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ABSTRACT

The Summer Opportunity To Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.) program is the elementary summer school program to improve reading and literacy in the Austin Independent School District, Texas. In June 2000, the 21-day program served 2,406 students in grades 1 through 3 who were below grade level in reading or at risk of retention. The budget allocation of over \$2 million was funded from Title I, a state grant, and local dropout prevention funds. Program effectiveness was measured by scores on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The average gain for all students was 2.1 reading levels as determined by the DRA, a gain equivalent to about one-fourth to one-half of an academic year. During the 4-week program, 92% of students showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA, and the average improvement for students who attended at least 19 days was 2.2 reading levels. The program has shown consistent gains from 1998 to 2000 even as enrollment has increased six fold. Thirty-six percent of students who began S.O.A.R. below grade level ended the program at or above grade level. Recommendations centering on student selection and professional development for teachers are made for program continuation and improvement. Five appendixes contain attendance data, reading level information, responses to the teacher survey, an S.O.A.R. daily schedule, and the year 2000 S.O.A.R. timeline. (SLD)

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Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.) Evaluation, 2000



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Austin Independent School District Office of Program Evaluation

October 2000

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Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.) Evaluation, 2000
Austin Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.)* program is AISD's elementary summer school to improve reading and literacy. In June 2000, the 21-day program served 2,406 grade 1-3 students who were below grade level in reading and/or at risk of retention. The budget allocation of over \$2 million was funded from federal Title I, state *Student Success Initiative* grant, and local dropout prevention monies. Reading instruction was provided by 176 AISD teachers who attended professional development in balanced literacy as part of the S.O.A.R. summer program.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Program effectiveness for S.O.A.R. was based on the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*. Valid pre- and posttest scores reveal the following information for all students (n=2,118) and for students who attended at least 19 days, 90% of the 21-day program (n=1,422):

- The average gain for all students was 2.1 reading levels as determined by the DRA. This gain is equivalent to about one fourth to one half of an academic year progress, depending on the grade level of the student. During the four-week program, 92% of all students showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.
- The average gain for students who received a complete program (at least 19 days) was 2.2 reading levels as determined by the DRA. During the 21-day program, 93% of students with a complete program showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.
- Of the 129 students who pretested at Level A (the lowest level), only 20 (1%) remained at this level at the end of S.O.A.R.
- The program has shown consistent gains for students from 1998 to 2000 even as the enrollment has increased six fold. In fact, each year has seen an increase in the percent of students making gains of one or more levels.
- Thirty-six percent (604) of the students who began S.O.A.R. below grade level ended the program at or above grade level.
- A total of 450 students (21%) were at or above grade level at the pretest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The S.O.A.R. program has grown and evolved during its three years of existence. Although negative comments were made by teachers about some aspects of S.O.A.R. 2000, the overall program was praised for its structure and design. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. *Continue the S.O.A.R. program for summer 2001.* The program has proven successful for approximately 4,000 students in its three summers of operation. Students have consistently shown average gains of two reading levels or more each year. An additional benefit is that S.O.A.R. teachers receive professional development and hands-on learning in balanced literacy that they can use in their classrooms throughout the year.
2. *Recognize S.O.A.R. as "the" AISD program for reading intervention for grades 1-3.* There are many summer programs at individual AISD schools that compete with S.O.A.R. for resources, teachers, and student attendance. This year, at least 13 Title I schools had reading and literacy summer programs that targeted some of the same students served by S.O.A.R. If campus sponsored summer reading programs continue in AISD, these programs should be evaluated for

effectiveness to assure that students are receiving effective reading intervention. Otherwise, S.O.A.R. should be the model for summer reading intervention in the early grades.

3. *Increase staffing for S.O.A.R.* Even though the program has grown each year, no additional staff have been added. The district should consider appointing a director for summer programs who has limited additional duties during the regular school year. Reasons for this include the need for increased and/or enhanced districtwide summer programs as the state moves toward stronger accountability for promotion. Additional support staff (clerical support and bilingual mentor teachers) are needed to continue the program at its current 2000 enrollment and beyond.
4. *Maintain the current average class size of 14:1.* While the average class size in 2000 was 14 students, 34% of classrooms had from 15-19 students. Sixty percent of the bilingual classes had 15 or more students. The DRA results do not indicate a difference between this year's average gain of 2.1 reading levels, when the average class size was 14:1, and previous years' gains when the class size was 9:1 in 1998 (average gain of 1.9) and 12:1 in 1999 (average gain of 2.0). However, teachers are very sure that one of the reasons this program works is because of a small class size. Teachers of large classes say that a class size of 17-19 students does not allow for the amount of one-on-one and small group reading instruction students need. As the number of Spanish-speaking students attending S.O.A.R. increases, it is necessary to hire more bilingual teachers to achieve an actual class size of 14:1.
5. *Restructure the training to take into account the fact that many of the teachers have received the same training in previous summers or in balanced literacy classes.* Teachers, mentor teachers, and principals offered many suggestions for changing the training model, but said that the training should be consistent for all grade levels. The director of S.O.A.R. 2001 and experienced teachers and mentor teachers should meet to brainstorm ideas for a new training model. Some of the ideas suggested by teachers included more hands-on training with the S.O.A.R. materials and breakout sessions to offer a more in-depth training for experienced teachers, while new teachers receive the current orientation training for balanced literacy.
6. *Develop and uphold stricter eligibility requirements to include only students who are below grade level in reading at the end of the school year.* Principals and teachers would need to be educated on the purpose of S.O.A.R. and how to identify these students. With the money saved by not including the 239 students who were above grade level at the beginning of S.O.A.R., the program would have \$170,407 (estimated cost of \$713 per student) to hire additional staff, purchase materials, enhance professional development, or serve additional students who are below grade level.
7. *Develop a policies and procedures manual for S.O.A.R. teachers and principals available prior to the beginning of the summer program.* Teachers and principals requested a manual that would include specific information about the curriculum, classroom procedure, employment issues, eligibility requirements, and attendance and behavior policies. This could lay the groundwork more clearly for teachers and principals and reduce the frustration for teachers who believed that all expectations were not made clear this year.
8. *Revise the registration forms to include information about special needs and LEP status to improve staffing and grouping of children.* Valuable teacher time was required this year to determine special needs and LEP status of students. Instruction will go more smoothly if teachers and principals are aware of special needs situations in advance.

The data indicate that the structure of the S.O.A.R. program can withstand change and growth and still be an effective reading intervention. The program should focus on providing reading intervention to those students who are below grade level in reading. Training, supervision, and materials need to be of utmost quality to accomplish this goal.

S.O.A.R. Program Staff

Terry Ross, *S.O.A.R. Project Director*
1999-2000 Language Arts, K-12 Team Leader

Kathryn Stone, *S.O.A.R. Facilities Personnel Director*
Elementary Instructional Coordinator

S.O.A.R. Support Staff

Veronica Guzman, Secretary
Debi Hyatt, Secretary
Jeri Pulido, Secretary
Jessica Manning, District Mentor
Johnnie Van Dyke, District Mentor

S.O.A.R. Principals

Suzie Bailey, Brown
Linda Webb, Graham
Floretta Andrews, Houston
Pam Gray, Jordan
Anna Caballero, Linder
Lydia Moore, Oak Springs
Elisa Paredes, Pecan Springs
Karen Davis, Pleasant Hill
Vanessa Alba, Reilly
Helen Darilek, Sunset Valley

Mentor Teachers

Constance Skeete, Brown
Karol Hobbs, Graham
Norma Munoz, Houston
Wendy Riney, Jordan
Patricia Melgar, Linder
Janice Bell, Oak Springs
Monica Woods, Pecan Springs
Lis Shanks & Tammy Seal, Pleasant Hill
Angela Ward, Reilly
Donna Schmeltekopf & Janey Santana, Sunset Valley

The mission of the S.O.A.R. program is to provide early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for primary students in an effort to meet the district and state goal that all students read at or above grade level upon exiting third grade.

