



2016-2017

Annual Report

1800 Pleasure Island Road

Eagle River, WI 54521

www.npsd.k12.wi.us



The School of Options and Applied Research High School (SOAR HS) opened its doors in the Fall of 2015. SOAR HS was created following the creation of SOAR Middle School two years previous 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, the success of SOAR MS, and the support of the Northland Pines School District and its Board have made the dream of SOAR HS come true. This annual report is an attempt to share what the year at SOAR HS was like. If you have any

questions or comments about this report or SOAR HS please feel free to contact Scott Foster, SOAR HS Principal, at sfoster@npsd.k12.wi.us or 715-479-4473. The best way to learn more about SOAR HS is to come and visit, we welcome you all!

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

Mission:

Students will:

- Be college, career and life ready.
- Be encouraged to take risks and understand failure is part of the learning process.
- Be engaged in the community for volunteer and career exploration.
- Be able to participate at NPHS in educational, social, and extracurricular activities to aid in their success.
- Have ownership in their learning and play a role in determining their expectations.
- Be able to take advantage of all learning methods and options to be successful and graduate from SOAR HS.

Vision:

SOAR HS will create passionate and independent lifelong learners through project based learning, community service, and strong personal relationships.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

SOAR HS opened in the Fall of 2016 with 20 students. We went up and down during the year and ended with 16. SOAR HS is comprised of students in grades 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th. At the time of this publication we are expecting to open in the Fall of 2017 with 18 students.

Grade	Number of students	Females	Males
8	4	2	2
9	8	4	4
10	6	3	3
11	2	1	1
TOTAL	20	10	10

Charter schools often get characterized for taking all the “leaders” or the “high achieving” students of the district. SOAR HS’s goal was to have similar demographics reflective of the NPSD district and avoid a homogenous student pool. While SOAR HS population does not mirror Northland Pines High School, we will try to achieve that goal. SOAR HS had fewer students with a disability than NPHS, however SOAR HS has a much higher % of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Even though there is not a category for at risk students, SOAR HS would have a higher population of students that fit that category than NPHS. In the end SOAR HS had no set template of what a SOAR HS student is except they all have one thing in common, they all wanted to be at SOAR HS. Coming to SOAR HS by choice is something they all accept and feel makes them unique and part of the SOAR HS family!

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is also a measure of academic achievement and an indicator of students desires to come to learn. When SOAR HS is compared to the Northland Pines High School (NPHS), SOAR HS’s attendance rate for the 2016/17 school year was at 94.55% vs. 94.76% at the NPHS. The difference is not significant, but something that SOAR HS seeks to improve upon.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is a huge part of having a 21st century learner and growing young students into young adults. At SOAR HS 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. Some key places students donated time were, the Vilas County Animal Shelter, Relay for Life, elementary classrooms, churches, neighbors and other civic organizations.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SOAR HS is a public charter school and all students are open and have the ability to enroll. All students at SOAR HS participate in some form of state required testing. In the Spring of 2016 all SOAR HS 8th Grade students took the Forward Exam for the state of Wisconsin in the area of Reading, Science, Social Studies and Math. In the Spring of 2016 ACT testing was given to students in grades 9th & 10th in the areas of Math, Reading and Writing. No results from these tests were available at the time of this report. All data will be shared publicly on the NPSD Website.

SOAR HS staff, students and board relied more on the universal screener used by the district to track progress for the grades that the assessment is normed for, which is 8th and 9th grade. 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 tested and compared in the area of Math Computation. When the data was looked at 100% of our students in 8th grade were at or exceeding the benchmark. 9th grade had 57% but with one student missing it by one point it would have been 71%. This data is positive; SOAR HS staff is still looking for ways to make it even better, creating more growth by all. We will be looking at new Math options, not that ALEKS is not showing success, it is more to see if another program would work better for certain students. Mrs.

Liu will be coming back to SOAR HS for year three and we are excited for the impact that will have. Our students also have the option of taking Math outside of SOAR HS at NPHS.

In the area of Reading students were tested and compared in the area of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) and Comprehension (MAZE). When the data was looked at 100% of SOAR HS 8th grade and 71% of our 9th grade students taking the assessment were at or exceeding benchmark. We will continue to evaluate our students and support their reading instruction through both building wide and individual interventions.

Reading was modeled, encouraged and celebrated at SOAR HS. SOAR HS students were motivated to read by their ability to choose most of their reading material.



