Where can I get more information?

Schools must provide information about SES eligibility. If you are unsure whether your student qualifies for services, ask their teacher, the school's main office, or the parent liaison.

If you have access to the internet, district websites have information regarding which schools qualify for SES, as well as information on providers. Districts also have specific personnel that handle SES related questions. Your school's main office can give you this phone number. You can also look at our study's website at www.sesiq2.wceruw.org. In it you will find various studies and policy briefs with a more detailed analysis of SES. Feel free to contact us at sesiq2@gmail.com or toll-free at 1-855-471-1700.

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