To accomplish this goal and ensure that significant student progress is achieved, S.O.A.R. will focus on balanced literacy utilizing materials specifically designed to complement each student's individual reading level.

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The S.O.A.R. 2000 program served 2,406 grade 1-3 students who were in need of reading intervention. The average gain for all students who attended the program five days or more was 2.1 levels in reading as determined by the DRA. During the four-week program, 92% of all students with a valid pre- and posttest score showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.

INTRODUCTION

The *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading* (S.O.A.R.) program is AISD's elementary summer school to improve reading and literacy. S.O.A.R., in its third year of operation, provided early intervention to promote literacy in students who would enter grades 1-3 in fall 2000.

The focus of the instruction is balanced literacy. Elements of a balanced literacy reading program are reading aloud to children, shared reading and writing, interactive writing, word study, guided reading, and independent reading. Curriculum specifically designed to complement individual reading levels is provided. While teachers work with some students in guided reading groups, other students are involved in learning through literacy centers. S.O.A.R. teachers and administrators participated in two days of professional development in using the balanced literacy approach to improve reading achievement at the beginning of the program.

The 2000 S.O.A.R. program was offered at 10 elementary sites (Brown, Graham, Houston, Jordan, Linder, Oak Springs, Pecan Springs, Pleasant Hill, Reilly, and Sunset Valley) from June 1 – June 29, 2000. Funding for the 2000 S.O.A.R. was provided by Title I, the state *Student Success Initiative* (for kindergarten), and local dropout reduction funds. Staff provided for the summer included the principal, classroom teachers, a mentor teacher, a nurse, a monitor, and a secretary at each campus. (The two sites with the largest enrollment, Pleasant Hill and Sunset Valley, had an additional mentor teacher.) District level support staff included Terry Ross, supervisor of the program, Kathryn Stone, facilities personnel director, and two districtwide mentors, assisted by three language arts team secretaries.

Eligibility for S.O.A.R. was based on students' January 2000 scores on the district *Primary Assessment of Language Arts and Mathematics* (PALM). All kindergarten through grade 2 students who were identified as at risk of retention and/or below grade level in reading were eligible to attend S.O.A.R. 2000. The lists of eligible students was sent to campuses in late March along with the registration forms. Schools notified parents of their child's eligibility for summer school.

To facilitate keeping separate the materials purchased by Title I funds and local funds, five of the campuses were designated Title I (Graham, Houston, Jordan, Linder, and Pecan Springs), and five campuses were non-Title I (Brown, Oak Springs, Pleasant Hill, Reilly, and Sunset Valley). Title I students could attend any campus while non-Title I students were required to attend the non-Title I campuses.

In 2000, the Title I evaluation staff continued to study the S.O.A.R. program to determine its effectiveness as the program expanded to serve more children. Both quantitative and qualitative data are included in this evaluation. In the S.O.A.R. program, students are described by the grade they will enter in the fall.

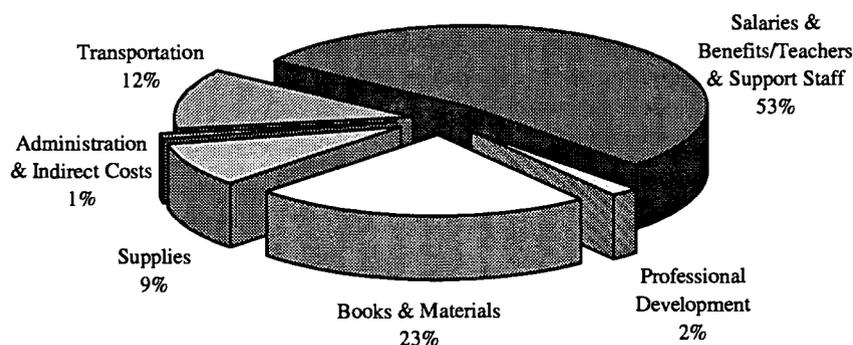
A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

S.O.A.R. BUDGET

The allocation of funds for the 2000 S.O.A.R. program came from three sources: local dropout intervention (\$800,000), Title I (\$600,000), and the state *Student Success Initiative* (\$681,930). The actual amount expended was \$1,715,411 (82% of the allocated amount), which is about twice the 1999 S.O.A.R. budget. For the 2,406 students who attended S.O.A.R. this summer, the cost per student was approximately \$713. This does not take into account the full-time central office language arts and evaluation staff that participated in this program.

The cost of staff comprised 53% of the budget and included the principal, a secretary, teachers, mentor teachers, a nurse, monitors, and custodians at each campus and two districtwide mentor teachers. The next largest expended amount was for materials, requiring 23% of the budget. Transportation expenses were covered by S.O.A.R. at a cost of \$200,000, 12% of the budget. Figure 1 shows the percentages of actual expenditures for S.O.A.R. by category.

Figure 1: 2000 S.O.A.R. Expenditures



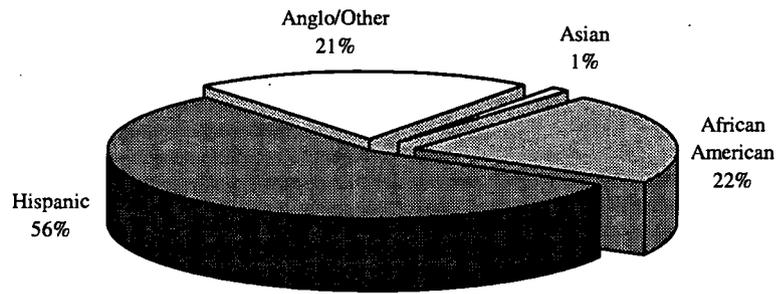
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment for S.O.A.R. 2000 was 2,406. An additional 70 students who were recorded as enrolled stayed fewer than five days. Demographic, attendance, and achievement data are reported only for students who attended S.O.A.R. five days or more.

In 2000, AISD Title I students (n=1,647), Title I private school students (n=13), and non-Title I students (n=746) attended the program. Twelve AISD elementary campuses (one non-Title I and the 11 year-round campuses) did not participate in the S.O.A.R. program. The students that attended S.O.A.R. were from 33 Title I and 26 non-Title I AISD elementary schools and 4 private schools.

Of the 2,406 students who attended five or more days, 57% were male and 43% female. The largest percentage of students attending the 2000 S.O.A.R. program will be entering grade 2 in the fall. The grade distribution is as follows: 22% grade 1, 47% grade 2, and 31% grade 3 students. The ethnicity was diverse with 56% Hispanic, 22% African American, 21% Anglo/Other, and 1% Asian. Figure 2 presents the ethnicity of S.O.A.R. students.

Figure 2: Ethnicity of S.O.A.R. Students, 2000



The population of students varied across the campuses. The largest population of Asian students was at Graham (1%), African American students at Pecan Springs (58%), Hispanic students at Houston and Linder (79% at each), and Anglo/Other students at Sunset Valley (47%). In 2000, reading instruction was offered in English and Spanish; 78% (down from 84%) of students received instruction in English and 22% (up from 16% in 1999) of students received instruction in Spanish.