FIELD STUDIES

Field Studies play a very important role in SOAR HS's vision/mission. If SOAR HS 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 HS staff. Field Studies typically require prep by the students, work while at the study and reflection upon return or shortly after. We 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:

Hay Meadow Creek

Northland College

Eagle Bluff

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center

NPSD School Forest

Superior Fresh Aquaponics

If you would like to see pictures of these trips please visit <https://www.facebook.com/NPSDSOARHS/>

The trip to Eagle Bluff was probably the biggest highlight of the year for students and staff. The trip was about learning; however it was done in the Fall to really set the school up for a good year as many of the activities also emphasized teamwork. The students did have to fund raise as the trip cost more to stay overnight, drive to Minnesota, and the activities. Students shared their experiences with the Northland Pines Charter School Governance Board and all want to go back next school year.

On these field studies people gave up their businesses time and/or resources to have our students come. SOAR HS and its students 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 HS. Students at SOAR HS are given a lot of responsibilities and have high expectations put upon them. With this comes the ability of the SOAR HS staff to listen and create opportunities for students to give feedback. One way this was done was through student surveys. We gave a student survey at the end of the school year and had 14 students respond. A survey gives staff and the

governance board the ability to reflect on what has worked and what changes we need moving forward. There is a lot to think about and look at in this survey. Here are a few answers & comments that stand out:

- 100% of the students feel they can improve as a student
- 100% of students feel they are treated fairly by the principal
- 93% of the students feel that their advisor believes they can learn
- 93% of the students feel safe at SOAR HS
- 93% of the students feel that they are challenged by the work their advisor asks them to do
- “The field studies are one of the best things about SOAR HS” (field studies was mentioned most often)
- “We are like a family.....”
- “Working at your own pace and you alone control your learning.”
- “I love being able to take classes outside of SOAR.”



PARENT SURVEY

The Northland Pines School District Charter Governance Board wanted to find out more of what SOAR MS parents were thinking about SOAR HS so they interviewed parents in grades 6-8 who have students at SOAR MS. 21 parents responded, more feedback would have been better however the board and administration felt this was a large enough sample size to draw conclusions. Of the 21 responding, 10 had 6th graders, 4 had a 7th grader and 7 had an 8th grader. It was decided before administrating the survey that 5th grade parents did not have enough insight due to their short time at SOAR MS at the time of the survey to be able to give feedback.

- 53% plan on having their child attend SOAR HS and 33% were undecided
- When asked to rate the reasons they would want their child to attend SOAR HS all areas scored very similar with a few being slight higher in the 4 range:
 - Hands on learning & field studies
 - Many learning styles can be utilized

Comments:

“Not being prepared for college or being able to take enough regular HS and AP courses.”

“I have concerns that my student will be prepared and successful at a “good” college.”

“SOAR HS is a great opportunity for students!”

FINANCIALS

SOAR HS has relied on the support of the Northland Pines School District. As a school we need to supplement our Field Studies and this year we did a Candle Sale Fundraiser and joined SOAR MS in selling pasties. SOAR HS also received a Land O' Lakes Fish and Game grant for a hydroponic project and the creation of working hydroponic system. SOAR HS's fundraising account ended the year with a balance of just over \$1200.00. The sustainability of SOAR HS is in good shape as long as the enrollment continues to grow and a high level of quality education can be sustained.

SUMMARY

Year two for SOAR HS was focused on making improvements based on the previous year. How credits were issued, relationships and continuing to improve the project process were all areas there were looked at to improve. Year two also brought an additional advisor for part of the day to SOAR HS and that was Becky Liu who is the SOAR HS Math Advisor. She was able to have two periods of the day to focus on Math.

SOAR HS mostly focused year two around atmosphere and the issuing of credits. SOAR HS's atmosphere has many variables. One challenge that continues is students taking other classes and not being together as a group. At SOAR HS really only had one period out of eight that all students were together. Another factor that was unforeseen was the transition to high school, it was intended that the smaller SOAR HS would ease this for most students, but for many the fears about going to high school were still there. One way of trying to improve culture based on student feedback was to have two advisories and have them in separate rooms. Some students ended up liking this while others did not think it was as positive as hoped.

Year two did bring advantages that were helpful. Having a few "veterans" did help as the new students coming in had a culture to come into and had students to guide them. A 3 day 2 night trip to Eagle Bluff early in the year did help build a more family culture. SOAR HS staff being in year two knew better what to expect and made more changes to the project cycle and based on student feedback more staff lead seminars for credit.

