



2016-2017

Annual Report

6485 Town Hall Road

Land O' Lakes, WI 54540

715-547-3619

www.npsd.k12.wi.us www.facebook.com/npsdsoar

[twitter@npsdsoar](https://twitter.com/npsdsoar)



The School of Options and Applied Research opened its doors in the Fall of 2013. SOAR Middle School (MS) was created by a committee of over 30 members made up of school staff, community members and parents looking at ways to improve student learning within the Northland Pines School District. The work of the committee and the support of the Northland Pines School District and its Board have made the dream of SOAR MS come true. This annual report is an attempt to share what the year at SOAR MS was like. If you have any questions or comments about this report or SOAR MS please feel free to contact Carie Brock, SOAR MS Principal, at cbrock@npsd.k12.wi.us or 715-547-3619. The best way to learn

more about SOAR MS is to come and visit, we welcome you all!

School of Options and Applied Research (SOAR) Mission/Vision Statement

Mission:

To engage students through authentic projects, experiential studies and community involvement.

Vision:

At SOAR MS, we:

- Empower students to reach their innate intellectual creative, and leadership potential
- Guide students learning with advisors serving as mentors
- Prepare students academically and socially for an ever-changing global society
- Encourage learning outside the walls
- Apply learning and critical thinking to make the world a better place
- Promote family and community engagement

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

SOAR MS opened in the Fall of 2013 with 44 students and in the Fall of 2014 we began the year with 63 students. For the Fall of 2015 the SOAR Governance Board and administration decided to change the maximum enrollment to 57. This was to improve support to the students. At the close of the 2016/17 school year, enrollment was 55 students (see chart). SOAR MS is comprised of students in grades 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th. At the time of this publication we are expecting to open in the Fall of 2017 with 57 students and a waiting list to get in.

Grade	Number of students	Females	Males
5	12	6	6
6	19	5	14
7	12	5	7
8	12	9	3
TOTAL	55	25	30

Charter schools often get characterized for taking all the “leaders” or the “high achieving” students of the district. SOAR MS’s goal was to have similar demographics reflective of the NPSD district and avoid a homogenous student pool. While SOAR MS populations does not precisely mirror Northland Pines Middle School, we are close in achieving that goal, having slightly less students with a disability than NPMS and fewer students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. In the end SOAR MS had no set template of what a SOAR MS student is except they all have one thing in common, they all wanted to be at SOAR MS. Coming to SOAR MS by choice is something they all accept and feel makes them unique and part of the SOAR MS family!

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is also a measure of academic achievement and an indicator of students desires to come to learn. SOAR MS’s attendance rate for the 2016/17 school year was at 93.98%. One factor that seems to be impacting our attendance is when students have an appointment they take a full day due to our location. This will be a tradeoff for the gains of our location; it is also good to remember our learning methodologies allow for students to learn from home even when not in attendance.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is a huge part of having a 21st century learner and growing young students into young adults. At SOAR MS students were required to complete 20 hours of community service every semester and 15 hours over the summer. Many of the students found a passion for service completing many more hours than required. SOAR MS students were able to complete over 3500 hours in their

communities during the school year. Some key places students donated time were, the Vilas County Animal Shelter, elementary classrooms, churches, neighbors and other civic organizations.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SOAR MS is a public charter school that is open to all students. SOAR MS students participate in the required state standardized assessment, Wisconsin Forward Exam. In the Spring of 2017 all SOAR MS students completed the Forward Exam in the area of Reading and Math, with 8th graders taking additional assessments in the areas of Science and Social Studies. No results from these tests were available at the time of this report. All data will be shared publicly on the NPSD Website.

SOAR MS staff, students and board relied more on the universal screener used by the district to track progress. The tool used, AIMSWEB, is made for this application and is used throughout the district and country to track student progress. The test is meant to look closely at individual student progress. AIMSWEB is used to look at student's ability in Reading and Math. Within each of these subjects specific skills are also measured and broken down.

In the area of Math, students were given the opportunity to show growth in both Math Computation (M-Comp) and the Measurement of Concepts and Applications (M-Cap). When we reviewed the Spring 2017 data, we noted that 100% of our students showed growth in Math Computation and approximately 84% showed growth in Measurement of Concepts and Applications from Fall to Spring.

SOAR MS uses a program called ALEKS for our Math curriculum and instruction for the school year. All staff members are available for individual or small group support during the designated ALEKS time each day. For the 2016/17 school year we continued to schedule one day per week of direct instruction for all students. One pattern we continue to notice is that the longer students work with the ALEKS program, the better they perform.