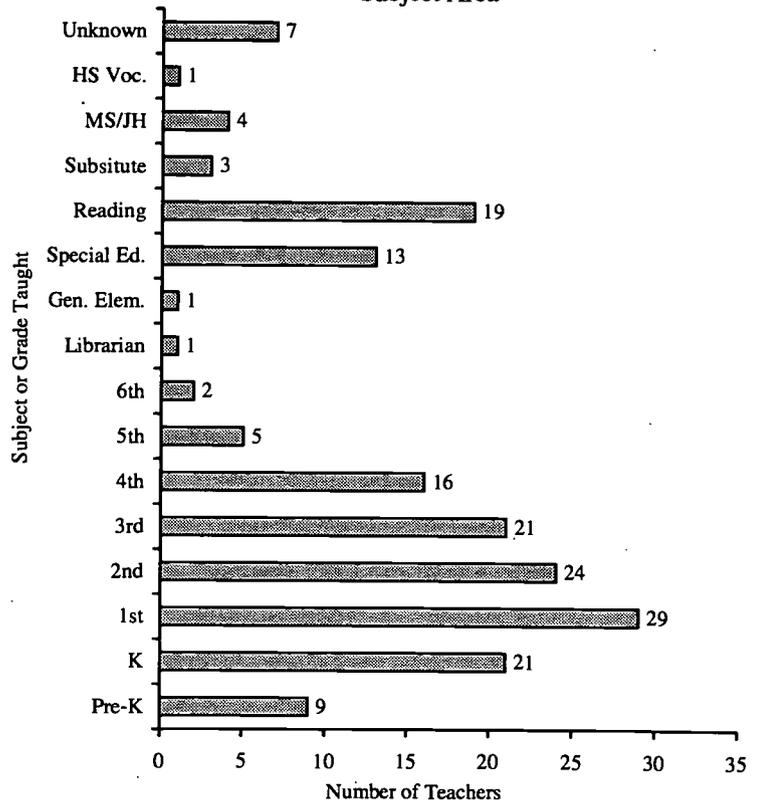
TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, 176 teachers participated in the S.O.A.R. program. The ethnicity of the teaching staff was 57% Anglo/Other, 14% African American, and 29% Hispanic. Fourteen (8%) of the 176 teachers were male. Thirty-two teachers were certified in bilingual education and eight were certified in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. The largest number of teachers taught grade 1 during the regular school year. Thirty-seven teachers, 21% of the 1999 staff, returned to teach in S.O.A.R. 2000. Five teachers have taught all three years of S.O.A.R.

During the 1999-2000 school year, S.O.A.R. teachers taught at 52 different AISD campuses. The majority of S.O.A.R. teachers (59%) taught in prekindergarten through grade 3 classrooms during the school year. These are the grades that are focusing on early intervention to meet the goal that all students will read at or above grade level by the end of grade 3. Nineteen reading teachers added their expertise to the program. Figure 3 shows the number of teachers by grade or subject taught during the 1999-2000 school year.

The majority (54%) of the S.O.A.R. teachers had five years or less of AISD teaching experience. On average,

Figure 3: Number of Teachers by Grade Level or Subject Area



the teachers had 7.6 years of teaching experience with AISD. The breakdown of experience teaching in AISD is as follows:

- 0-1 year – 22%
- 2-3 years – 23%
- 4-5 years – 10%
- 6-10 years – 19%
- 11-20 years – 19%
- Over 20 years – 8%

The overall pupil-teacher-ratio was 14 students to each teacher, higher than the 1999 ratio of 12 to 1. A ratio of no more than 15 to 1 was the original program goal.

ATTENDANCE

A total of 3,232 students preregistered to attend S.O.A.R. 2000. The actual number who attended at some time during the program was 2,476, which indicates that an estimated 23% of the students who registered for S.O.A.R. did not attend. The actual percentage of “no-shows” is likely to be higher than 23% because students were allowed to register at the campus and would not be included in the preregistration number.

A daily attendance count was reported by all sites. Summer programs do not use the AISD attendance files. Therefore, attendance numbers were reported to a central office language arts secretary, who calculated average daily attendance for each day and for the overall program. According to records from the ten campuses, an average daily attendance for the S.O.A.R. program was 2,060 students.

An official attendance rate was not calculated. However, using the average daily attendance, an approximate rate of 86% was calculated. This number may be underestimated because students’ date of enrollment and/or withdrawal was not included in the data collection. This 2000 S.O.A.R. attendance rate is 10 percentage points lower than the average attendance of 96% for AISD elementary students during the 1999-2000 school year.

The average number of days in attendance for S.O.A.R. 2000 students was 17.6. Twenty-six percent (n=618) of the students attended all 21 days of the S.O.A.R. program. The largest campus was Sunset Valley with 390 students and the smallest campus was Reilly with 123 students. More in-depth attendance data for the 2000 S.O.A.R. campuses can be found in Appendix A.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The assessment instrument used in the S.O.A.R. program was the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA). The DRA, used with kindergarten through third-grade students, is administered during a one-on-one conference as children read specially selected assessment texts. The DRA test procedures incorporate the work of Dr. Marie Clay, founder of Reading Recovery, including the use of running records. DRA reading levels are presented by grade level in Appendix B.

The DRA assessment texts represent a range of reading difficulty (20 texts from Level A through 44). There are four stages of literacy identified by the DRA – emergent (levels A-2), early (levels 3-10), transitional (levels 12-24), and extending (levels 28-44). The running record

is administered as the pre- and posttest to determine reading level. Reading levels reported for the DRA assessment in this report were taken at the instructional level (90% accuracy). When interpreting the results of the DRA, it is advisable to take into consideration that the running records are a somewhat subjective measurement. All students, both English and Spanish, with pre- and posttest scores were included in these comparisons. For the purpose of this evaluation, the term "all students" refers to those who have attended S.O.A.R. at least five days.

Increase in Reading Level

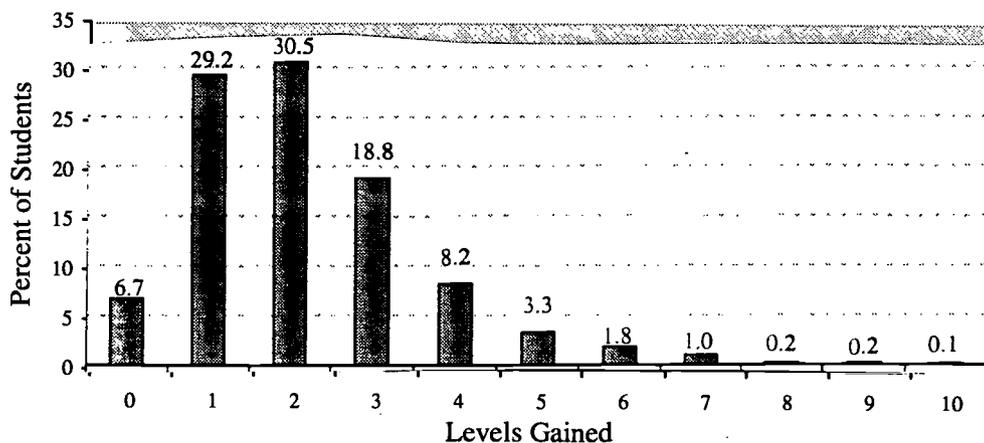
By completing a pretest and posttest with the DRA, it was possible to determine reading improvement during the 21-day program. Nineteen days (90% of the 21-day program) was considered to be a complete program for the purpose of this evaluation. To determine the effect of attendance on reading gains, the gains for students with 19 or more days in attendance were compared with gains for all students. The finding was that, regardless of number of days in attendance, students who had valid pre- and posttest scores gained an average of slightly more than two reading levels.