The challenge of issuing credits was better, but still an area of improvement. In year 1 credit was issued for work that was done at a Proficient or Advanced level, this year a designation of (C) Completed to allow for more items to get done. SOAR HS did try to look at time as a factor as well as work completed; this is an area that will need more work in year 3. Students did not earn the amount of credits that the staff expected; but better than in year 1. In year 2 students did go out on job shadows more which did help with learning and also allowed for some credits to be issued in this area.

Year 3 will also require more work to get an RtI system up and running. This is where students are identified who struggle in Reading and Math and provided interventions to help build a very specific skill in those areas. This has been an ongoing issue even at NPHS, but as NPHS has some new ideas for the 2017/18 school year SOAR HS could be part of that as well.

Significant accomplishments in year two did happen. SOAR HS positively impacted many students both academically and socially. Enrollment is higher to start than it need this year. Veteran students have become proficient in Project-Based Learning (PBL) and have completed both teacher and student-designed projects. New students showed great growth and understanding in PBL as the year went on. By the end of year 2 a clearer vision of what SOAR HS is and what it can become in the future. SOAR HS has been able to participate in many outstanding field studies and attend another college. SOAR HS has taken advantage of the great outdoor environment in which we live and go to school. SOAR HS students were successful outside of the classroom

being soloist at many of the NPHS Music Concerts and had students in roles in the NPMS 8th grade play as well as the NPHS Musical. Students were in sports and clubs like downhill ski team and trap club. Finally, SOAR HS students and families have embraced the idea that high school can be customized to meet the needs of their learner.

Year three will bring many changes to SOAR HS including the significant change of being in a new building. This move is exciting for both getting to design a new school layout specifically for SOAR HS needs and to separate the two high schools. The schools will be close enough for the students who want to take classes to be near each other, however far enough apart for students who are looking for that separation. Year 3 is significant as the staff and board need to reevaluate the original Mission and Vision. SOAR HS is not a mirror of SOAR MS, it is really becoming its own school and even though it can be similar to SOAR MS in many ways for those students who want that it also can fill a need for a different type of student. PBL is not for all students, many SOAR HS students desire the positive culture, smaller size and the independent learning aspects of SOAR HS. It will be imperative that SOAR HS finds a way to meet their needs as well. Math will look to make some significant changes based on having a Math teacher who is returning after their first year at SOAR HS. One exciting option will be for students to have direct instruction and Math classes vs. just having ALEKS as an option. The focus will continue to build a school program and culture to help all SOAR HS students thrive, but one eye needs to be looking ahead.

A change in leadership will be coming for 2017/18. Scott Foster who has been part of the SOAR HS team from the beginning will be leaving to become the 7-12 Director of Curriculum and Instruction, he will also continue as Northland Pines High School Principal. Scott will not lose total connection to SOAR HS as his new role will have him working with SOAR HS on curriculum and on high school items as the two high schools share many resources. Current SOAR MS Principal Carie Brock will be taking over as the Principal at SOAR HS. This change will allow consistent leadership between SOAR MS and HS as well as continuity at the governance board level with Carie Brock and Tony Duffek now being the two principals in our charter schools.

The SOAR Governance Board changed its name this year; it is now called the Northland Pines School District Charter Governance Board. This year started with the board focusing more on looking ahead vs. getting schools started. The board and administration worked on revising each school's mission and vision. Work will continue on this, especially for SOAR HS. With SOAR MS completing four years and two charter schools completing their second year the board has a challenge to keep everyone moving ahead. The other challenge is the changes coming to the district with 7th and 8th grade students going to the high school at the start of the 2017/18 school year. A lot of progress has been made thanks to the work of the governance board.

On a final note, schools are only as successful as the staff that is in place. SOAR HS's successes can directly be tied to the fantastic staff. Becky Liu, Ann Perry and Nick Stemper really took the challenges of year one and made SOAR HS better during the 2016/17 school year. Their ability to teach, hard work, passion, and also trying to better the attitudes with students, parents and community members, makes SOAR HS a special place for students.

FUTURE

As SOAR HS looks to the future and specifically the 2016/17 school year a few goals stand out.

1. Create and live by a clear mission & vision
2. Creating a school that is closer to personalized learning than PBL only
3. Improve procedures for issuing credits
4. Work on transition to SOAR HS for our students

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Any organization can only be as successful as its leadership. SOAR HS is fortunate to have a group of individuals that have the vision and passion to see SOAR HS get off the ground and move to a sustainable school that will impact students for many years to come. The NPSD Charter Governance Board is a key aspect to the success of SOAR HS and the students and families of SOAR HS 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
- Community Member – Betty Wright
- Parent Member – Stephanie Feckett
- Parent Member – Derek Pennycuff

