

STRATEGIES

OPPORTUNITIES

ADVANTAGES

RESOURCES

SOAR, the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation's early childhood education initiative, strives to give the next generation a strong educational start.



SOAR, the Foundation's early childhood education initiative, strives to give Muhlenberg's next generation a strong educational start, with a focus on early childhood literacy. To provide children from zero to five with the skills they need to be successful, SOAR focuses on providing Strategies, Opportunities, Advantages, and Resources for preschool-aged children and their families, while also supporting elementary-aged children's literacy efforts with select programs.

SOAR Signature Programs



Getting Ready 4 Kindergarten Workshops (4-yr olds)

Since 2013, SOAR has provided workshops for the parents of children who will start kindergarten in the following fall, teaching parents how they can "play with a purpose" with their children to give them the skills they need to succeed in kindergarten.





Get Ready Eddy Kindergarten Camp (4-yr olds)

Since summer 2019, in an effort to directly improve the readiness skills of local pre-K students, all students who will start kindergarten in the fall are invited to attend a free four-day camp, taught by certified teachers and assisted by teacher's aides and student interns. Campers become familiar with the school environment in a smaller group setting, and lessons focus on improving skills in five target areas each year.



READY! for Kindergarten

Ready! for Kindergarten Program (0-3 - yr olds)

Through partnerships with several community organizations serving under-resourced children, SOAR offers Ready! for Kindergarten, a national curriculum teaching age-appropriate learning targets, for over 80 families with younger children in high-need groups. Pathway of Hope offers classes for families with children 0-1, while Early Head Start and HANDS staff provide in-home sessions for enrolled families with 1-3-year-olds. SOAR provides materials and training for these partnership programs, and the partners are committed to providing the staffing to offer these classes across the County.





Super Saturdays Readiness Event

(3-yr olds)

Based on the kindergarten camp model, which brings together early childhood teachers with young children to learn hands-on skills, SOAR launched a program for 3-year-olds and their families first held in spring 2022. Partnering with Community Early Childhood Council/Governor's Office of Early Childhood, Head Start and Preschool.

New Baby Literacy Initiative and Expecting Parents

(0-1 yr olds)

SOAR hosts an annual Community-Wide Baby Shower, with over 20+partners participating to provide supplies and resources that expectant parents need to welcome their babies and give them a healthy start in life. SOAR and friends invite expectant families and families with newborns. SOAR provides each family with a toddler backpack filled with early education and literacy materials including books and health hygiene items as well as resource guides, program information, and a library card.



Community Events

Community events promote both SOAR and the Imagination Library program within the community, while teaching the importance of literacy, and distributing books and early childhood education information to Muhlenberg County families. SOAR sponsors or participates in 20-30 events each year.



Books 'n Cream Summer Reading Program

Books 'n Cream has become a household name across Muhlenberg County, offering children free books and reading challenges throughout the summer. The weekly summer reading program features learning centers which allow families to play together and read together.



COMMUNITY Family Reading Events

Based on the belief that families that read together learn together, SOAR teamed up with elementary school librarians last year to create Family Reading Night events. Education World asserts that “reading nights not only motivate children to read more at home, but they also can encourage parents to get more involved in their children’s education.” These events bring families together at their local school libraries for a fun day/evening of reading which includes structured and family story time, small crafts pertaining to the stories, and the opportunity to check out books for the summer.



Community Bookshelves/ Little Free Libraries

In an effort to encourage reading and make books available for ALL children, SOAR provides and stocks free community bookshelves and Little Free Libraries across Muhlenberg County.

The Reading Posse

The Reading Posse is made up of first responders, barbers, dentists, and school bus drivers who distribute free children’s books to the children they serve. The program encourages positive relationships and makes reading a reward for good behavior!



Read15 Awareness Campaigns

Signage and billboards that promote early childhood literacy are placed across the County. SOAR draws its messaging from national campaigns encouraging families to Read 15 Minutes Every Day.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library



Utilizing an annual Foundation grant to the Muhlenberg County Public Library since 2009, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is available for all Muhlenberg children under the age of five. Through this program, registered children receive a free book in the mail each month, with books curated based on the child's age.

Kindergarten Day (K-Day)

Muhlenberg County elementary schools works with SOAR to host a Kindergarten Day (K-Day) event at each school which allows incoming kindergarteners and their families to spend time at school in anticipation of the first day of classes. For many kindergarteners and their families, K-Day is the first opportunity to visit the school and meet with their teachers before the start of their first school year.



Reach Out and Read with Pediatricians

SOAR continues to expand partnerships with local doctors to offer the Reach Out and Read program. Through this program, local doctors issue "prescriptions for reading" at well-child visits, and the program provides books for their young patients.



R. Hero Program

A partnership with the Hero in You Foundation aims to empower children to make better decisions in emergency situations. School Resource Officers teach R.Hero curriculum in elementary classrooms, teaching children how to make split second decisions in an emergency situation using their 6 senses.

Rotary Reads/Mayor's Reading Club

SOAR provides books and coordination for these programs which bring community leaders into all five elementary schools to read to students, distribute books, and strengthen community relationships inside school walls.



SOAR Support for Local Partner Programs

In order to grow robust early childhood programs throughout the County, SOAR helps develop and adds support to events and programs offered by local partners, offering financial support, providing books and curriculum, and building further partnerships which will allow each program to expand its reach.

Kindergarten Registration Booklet & Literacy Bag

SOAR produces a kindergarten guide for parents, *School Readiness Matters*, which is distributed to every incoming kindergarten family on K-Day. SOAR also provides a literacy bag for all children taking the kindergarten early admittance screener at the board of education during the summer.

Community Partner Training

Each year, SOAR invites community partners to participate in a professional development opportunity with SOAR staff, offering additional educational opportunities, while also growing partnerships and encouraging local brainstorming of new approaches for Muhlenberg County.



Audubon Head Start Muhlenberg County Preschool

SOAR provides funding and program planning support for up to 4 parent/child events focused on literacy & school readiness. Books will also be provided for students at Christmas and for all home visits.





SOAR has meant a lot to my family and my girls. I started getting involved with SOAR when my oldest daughter, who is now seven, was a baby. We started going to Books'n Cream. She loved all the activities and she especially loved getting a new book every time we went. This activity has become a summer tradition.

This year as a second grader my oldest had taken her diagnostic test for school. The reading portion of the test was a shocker as a parent. In one minute, my daughter read 119 words. Far above the goal. Her goal for the fall was 59 words in one minute. Her fluency reads have also been a huge shock when she brings those home. Her most recent read was 147 words in a minute.

I say all this to say, without SOAR I do not believe that I would have had the opportunity to show my daughters the joy of reading. SOAR has done so much not only for me and my family but for others in the community as well.

-Emily



For more information about SOAR and other Foundation programs, contact the Foundation at 270-977-9194 or felixmartin@cflouisville.org