During the four-week S.O.A.R. program, 92% of all students with valid pre- and posttest scores ($n=2,118$) showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA. Students with less than 19 days in attendance gained an average of two reading levels (average gain of 2.1 levels), with a range from 0 to 11 levels gained.

Of the 1,422 students who received a full program of 19-21 days, 93% made gains of one or more level. The average gain in levels for students who attended 19 or more days was 2.2. Because the average attendance rate overall was 17.6 days, the achievement differences between all students and those with at least 19 days of attendance would be expected to be similar.

By examining Figure 4, it can be seen that of the students who attended at least 19 days of S.O.A.R., 30.5% made an average gain of two levels, 29.2% made an average gain of one level, and 18.8% moved up an average of 3 levels. (Average gains in level are similar for all students.)

Figure 4: Percent of Students Attending 19+ Days Who Made From 0-10 Level Gains on the DRA



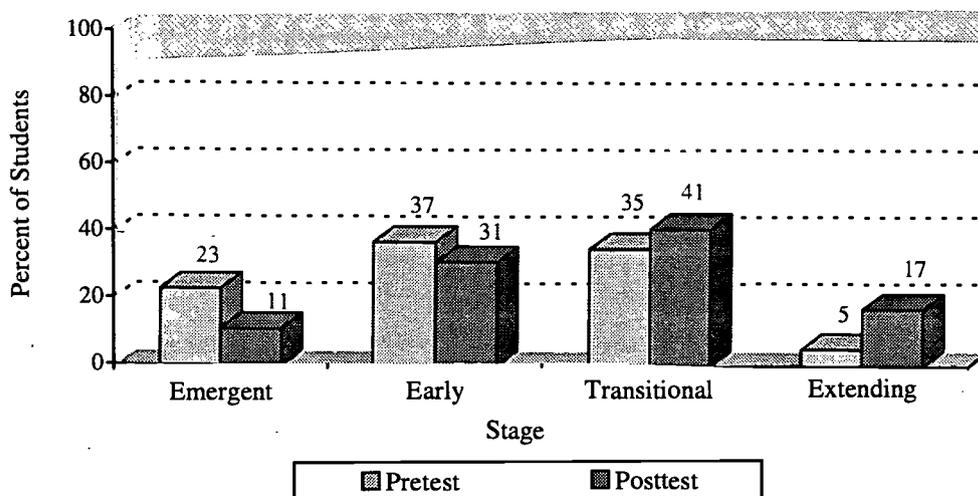
For students with 19 or more days in attendance, the greatest movement occurred at Level A from pretest to posttest. Advancement from the lowest level (A) to a higher level during S.O.A.R. was achieved by 129 students. Of the 129 students who pretested at Level A, only 20 (1%) remained at this level at the end of S.O.A.R. Many of the Level A students were reported by teachers as being below level A (i.e., having limited letter knowledge and phonemic awareness) at the pretest.

Increase in Stages

Because DRA uses only four stages of literacy (emergent, early, transitional, and extending) versus 20 levels of reading difficulty identified on the DRA, it is more difficult to advance from one stage to another than it is to move from one level to another, especially if the student started at the lowest level in a given stage. For students in attendance for 19 or more days, 42% (n=602) advanced one stage. The percentage of all students advancing one stage is similar (41%, n=861). The majority of students (58% of those with 19 days and 59% of all students), however, advanced by less than a full stage measured by the DRA. Less than 1% of students advanced two stages.

Figure 5 shows the percentages of students at each stage by pretest and posttest scores. The graph shows that the percentage of students at the two lowest stages (emergent and early) decreased from pretest to posttest, while the percentage of students at the two highest stages (transitional and extending) increased from pretest to posttest, which is evidence of reading gains for S.O.A.R.

Figure 5: Percentage of Students Attending 19+ Days at Each Stage at Pretest and Posttest, S.O.A.R. 2000



Achievement by Language

Spanish DRA kits were used for assessment of Spanish LEP students in grades 2 and 3. Grade 1 Spanish LEP students attended summer school at one of the four district LEP summer school sites for pre-K and kindergarten. Thirty-two bilingual teachers taught in 18 grade 2 classes, in 11 grade 3 classes, and in 3 multi-age classrooms of grade 2 and 3 students.

The mean gain level for Spanish was 2.4 compared to 2.0 for English. Table 1 shows the minimum, maximum, and mean gains by language on the DRA. (The English gains include grades 1-3 and the Spanish gains include grades 2 and 3.)

Table 1: Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Gains for DRA Levels and Stages by Language for All Students with Valid DRA Pre- and Posttest Scores

Language	Number	Minimum Gain Level	Maximum Gain Level	Mean Gain Level	Minimum Gain Stage	Maximum Gain Stage	Mean Gain Stage
English	1,661	0	11.0	2.0	0	2.0	0.39
Spanish	457	0	9.0	2.4	0	2.0	0.47

Achievement by Grade

Student grade placement was based on the fall 2000 grade level. When scores were examined by grade, it could be seen that students about to enter grade 3 had the greatest mean gain in level and in stage. The mean gain in reading level was 2.3 for grade 3, compared with 1.5 for grade 1 and 2.2 for grade 2. The mean gain in stage was less than 1 and was similar for each grade. Table 2 shows the minimum, maximum, and mean gains for DRA levels and stages by grade for all students with valid pre- and posttest scores.

Table 2: Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Gains for DRA Levels and Stages by Grade for All Students with Valid DRA Pre- and Posttest Scores

Grade	Number	Minimum Gain Level	Maximum Gain Level	Mean Gain Level	Minimum Gain Stage	Maximum Gain Stage	Mean Gain Stage
1	460	0	7.0	1.5	0	1.0	0.42
2	975	0	10.0	2.2	0	2.0	0.39
3	683	0	11.0	2.3	0	2.0	0.44

Number of Students on Grade Level

There is an urgency to help students read on grade level because of the current legislation that will require students to pass TAAS reading in grade 3 to be promoted to grade 4 in 2003. Although the district has not prescribed a particular DRA level for the end of kindergarten, there is a DRA level that correlates to students being on grade level at the end of kindergarten (level 2), at the end of first (level 16), and the end of second grade (level 28).

A kindergarten student is considered an emergent reader and should master levels A, 1, and 2. For a student who is on grade level at the end of kindergarten to remain on grade level, he or she would need to gain eight levels (from level 2 to 16) by the end of first grade; four levels (from 16 to 28) by the end of second grade; and three levels (from 28 to 38) by the end of third grade, according to the DRA. The average gains listed in Table 2 are equivalent to about one fourth to one half of an academic year progress, depending on the grade level of the student.

