



## **Informational Memo: SOAR - Social, Organizational, and Academic Readiness *Program Implementation Update***

TO: School Board  
Trisha Kocanda, *Superintendent*

FROM: Beth Martin, *Director of Student Services*

June 8, 2016

### **Overview**

The SOAR Program was newly implemented this school year at Skokie School and Carleton Washburne School. This special education program promotes social, organizational and academic readiness in students who display unique social and emotional needs that require a more structured educational environment than our standard special education programming. This program was added to the continuum of services within the District for three primary purposes:

1. To provide a supportive transitional program for students upon return from an outplacement.
2. To provide direct and specialized supports to students before consideration of any outplacement.
3. To offer more inclusion opportunities for students who may otherwise be in self contained special education classrooms.

Additionally, the goal was to offer this new specialized social and emotional program within District on a relatively cost neutral basis.

The program has expanded beyond these initial targets to address needs of students who may not necessarily transition in or out of District, yet require specialized support to address their social and emotional needs.

## **SOAR Program Summary 2015-2016**

### *Skokie School*

- ☐ New Program for Skokie School this school year.
- ☐ Four students were enrolled in the program at the beginning of the school year - 2, 5th grade students and 2, 6th grade students.
  - ☐ Three of the four students returned to Skokie from outplacements last school year.
- ☐ Students have been included in general education classes from 80% -100%.
  - ☐ This level of inclusion may fluctuate depending upon the emotional state of a student on any given day.
  - ☐ The SOAR classroom is available for students to return to if needed for direct instruction or for work completion.
- ☐ Three additional students have entered the program this school year.
  - ☐ One student transitioned back to Skokie from an outplacement.
  - ☐ Two students were referred internally by the Skokie educational team.
- ☐ There have been no incidences of a student having to move to an outplacement for a higher level of support this school year.
- ☐ The Skokie program has realized a net increase of three students over the course of the school year.
- ☐ It is anticipated that one student may transition out of SOAR and into standard special education support for 2016-2017.

### *Carleton Washburne*

- ☐ Mixed model/revised program for Washburne this school year.
  - ☐ SOAR principles were embedded for new and existing students as a means to phase in the program at Washburne, which supported students with emotional needs and those who may require modifications in their curriculum.
- ☐ Twelve students were enrolled at the beginning of the school year - 7, 7th grade students and 5, 8th grade students.
  - ☐ Two students fully or partially transitioned back from outplacements last school year.
- ☐ Students have been included in general education from 40% - 90%.
- ☐ One student transitioned fully into general education (Nov, 2015).
- ☐ One student transitioned to an outplacement (Feb, 2016).
- ☐ Three additional students joined the program in March-April, 2016.
  - ☐ Two were referred internally by the Washburne educational team.
  - ☐ One transitioned back to Washburne from a parentally placed outplacement.

- ❑ The Washburne program realized a net increase of one student over the course of the school year.
- ❑ It is anticipated that one student may transition out of SOAR and into standard special education support for 2016-2017.

### **Program Description**

One of the commitments identified earlier this school year was to offer a means to increase awareness about the SOAR program. Staff members associated with the SOAR program in both buildings have collaborated and drafted a [program description](#) that has been presented to administration and shared with staff. It is anticipated that this description will be made available to parents via the District website in June.

### **SOAR Program Projections for 2016-2017**

#### *Skokie School*

We are experiencing growth within the program as student needs are identified and the unique supports offered within SOAR are deemed most appropriate by the educational team. This will impact caseloads for the special education teacher and the social worker within SOAR.

- ❑ Anticipate 11 students
  - ❑ 4, 5th grade students (one returning from parentally placed outplacement)
  - ❑ 7, 6th graders - more referrals from the educational team for students who are already within the Skokie School setting.
- ❑ Addition of a resource period so all students are regularly scheduled with the SOAR teacher for one period each school day. This will also enable the teacher, social worker and associates to network regarding student performance across settings.
- ❑ Social worker in the building ½ day, every day as opposed to two full days each week.
- ❑ Staffing - may need addition of one associate to manage 11 students within general education classrooms. This determination will be made once all grade level teams have been formed, students have been assigned to teams, and other supports available have been considered. It should be noted that without a program that offers this level of support, more students would likely need the support of an 1:1 associate.

### *Carleton Washburne*

- ❑ The addition of a special education teacher for students who require alternatives to curriculum (modified or replacement) will provide opportunity for the SOAR teacher to focus on needs of SOAR students (replication of model at Skokie)
- ❑ Anticipate 10 students
  - ❑ 5, 7th grade students - two moving up from SOAR at Skokie and 3 new referrals from Skokie educational team
  - ❑ 5, 8th grade students - all currently in the SOAR program
- ❑ Social Worker in the building ½ day, every day as opposed to three full days each week.
- ❑ Staffing - do not anticipate the need for an additional associate at this time, as associates within other settings may be available to assist with coverage for those students who require minimal support.
  - ❑ Will need to monitor the ability of the social worker to effectively support and provide service to 20 students across two school buildings as a result of increased referrals to the program.

