

Finding A Balance – Classroom/SOAR Program

~Student Concerns~

The following are concerns that have been raised by SOAR students over the past few years regarding their participation in the out-of-school withdrawal program. They are included as “food for thought” for teachers, students and families.

- wondering how to maintain Level 4 marks and continue to be involved in extracurricular activities at the home school, although they will be missing one day each week
- returning to school after a day at SOAR and not knowing what happened while they were away
- feeling at a loss as to how to catch up
- being expected to do all the work they missed when they attended SOAR
- having to lose time during the other 4 days of the week to do papers, tests, etc. presented while they were at SOAR
- losing marks because they didn't have to do all the assignments; being marked poorly for notebooks with missing pages
- missing art, Phys.Ed, music, science because it is only offered on their SOAR day
- being made to choose between SOAR and being in the choir/on a school team because they were attending SOAR on the try-out day/practice day/rehearsal day
- being made to choose between class trips, special events at school – guest speakers, Medieval Feast, electives and attending SOAR
- not being allowed to make mistakes – the expectation to be perfect or to know all the answers because they are in SOAR
- not being acknowledged or recognized when they want to answer the teacher's question

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~Teacher Concerns~

1. **How do we as their home room teachers make sure that key concepts or skills are not missed even though the student is away one day a week?**
 - keep a “*While You Were Away*” folder; mark items as FYI or “required work”
 - photocopy notes that were missed
 - use peer buddies to review the day; go over basic concepts missed; hear about school events; encourage student to phone the buddy the evening prior to returning to school
 - seek parental support
 - conference with the student on a regular basis

2. **How can I timetable effectively to avoid students missing subject areas and trips?**
 - keep a note with a visual reminder of the SOAR day close to your calendar – Gr. 4 – Tues./ Gr. 5 – Wed./ Gr. 6 –Thurs.
 - try to avoid activities/trips/special assemblies, etc on the SOAR day
 - if unavoidable, discuss in advance so that the student can make an informed decision

3. **How can I be accountable for this student’s marks when the report card requires concrete proof for assessment?**
 - have students do a sample or the “most difficult first” segment of an assignment
 - use a pre-test when appropriate
 - use an alternate type of assessment tool to assess this student (conference instead of written test)
 - condense or compact the unit
 - have the student involved in an individualized activity from which you can assess the same skills
 - schedule the assessment on another day
 - ensure that any concepts being assessed have not been missed by the student

4. **How can I help SOAR students to maintain extra-curricular involvement within our school?**
 - inform other teachers and office staff of the day of the SOAR class

 - put this information on a school calendar

5. How do I explain “giftedness” and the absence of this student to her/his peers?

- be open and honest and encourage conversation
- encourage the SOAR student to share his or her learning with the class – eg. brain teasers, projects
- highlight that we all have strengths and benefit from working with others who have the same strengths; eg. sports, music, etc.; therefore, people who learn differently will benefit from a class where others have the same needs
- SOAR is an alternate program for students who have demonstrated that they think “differently” than their peers
- SOAR is a program which challenges and encourages thinking that may be, at any given time, at a higher level, faster paced or more individualized for those students who need this
- use ministry language which says that all children are entitled to programming which helps them to reach their learning potential

6. How do I record attendance?

- SOAR students are not absent when they attend the program
- in case of illness, parents will call both schools and it will be recorded as an absence