Because some of the S.O.A.R. teachers expressed concern that many of their students were at or above grade level at the beginning of S.O.A.R. and were not the intended participants for S.O.A.R., the data were analyzed for an actual number and percentage of students who fit this category (using students with valid pre- and posttest scores, $n=2,118$). A total of 450 (21%) grade 1-3 students were at or above grade level when S.O.A.R. began. It is possible that some of these students were not firmly on grade level, but needed additional support. The following information was obtained from this analysis of students attending S.O.A.R. who had valid pre- and posttest scores and were at or above grade level on the DRA pretest:

- 178 (39%) of grade 1 students;
- 177 (18%) of grade 2 students; and
- 96 (14%) of grade 3 students.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of students by grade according to their pre- and posttest scores and groups the numbers according to their DRA grade level status (below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level).

Table 3: Number of Students at Pretest and Posttest by Grade Level Standing

Grade	Below Grade Level		At Grade Level		Above Grade Level	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Grade 1 (n=460)	282	79	98	121	80	260
Grade 2 (n=975)	798	569	66	99	111	307
Grade 3 (n=683)	588	416	47	67	48	200
Total (n=2,118)	1,668	1,064	211	287	239	767

To get a true picture of the impact of the S.O.A.R. program on the students needing reading intervention, it would be necessary to remove the scores of those students who began the program above grade level. Looking at the below grade level column in Table 3, it can be seen that the number of students with valid pre- and posttest scores who began S.O.A.R. below grade level is 1,668.

The good news about grade level achievement is that 604 students began S.O.A.R. below grade level and ended the program at or above grade level. This number represents 36% of the students who began the program below grade level. A breakdown by grade shows the following:

- 203 were grade 1 students (72% of all grade 1 who began below grade level);
- 229 were grade 2 students (29% of all grade 2 who began below grade level); and
- 172 were grade 3 students (29% of all grade 3 who began below grade level).

While 21% of students with valid pre- and posttest scores began the program at or above grade level, 50% of students were at or above grade level at the completion of S.O.A.R. This shows a 29-percentage point increase by the students who began the program below grade level and ended at or above grade level in reading.

THREE-YEAR COMPARISON DATA

The S.O.A.R. program has evolved over the past three years. The program began in 1998 as a summer reading intervention for Title I students, with the option for other students to attend on a tuition basis. In 1999, students were included who were funded by the state Optional

Extended Year grant in addition to Title I and tuition students.

This year, the S.O.A.R. reading program was offered free to all first through third grade students who needed reading intervention. The number of sites, students served, teachers employed, and budget have all increased greatly from 1998 to 2000. Table 4 shows three years of information relating to the S.O.A.R. program.

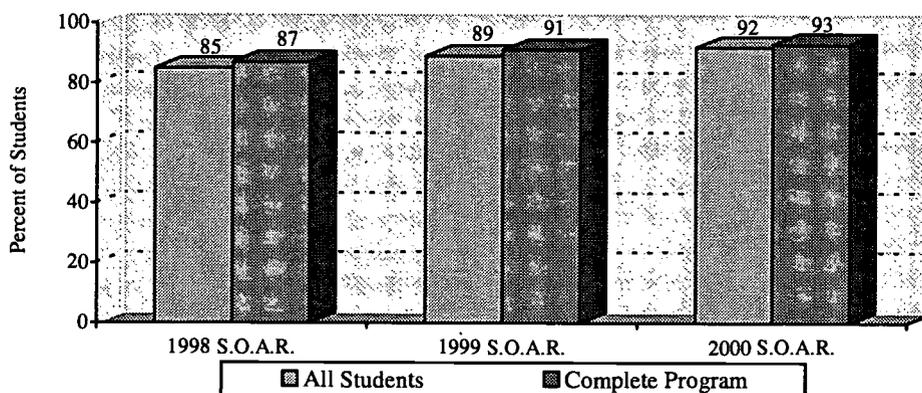
Table 4: S.O.A.R. Program Comparisons by Year

	1998 S.O.A.R.	1999 S.O.A.R.	2000 S.O.A.R.
Number of Sites	3	6	10
Number of Students Attending	388	1,249	2,406
Days Offered	19	20	21
Number of Schools Participating	22	52	59
Ethnicity			
% Hispanic	47	55	56
% African American	37	30	22
% Anglo/Other	16	14	21
% Asian	<1	1	1
Average Days in Attendance	16.3	16.6	17.6
Number of Teachers	45	102	176
Number of Mentor Teachers	0	6	12 Campus 2 District
Number of Bilingual Teachers	7	19	32
Average Years Teaching Experience	8.7	7.7	7.6
Pupil Teacher Ratio	9:1	12:1	14:1
Budget	\$487,620	\$901,514	\$1,715,411

1998, 1999, and 2000 Achievement Comparisons

While the S.O.A.R. program has grown each year and the students served have changed, the structure of the classroom instruction has remained basically the same. The balanced literacy components have been a strong framework for this summer reading program. In fact, each year has seen an increase in the percent of students making gains of one or more levels. Figure 6 shows the percentage of all students and the percent of students with a complete program (17+ days in 1998 and 1999, 19+ days in 2000) who made a gain in level.

Figure 6: Percentage of Students Making a Gain in Level in 1998, 1999, and 2000 S.O.A.R.



Further three-year comparisons can be made by average gains in level and in stage. Mean gains in level have increased each year for all students and students with a complete program each year. Table 5 shows the mean gain in level and in stage for all students and students with a complete program in 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Table 5: Mean Gain and Stage Levels by Attendance, 1998, 1999, and 2000

	Mean Gain Level	Mean Stage Level
1998		
All Students*	1.9	0.32
Complete Program**	2.0	0.35
1999		
All Students	2.0	0.34
Complete Program	2.1	0.35
2000		
All Students	2.1	0.41
Complete Program	2.2	0.43

* All students refers to students who attended at least five days on S.O.A.R.

** Complete program refers to 17+ days in 1998 and 1999, and 19+ days in 2000.

COMMON THREADS

Teachers, principals, and mentor teachers who work with the balanced literacy framework have valuable information to share. Teachers and mentor teachers were asked for in-depth information about how the S.O.A.R. program worked in the classes. Interviews were conducted with principals, the program director, and the facilities personnel director as well.

While there was an overall perception that the program benefits students, there were areas of the S.O.A.R. program that were thought to need improvement. This section will include information obtained from the teachers, mentor teachers, principals, the project director, and the personnel facilities director.

Teacher Survey

Teachers at each of the S.O.A.R. sites were invited to respond to a multiple-choice survey about various aspects of the S.O.A.R. program including: training; the DRA; class size; planning and coordination; materials; and assistance from the mentor teacher. Ninety-one percent (n=161) of teachers responded to the survey. Comments written by the teachers on their surveys will be reported later in this section.

Teachers expressed strong appreciation for the support and feedback they received from mentor teachers. This survey item garnered the highest overall rating (mean response of 4.3 based on a 5 point scale).

Teachers also expressed strong disagreement with the statement that the number of students in S.O.A.R. classrooms was conducive to providing a high level of instruction for each student. The average class size for 2000 S.O.A.R. was 14:1, which is a higher ratio than the previous two years of the S.O.A.R. program.

When looking at the results by school, Brown teachers offered the most positive response to the questions about S.O.A.R. 2000. The only areas of concern at Brown had to do with the number of students per teacher. Brown had the highest pupil-teacher ratio (14.6 as reported by teachers) of all S.O.A.R. campuses. Ten of the classrooms at Brown had 15 or more students.

By contrast, teachers at Oak Springs had several areas of concern. To the statement, "The 2000 S.O.A.R. program was well planned and coordinated," teachers at Oak Springs generally responded negatively. The mean response to this statement was 2.8 based on a 5-point scale. See Appendix C for a complete list of mean responses to the teacher survey by campus and across the ten campuses.