With regards to programs at Skokie and Washburne, the program description and program parameters will need to be reviewed as a means to effectively manage referrals into the program. Although student need for social and emotional support is increasing, placement in the SOAR program may not always be warranted. Review of program description and parameters will promote the ability to sustain the program and to meet program goals.

### **Program Successes**

- ❑ We have been able to provide proper supports to additional students this school year as a result of program effectiveness for those students who began the year receiving this level of structured support.
- ❑ The fluidity of the program has enabled students to experience and succeed when included yet have the opportunity to seek out more support when needed.
- ❑ We have offered reverse inclusion where general education peers may come visit the SOAR classroom with their peers for group work on general education assignments.
- ❑ Supports that are provided within SOAR have enabled students to effectively succeed within a District program as opposed to moving to an outplacement.
- ❑ The support of a behavioral coach has been instrumental in developing appropriate behavior management plans as warranted.

## **Program Challenges and Opportunities**

- ❑ Managing the number of referrals -
  - ❑ We are experiencing an increase in referrals to the program. Most students referred are predominantly included within general education classrooms, but require the support within SOAR to manage emotionality when it heightens.
  - ❑ We have new students either moving into the District or returning from parentally placed programs who require the social and emotional support offered within SOAR.
  - ❑ It will be imperative to collect data and monitor the effectiveness of service delivery to truly establish a saturation point for the program - specifically, how many students can one program/classroom effectively serve?
- ❑ Provision of ongoing professional development -
  - ❑ Program associates and general education staff will require PD regarding social and emotional strategies including non-violent crisis management, de-escalation techniques, social thinking and zones of regulation. This will enable common language throughout the school building and promote success for students across all settings.
- ❑ Managing the social work needs of all students within the program-
  - ❑ Crisis management and response time with students when in emotional crisis - it is difficult to predict the time or severity of such events and how this will impact the SOAR staff, specifically the social worker.
- ❑ Behavior management - although the SOAR program is designed to support students with social and emotional needs, there are instances when dealing with an emotional outburst may require behavioral supports.

## **Program Goal Updates**

The following is an update on measures used for determining the success of the SOAR program.

- ❑ Have inclusion opportunities increased for students?
  - ❑ 100% of students within SOAR at either building have opportunity for general education inclusion. At least 50% of students within SOAR are included 90% or more each school day.
- ❑ Have student outplacements decreased?
  - ❑ Over the course of this school year, only one student who was within the SOAR program has been outplaced to a more restrictive setting. In 2014-2015, 4 students were outplaced for more intensive therapeutic supports.
- ❑ Have students returned to District from outplacements?

- ❑ Over the course of this school year, one student has successfully transitioned back to District full time. At the start of this school year, 3 students in the Skokie SOAR classroom and 2 students in the Washburne SOAR classroom returned from an outplacement as a result of the new SOAR program.
- ❑ It should be noted only three middle school students are currently outplaced for social-emotional purposes.

Have we maintained our target of offering a relatively cost neutral program?

**Mid year financial update-**

<b>Projected Net Cost</b>	<b>Actual Net Cost</b>	<b>Differential</b>
\$65,519	\$82,139	+\$16,620

**End of year financial update-**

<b>Projected Net Cost</b>	<b>Actual Net Cost</b>	<b>Differential</b>
\$65,519	\$93,222*	+\$27,703

\* One student returned to District full time May, 2016, one student was outplaced Feb, 2016.

**Elementary School Needs/Future considerations**

When the SOAR program was first proposed, it was suggested that the program be implemented in phases. Phase 1 would focus on implementation at the middle schools and Phase 2 would include consideration of implementation at the elementary level. Currently, the majority of students who are outplaced for social and emotional needs are elementary students (6 students).

There is an existing need for specialized social and emotional programming for our elementary-aged students. This can be managed in one of three ways:

- ❑ Outplace students into specialized programs.
- ❑ Partner with NSSD and develop a program that will be housed within District.
- ❑ Develop a SOAR program within our elementary schools with District staff.

This school year, two children were transitioned from their elementary schools into outplacements to address their social and emotional needs. Consideration of outplacements is most feasible at this time until data can be collected regarding possible implementation of SOAR at the elementary level. This data collection would include a cost analysis and feasibility study for program expansion based on the needs of the students within our elementary schools. It is imperative that the SOAR program at the middle schools is well established prior to adding an additional program at the

elementary level. Monitoring the program and providing ongoing support will enable this to occur. As indicated earlier in this memo, managing referrals into the SOAR program is paramount to its success.

### **Next Steps**

- ☐ Continue to monitor program successes and program needs within the middle schools..
- ☐ Ascertain effectiveness of professional development opportunities that have been implemented.
- ☐ Monitor program enrollment and referrals and ability to provide appropriate educational services and supports.
- ☐ Provide a program update including progress toward program goals in December, 2016.
- ☐ Determine best time to implement a feasibility study to consider alternatives for elementary-aged students.