In the area of Reading students were tested and compared in the area of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) and Comprehension (MAZE). After reviewing the data, 90% of SOAR MS students showed growth in this area. Although we are pleased with the continued progress students are demonstrating as readers, we continue to recognize areas for improvement. During the 2016/17 school year, the SOAR MS team met with our Title One specialist to create a plan for increasing our overall reading proficiency while incorporating skills that will help students with the project process. They worked on this plan collaboratively for a good part of the second semester. They did not feel it was in the best interest of our students to implement a program change during the year, but are very excited to start next year out with a slightly different approach. Our "Project Management" time will include authentic student reading and summarizing nonfiction text for their individual projects, peer edit and review, resource credibility verification. We will also be adding a writing component with peer edit and review. Reading was modeled, encouraged and celebrated at SOAR MS. Students were motivated to read by their ability to choose most of their reading materials. Our partnership with the Land O' Lakes Library and Karen

Mendham, as well as, Jone Davis our SOAR MS Librarian had a significant impact on our ability to support student growth.

The following table includes a glimpse of data, based on the AIMSWEB assessment:

SOAR MS Spring AGR Report July Board Meeting						
Grade	ASSESSMENT	Fall	Winter	Spring	Growth	Notes
		Score	Score	Score		
5th	M-CAP	64%	58%	8%	-56%	
	M-Comp	63.5%	83.2%	75%	12%	
	CBM	55%	50%	58%	3%	
	MAZE	64%	33%	33%	-31%	
6th	M-CAP	80%	68%	47%	-33%	
	M-Comp	80%	79%	95%	15%	
	CBM	35%	44.3%	52.5%	17.5%	
	MAZE	55%	37%	37%	-18%	
7th	M-CAP	53.7%	80%	77.7%	24.0%	
	M-Comp	69%	70%	100%	31%	
	CBM	46%	40%	56%	10%	
	MAZE	46.1%	50%	44.3%	-1.8%	
8th	M-CAP	77%	75%	75%	-2%	
	M-Comp	85%	100%	100%	15%	
	CBM	62%	58%	42%	-20%	
	MAZE	69%	75%	75%	6%	



FIELD STUDIES

Field Studies play a very important role in SOAR MS's vision/mission. If SOAR MS truly believes that learning can and should take place outside our school walls then that needs to be modeled. One distinction that needs to be made is that a field study is quite different than your average field trip. A field study almost always has an expert involved from outside of the SOAR MS staff. Field Studies typically require prep by the students, work while at the study and reflection upon return or shortly after. In some of the field studies students used the wireless on the bus to complete work to and from the study. We also have a goal of attending at least one college campus per year and we were able to do that this year. Below is a list of some of the field studies attended in 2016/17:

Great Lake Aquarium

Leadership Group to Clam Lake

NPSD School Forest

Enger Tower in Enger Park

Nagel Dairy Farm

Grand Theater in Wausau

Leigh Yawkey Art Museum

Art Institute in Chicago

Land O' Lakes Artisans (LOLA)

Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland

US Forest Service at Franklin Lake

Lake Superior

If you would like to see pictures of these trips please visit www.facebook.com/npsdsoar

On each of these field studies, a wide variety of people gave up their business time and/or resources to lead an informational experience for our students. We owe a huge thank you to all the people who make these field studies happen!

STUDENT SURVEY

Students have played a significant role in the success of SOAR MS. Students at SOAR MS are given a lot of responsibilities and have high expectations put upon them. With this comes the ability of the SOAR MS staff to listen and create opportunities for students to give feedback. One way this was done

was through multiple student surveys. These surveys gave staff and the governance board the ability to reflect on what has worked and what changes we need moving forward. Here are a few answers & comments that stand out:

- My advisor allows me to demonstrate my learning in a variety of ways.
- My advisor shows respect to all students!
- I feel valued at SOAR MS
- My advisor helps me to be better organized
- The advisors set high expectations for me in the classroom

PARENT SURVEY

We spent a bit of time and energy this year trying to extract information from current SOAR MS parents regarding their future high school decisions. We wanted to learn more about what drives the decision making about whether to continue in a chart environment, such as SOAR HS, or transition into the traditional learning community at NPHS. We received 21 responses. The following are a few highlights of the survey:

- Highest weighted value of response to ‘why attend’ was the desire for children to experience hands-on learning and field studies.
- Second highest weighted value of response to ‘why attend’ was the attention and value given to a variety of learning styles.

An ongoing concern that was noted in a few of the comments, was how grades and mastery of content is transferred to colleges and other learning facilities.

PARTNERSHIPS

SOAR MS could not function at the level it does without key partnerships and volunteers. Three organizations, that have been with SOAR MS from the start and played a key role for us this year were the Land O’ Lakes Library, Land O’ Lakes Artisans, and Conserve School. Another organization that



SOAR MS had extensive partnership with is Land O’ Lakes Elementary. The sharing between staff and between students is great and something that makes both schools better. Each organization plays a different role, but they all provided talent, space and a passion for SOAR MS students to succeed. SOAR MS will continue to grow current partnerships, extend to new opportunities, and create reciprocal relationships with our partner organizations.