Teachers were also asked how many hours of balanced literacy training they had attended prior to S.O.A.R. 2000. The majority (61%) of teachers had previously received more than 16 hours of balanced literacy training. The results are as follows:

- 3% had less than 4 hours of training;
- 16% had from 4-8 hours of training;
- 16% had from 9-16 hours of training;
- 61% had more than 16 hours of training; and,
- 4% had not previously attended literacy training.

In general, teachers were less positive about the 2000 S.O.A.R. teaching experience than were teachers from previous S.O.A.R. programs. In prior years, the comments by teachers expressed the need for more low level materials, low class sizes, and extra training and preparation days. In addition to these same issues, this year the tone seemed to express the teachers' responses to a perceived negativity of district coordinators. There were a significant number of comments written by teachers that are summarized in this section.

Teacher, Mentor Teacher, and Principal Comments

Responses by S.O.A.R. campus staff (teachers, mentor teachers, and principals) are organized by category. The district personnel interviews will be summarized at the end of this section.

MENTOR TEACHER MODEL

The mentor teacher "supported our ideas and encouraged us to risk trying new concepts that proved successful in meeting the needs of our children."
-S.O.A.R. 2000 Teacher-

Each campus began S.O.A.R with one mentor teacher to assist classroom teachers with balanced literacy teaching. Pleasant Hill and Sunset Valley added another mentor teacher when the enrollment at these campuses reached over 340 students. In addition, two district mentor teachers visited the 10 campuses observing and giving feedback to mentor teachers and classroom teachers. During the regular school year, these 14 teachers serve as teachers of grade 1 (3), grade 2 (1), grade 3 (1), reading or Reading Recovery (8), and as instructional specialists (1). Five mentor teachers (36% of all) have previously taught S.O.A.R.

Mentor teachers were asked to explain their role in the S.O.A.R. program. Mentor teacher duties include the following:

- present initial S.O.A.R. training;
- level and distribute books;
- model guided reading lessons;
- problem-solve with teachers about students, materials, and the schedule;
- talk with parents about literacy development;
- work with individual students or small groups;
- provide follow-up training on basic components of balanced literacy;
- provide ideas for centers;
- conduct observations and offer suggestions on improving instruction;
- conduct debriefing sessions;
- share strategies and materials; and
- coach teachers in need of additional assistance.

In its second year, the mentor teacher model is applauded by S.O.A.R. teachers. The mentor teacher "supported our ideas and encouraged us to risk trying new concepts that proved successful in meeting the needs of our children," said one teacher. According to teachers, mentor teachers offered support, constructive criticism, and advice.

With more students being instructed in Spanish, teachers expressed a need for a bilingual mentor. One teacher said, "I feel strongly that if the S.O.A.R. program is going to offer bilingual classes, it should be essential that at least one mentor be bilingual to offer help, suggestions, direction, and support."

Conducting debriefing sessions is a major part of the mentor teachers' duties. Comments by teachers indicated that they felt that the debriefings were too long. The schedule stated that debriefing and planning would occur between 12:00 and 1:15 p.m. each day. (See the schedule in Appendix D.) Many times the debriefing sessions would run over into the time that was allowed (i.e., paid) for planning. According to one teacher, "Although the debriefing time was helpful, it really limited the amount of planning time available." Other teachers suggested that perhaps new S.O.A.R. teachers or those wanting further support could attend debriefing more often than experienced teachers.

When asked about the role of the mentor teachers, the principals indicated that the mentor teachers had no administrative duties so that they would be free to work with teachers all day. All the principals reported that their mentor teachers set up literacy libraries at their campuses. Although all of the principals felt that the debriefing sessions worked well, it was apparent that these sessions were not conducted consistently across the campuses. Several principals suggested that it would be helpful to have written guidelines on the content and frequency of these sessions.

TRAINING AND PREPARATION

There were two main issues with the training this year. Teachers who had previous S.O.A.R. training or extensive balanced literacy or DRA training requested that the training be restructured to offer different training to novice and experienced S.O.A.R. teachers.

In addition, teachers asked for more consistent training in accordance with the specific expectations of the administration.

The 2000 S.O.A.R. training was conducted according to grade level much like the 1999 training was. Grade 1 teachers met at Graham, grade 2 at Jordan, and grade 3 and bilingual teachers at Houston. The mentor teachers presented training in 1 ½ days, June 1-2.

Teachers indicated that mentor teachers did not seem to have a standard list of expectations to deliver during training. One teacher stated, "We had multiple trainers who gave us their own take on things that made our training sessions very frustrating." Some of the comments about the training included the following:

- "Need more consistent training in accordance with the specific expectations of administration (we were criticized for things we were told to do in training)."
- "Training needs to be the same at each grade level."
- "The training needed to include a review of materials."
- "Guided reading groups, shared reading and writing, and administering a DRA should be modeled in the training session."
- "Training needs to be more detailed."

- “Working on campus with my team was much more beneficial to me.”

Because this was the third year of S.O.A.R. and little has changed about the structure of the balanced literacy training, many teachers were repeating the training (five for the third year and another 32 for the second year). This represents 21% of S.O.A.R. teachers having had previous S.O.A.R. training. In addition, 61% reported on the teacher survey that they have participated in over 16 hours of balanced literacy training. One teacher said, “For the teachers who do not need to continue to repeat this training, a different type of training should be available, perhaps simply a short refresher course.” The abundance of balanced literacy training caused one teacher to offer the following suggestion for restructuring the training next year: “Have only those new to S.O.A.R. or balanced literacy to come back on the first day of training. On that day, teachers could learn how to administer the DRA and what to do with centers. The second day would be used for additional information or changes--things we need to know for that particular summer.”

Mentor teachers agreed that the structure of the training was a problem because teachers were told different things by different trainers. Mentor teachers were asked how the training might be restructured for next year. One possibility suggested is to separate novice teachers from the seasoned S.O.A.R. teachers for training. Novice teachers would receive regular S.O.A.R. training using the training model from the first year of S.O.A.R., where the same people train all teachers on particular components so that everyone is getting the same information. The mentor teachers not presenting to novices would work with the returning S.O.A.R. teachers. After a brief review of balanced literacy components, experienced S.O.A.R. teachers could brainstorm or problem solve ideas from previous years.

According to the teachers, the training was fast-paced. One teacher also thought that it would help if the training were more interactive, with participants seeing materials, brainstorming in small groups, and modeling strategies in the group.

Another mentor teacher said that mentors were not knowledgeable enough in every component of balanced literacy to explain the model fully to the teachers. “Curriculum specialists or the language arts literacy team would be good choices for presenters because they are experienced in staff development,” she said.

A district mentor suggested that teachers need more staff development in very specific areas: shared reading, interactive writing, and guided reading. The mentor also asked for additional breakout sessions for new S.O.A.R. teachers and experienced S.O.A.R. teachers.

One principal noted that experienced S.O.A.R. teachers needed more instruction on working with centers, while teachers new to S.O.A.R. needed more exposure to information about balanced literacy. Several of the principals were concerned about inconsistencies between the trainers. Because the training was provided by grade level at separate sites, teachers were presented information by different trainers. The principals indicated that they had to work out differences in the “message” that was delivered at the various trainings during the first week of the program. Nevertheless, the principals all indicated that teachers appeared to be implementing the S.O.A.R. model effectively and were administering the DRA appropriately.

Several employee issues came up during S.O.A.R. Many teachers expressed their disappointment about the pay for training being a \$75 stipend instead of the regular daily rate.

Some teachers did not get the information about the pay rates and about the payment date (not being until the end of July) until after classes began.

A preparation day was put back in the schedule in 2000 after being removed from the 1999 schedule. Teachers expressed gratitude for the preparation day. One former S.O.A.R. teacher commented, "I did sincerely appreciate the added day for preparation time this year. It impacted the start of the S.O.A.R. program considerably."

In general, the site principals felt that the teachers had adequate time for preparation and planning, but remarked that the principals needed to complete much of the groundwork for S.O.A.R. on their own time. Several of the principals indicated that they compiled campus-specific procedures manuals that they distributed to teachers either at a meeting prior to S.O.A.R. training or during the first meeting at the campus after training was completed. The principals who provided these manuals attributed some of the success of their programs to this advance planning and preparation, and to the clear delineation of campus expectations contained in the manuals.

MATERIALS

"Wow! Books, books, books! No one should be complaining. Books were everywhere in the rooms and being adequately and effectively used in most rooms."

-S.O.A.R. Mentor Teacher-

While teachers appreciate the quality of books and materials, the need for more materials for Spanish readers and emergent readers was expressed. Often, the third grade teachers need to use the low level books, which stretches the availability of some levels of books. One of the district mentors summed up the materials issue by saying, "Some of the levels at first grade were difficult for the students. These are kindergarten students entering first grade and have had very little experience with text readings. The levels were appropriate and very well used at second and third grades."

Bilingual teachers raved about the new Spanish materials by Hampton Brown, *Cancionero* and *Elefanetica*, but wished they had more. This was the second year to offer reading instruction in Spanish, and it has been difficult to order enough materials to keep up with the demand when 22% of this year's S.O.A.R. students were offered instruction in Spanish.

Having an inadequate supply of upper level books was a different problem this year. A large number of students came to S.O.A.R. reading at or above grade level. One teacher said, "If children on or above third grade level are going to be in our program, we need books that are 30+." Many teachers commented that they thought the program should serve only those for whom it was intended-- students below grade level.

Teachers expressed a need for more center ideas and purchased materials for centers, such as alphabet puzzles, magnet boards/cookie sheets, dry erase boards, and clipboards. The first three days of S.O.A.R. are hectic for teachers as they are administering the DRA pretest to students. One teacher suggested, "Have generic centers and lesson plans for the first few days prepared for each grade level so the DRA can be focused on."

Teachers and students liked the black and white take-home books. The English readers also got colorful books to take home as incentives for attendance. These nicer take-home books were not available in Spanish.

In addition to more Spanish and low level books, mentor teachers would like to see more guided reading or DRA leveled books instead of kits with books of several levels. Specifically, mentor teachers requested more lower level books that work on one-to-one matching supported by pictures; *Foundations* series in Spanish; and more accordion books at lower levels.

Mentor teachers had to level many of the books to DRA levels. This took a great amount of time. One mentor teacher wrote, "At times I felt I was spending too much time managing materials. I would have preferred to spend 95% of my time in the classrooms." Most of the mentor teachers suggested having a checkout system for circulating materials from one center location.

In general, the principals reported that there were sufficient materials provided for S.O.A.R. teachers and students. In fact, one principal commented that her teachers were moved to tears when they saw the abundance of materials that were available to them for their classrooms. Nevertheless, the principals also identified a few areas of concern. Several principals indicated that the coverage for the Spanish materials was not as extensive as it was for the English materials. Specifically, teachers needed more low-level materials in Spanish for students in grades 2 and 3. There were non-readers in Spanish in the upper grades that needed these lower-level materials as well.

CLASS SIZE

"I wish the regular school year could be this small. It's amazing how much progress you can see." -S.O.A.R. teacher who had 10 students-

Teachers said much about the class size this year. Fifty-seven teachers (35 English and 22 Spanish) had 15 or more students. This number represents 32% of all classrooms. As one teacher said, "Fifteen children in a class are too many especially when most of them are very low." Teachers suggested that the ideal number would be 10-12 students per classroom

For classes where special education students are enrolled, there is an even greater need for small classes. According to one teacher, special education students "often do not get the one-on-one attention they are used to and are frustrated" in a large classroom. Further, teachers believe that students with special needs should be highlighted on the S.O.A.R. class roster to allow teachers to know how to best meet the students' needs.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

"I felt that communication between the district and staff was strained."
-S.O.A.R. Teacher-

At least 25% of the teachers expressed displeasure with some of the aspects of district leadership this year. One of the decisions made by district coordinators for S.O.A.R. was to remove crayons from all classrooms after seeing them being used "inappropriately" at one

campus. Many of the teachers responded to this decision in a negative way. One teacher wrote, "When rules or ideas are introduced and changed, please consider the first graders (who are really kindergartners!). They can't write—they need pictures to express their thoughts." Another teacher added that changes "were implemented without discretion and were all encompassing when perhaps they should have been handled with individual teachers or campuses."

Teachers felt that expectations were not made clear by the mentor teachers in training or by district personnel before the beginning of the program. Teachers said, "We need a do and don't list at the beginning if we are to be expected not to do certain things." Teachers expressed frustration about changes being made in policy. Teachers said this could be avoided if there was a "set protocol on how things should go." These specific expectations could be put into the training manual and become part of the training, they said.

There was a situation at one of the schools where teachers said that harsh criticism from district personnel about efforts in the classroom, "led to a decline in morale and confidence of the staff." Teachers asked for constructive criticism and more respect as professionals from district personnel.

Mentor teachers, on the other hand, were very positive about the support they received from district personnel. One mentor teacher wrote that a strength of the S.O.A.R. program is a "good, supportive project director who knows what it takes to have a successful program."

DAILY OPERATIONS

Principals expressed concern again this year about transportation.
Attendance problems at S.O.A.R. are often linked to problems with transportation.
-S.O.A.R. Principals

Principals were asked about the daily operations of S.O.A.R. Information obtained from principal interviews about daily operations is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Preregistration

Over the three years of the program, preregistration has not been a strong indicator of the actual number of students that will enroll on a given campus. Only one principal reported that the number of preregistered students almost equaled the number of students who attended classes at her campus. She attributed the high enrollment at least in part to the fact that her teachers placed calls to the parents of all preregistered students several weeks before S.O.A.R. classes began to remind them about the program and to get a commitment of attendance. Several of the principals indicated that the registration form itself needs revision. The student ID number needs to be included on the form, along with an area to indicate any special programs the student participates in during the regular school year (e.g., bilingual or special education services). For example, one student attended the program for over a week before the classroom teacher learned that the student is the child of deaf parents and lives in a total deaf community outside of school hours. Consequently, this child's social and verbal skills are developmentally behind. The

teacher needed this information before S.O.A.R. began to be better prepared to provide this student a quality instructional program.

Transportation

When asked about the logistics of running the summer program, the principals' main concern was transportation. One principal reported that drivers frequently arrived early at their stops, and students would miss school for the day because they were not at the stop early enough. Another principal indicated that only one of the drivers had driven the route prior to the first day of classes. However, several principals indicated that transportation was not a problem at their school, and they attributed this to the advance planning and procedures they established prior to the first day of classes.