FINANCIALS

SOAR MS was granted a Wisconsin DPI Charter School Planning Grant in the Fall of 2012 in the amount of \$175,000. In the Fall of 2013 SOAR MS was awarded a Wisconsin DPI Charter School Implementation Grant in the amount of \$175,000. SOAR MS submitted and applied for in the Spring of 2014 a Wisconsin DPI Charter School Implementation Renewal Grant in the amount of \$175,000.

SOAR MS has relied on grants and support of the Northland Pines School District. Besides the grants from WI DPI, SOAR MS has also been awarded grants from the Land O' Lakes Fish and Game Club and the Conserve School. As a school we need to supplement our Field Studies and this year we did a Pasty Fundraiser. This fundraiser was able to net the school over \$4,000.00. SOAR MS also took over the Funnel Cake Booth at Cranberry Fest netting the school \$400.00. The Northland Pines School District does provide all facilities and staff needs for everyday operation. The majority of the grant dollars have gone for staff development, furniture, equipment and supplies to get SOAR MS off the ground and prepare for its sustainability. The sustainability of SOAR MS is in good shape with its consistent enrollment and the foundation the grant has provided.

SUMMARY

SOAR MS has had many major accomplishments in its fourth year. We have sustained our max enrollment almost all year, and have 57 students enrolled and a waiting list for the 2016-17 school year. We have seen numerous improvements in students both in the area of numerical data as well as anecdotal evidence. Our students embrace Project Based Learning (PBL), 21st century Learning and Service Learning. Our students have become proficient in Project-Based Learning (PBL) and have completed both teacher and student-designed projects. Students complete twenty hours or more of community service each semester. Our students have become 21st century learners through the use of technology and in how they interact with others and within their communities. All of the students' projects require them to contact, interview, and demonstrate items to adults and other students in our communities, thereby promoting and intertwining students' social skills and leadership development. We have been able to form partnerships in many different communities and areas. We have taken advantage of the great outdoor environment in which we live and go to school. We have conducted field studies and use the environment as a vehicle for our Language Arts and other academic studies. As educators, we have witnessed students who are much more engaged in learning, even though they have more independence and less direct instruction. Our students and families have embraced the idea that "learning does take place outside of the school walls." Students have had, and continue to use, Fridays for all the concepts that we have listed in our mission with emphases such as project-based learning, 21st century learning skills, technology, environmental conservation, and strong community connections.

Year four has brought some accomplishments that could not have happened in year one. We were proud to promote our first group of 8th grade students who have had the opportunity to attend SOAR MS for all four years! These students have played a key role in helping form SOAR MS and helping us create and execute a vision for many years to come. SOAR MS hopes it has had as much impact on these

students’ lives as they venture into SOAR High School, Northland Pines High School or any other journey they choose.

On a final note, schools are only as successful as the staff that is in place. SOAR MS’s successes can directly be tied to the fantastic staff that is in place. Robin Indermuehle, Don Anderson, and Kate Neville did an outstanding job teaching during the 2016/17 school year. Our staff members are exemplary models in their ability to teach, their hard work, vision, passion and dedication to building relationships with students, parents and community members makes. Our staff works very hard to make SOAR MS a special place for students! The fourth member of the team, Carol Pluedeman, is listed as paraprofessional in her job description; however there is no title that fits her because she does so many positive things for our students and school. Finally, Beth Hayner, building and board secretary, not only has the skills, but the patience and passion to hold the whole school together, which we are very grateful for! The dedication and commitment of our staff members truly makes SOAR MS a wonderful learning opportunity for all kids!

FUTURE

As SOAR looks to the future and specifically the 2017/18 school year a few goals stand out.

1. Improve Reading outcomes for SOAR MS students through ‘Project Management’ time.
2. Improve Mathematics outcomes for SOAR MS students by intentional, instructional attention to the Mathematical Practices. Through these Mathematical Practices, students will have the opportunity to focus on the concepts, processes, and applications of mathematical thinking.
3. Work on the transition of a new SOAR MS Advisor, Jeffrey Libby.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Any organization can only be as successful as its leadership. SOAR MS is fortunate to have a group of individuals that have the vision and passion to see SOAR MS get off the ground and move to a sustainable school that will impact students for many years to come. The SOAR Governance Board is a key aspect to the success of SOAR MS and the students and families of SOAR MS owe these board members a big thank you for the job they have done and continue to do moving forward.

LIST OF MEMBERS

- President – Marti von Kluck
- Vice President - Jessica Chuckel
- Treasurer – Beverly Ahlborn
- Secretary – Betty Wright
- Parent Member – Derek Pennycuff
- Parent Member – Stephanie Feckett