Food Service

Regarding the meal programs, principals generally indicated that the breakfast and lunch schedules worked fine. There were a few problems at several of the campuses that housed more than one summer program, but this seemed to depend on the working relationship that had been established with the home campus and its staff. One principal noted that S.O.A.R. principals need to have an attitude of being a "guest in the house" when working with the site campus.

Schedule

According to the principals, teachers and students generally adapted well to the S.O.A.R. daily schedule. Teachers seemed to have the most problems adjusting to the concept of centers, and some students had difficulty with not having a recess break, as reported by several principals. One principal commented that, once the pretesting was finished, it was easier for the teachers to follow the schedule. The principals indicated that there were several discipline problems and some students were subsequently dismissed from the program.

Attendance

All of the principals reported that teachers and clerical staff made calls to parents whenever students were absent to encourage attendance. However, the campuses were not consistent in how often the calls were made (e.g., after one day's absence, after two days' absence). One principal indicated that there needs to be a clear policy on attendance established for S.O.A.R. (e.g., two consecutive days of absence and the student is dismissed from the program). One principal reported that teachers at her campus were required to have weekly contact of some sort with every parent, and she felt this helped the parents remain supportive of the program. Also, several principals indicated that any problems with attendance at their campuses were linked to problems with transportation. When parents were called to ask why their children were not in school, frequently they would reply that it was because the bus had not come by to pick up the students.

Some parents were confused by the fact that the LEP summer program was located at campuses different from the S.O.A.R. campuses. One principal reported that some parents chose not to have their children participate in S.O.A.R. because younger siblings would not be able to attend the same campus.

Support Staff/Activities

Each S.O.A.R. site was assigned a mentor teacher, a nurse, one secretary, and classroom monitors/teacher aides to assist with the summer program. Unlike previous years, neither a parent training specialist nor a librarian were provided.

Nine of the ten principals interviewed indicated that they did not see the need to include a librarian in the S.O.A.R. staffing configuration. One principal said that, with the "plethora of materials" available to teachers, they have all they need. Further, there were literacy libraries set up at all of the campuses, and the principals felt that this served the students and teachers much better than a regular library would. Because students were provided with take-home books through S.O.A.R., there was an abundance of material available to them. Several principals even suggested that use of the school library would detract from S.O.A.R., and that "going to the library might be wasting time because of the transition time." However, several principals also suggested that the S.O.A.R. program directors consider coordinating with the public library system to get basic information on how to obtain a library card, etc. that could be distributed to students and parents. Also, field trips could be arranged for parents to visit their neighborhood public library as part of the S.O.A.R. parent involvement agenda.

The principals were divided on the need for a parent training specialist. All of the campuses reported some form of parental involvement, and many of the principals indicated that they used the staff at the Family Resource Center to conduct both training and informational meetings for parents. Many of these meetings centered on what parents could do at home with their children to develop literacy awareness. Each campus sent newsletters to the parents in both Spanish and English to keep them informed about the summer program, and the principals and teachers worked together on this activity for the most part. Further responsibilities of the parent training specialist, such as contacting parents in the case of student absences, were generally shared by the principals, teachers, and other support staff.

Incentive Funds

When asked how they had used the incentive funds provided for S.O.A.R., the principals reported that they bought items such as pencils, stickers, and certificates to distribute to the students. One principal used the money to have a book printed that was written by the S.O.A.R. students at her campus, and the students all received a copy of the book on the last day of classes. All of the principals indicated that they would have liked to be able to purchase incentives for the teachers, and that it was necessary for them to use their own money for this purpose. However, district policy does not allow this expenditure.

Regarding the refreshment money, for the most part the principals reported that they did not use all of these funds because they were able to get many food items donated. Finally, several principals indicated that they would like an easier method for reimbursements from these funds, perhaps through a local account at the campus where the money could be distributed directly upon presentation of a receipt.

STRENGTHS OF THE 2000 PROGRAM

"I think this program is excellent. It has completely enlightened me as far as diagnosing reading problems, analyzing student mistakes, and developing a plan to address deficiencies specifically."

-New S.O.A.R. Teacher-

The overall S.O.A.R. program for children was praised by many teachers. Some of the teachers' comments are listed below.

- "This is a wonderful experience. It was a hands-on-the-job training for me for next year with the balanced literacy program. I received so many helpful ideas and strategies from the trainers, mentor teachers, and other summer school teachers."
- "I learned so much about balanced literacy through teaching S.O.A.R. I am excited about using these ideas in my classroom next year."
- "The S.O.A.R. program is an excellent reading program for students who experience difficulty in reading. It was delightful being part of a program where the children were successful."
- "No more excuses. All teachers need to implement this in every classroom every day during the school year. If we can make these gains in four weeks during the summer, amazing things should be happening during the regular day."

Mentor teachers were also asked to indicate what they viewed to be the strengths of the S.O.A.R. program and they added the following:

- more instructional days this year;
- one full day to set-up classrooms;
- the pairing of English speaking mentors with Spanish speaking principals and vice-versa;
- variety of books purchased;
- Spanish books from Hampton Brown (*Cancionero* and *Elefonetica*);
- high intensity and high expectations required from each student and teacher;
- great principal, teachers, and support staff;
- most teachers trained in balanced literacy;
- visibility of district staff;
- a mentor on every campus;
- consistency and structure of the program;
- monitors at every campus to assist where needed;
- expertise and support of district mentors;
- debriefing sessions;
- availability of age appropriate materials;
- take-home books;
- daily monitoring; and
- demonstrations and modeling.

When asked to summarize the strengths of the S.O.A.R. program, the principals indicated that the program's structure is a major asset. Students are "immersed in literacy" for one month,

and the expectations for students and staff are clearly outlined. Several of the principals commented that the teaching staff is a plus, as is the opportunity for teachers from campuses across the district to work together. Other principals felt that the small class size contributed to the overall success of the S.O.A.R. program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Teachers want a positive learning experience at S.O.A.R. They believe that the development of a set protocol for procedures associated with S.O.A.R. would be helpful. -S.O.A.R. teacher comments-

The structure of the S.O.A.R. program is strong, but there are some areas of the implementation of the program that are in need of attention. S.O.A.R. 2000 teachers made the following suggestions for future programs:

- Keep it positive. Constructive criticism is important to teacher morale.
- Develop a set protocol for procedures associated with S.O.A.R.
- District personnel should express clear expectations for teachers.
- Continue to purchase more low-level books.
- Continue to purchase more bilingual books and materials.
- Purchase Spanish take-home books.
- Class size should be 10-12 students.
- Training should be restructured to take into account the fact that many of the teachers have received the same training in previous summers or in balanced literacy classes.
- The registration forms need to include information about special needs and LEP status to improve staffing of teachers and grouping of children.

According to one mentor teacher, "The program is solid because of its consistency. Even though there are logistical problems that need to be worked on, the program is based on a sound and solid concept. By being able to target the students' individual needs, the rate of success is higher than in traditional summer school programs."

Mentor teachers suggested the following improvements to the program for next year:

- Offer clear, concise, and consistent expectations of teachers and the S.O.A.R. program.
- Hire principal, mentor teachers, and classroom teachers earlier to allow more time for planning.
- Provide more training time for mentor teachers to review, catalog, and set-up materials.
- Make sure that mentor teachers take accurate counts of materials. These materials should be packed away in the correct boxes and labeled appropriately to save time during unpacking.
- Have stricter eligibility requirements to include in S.O.A.R. only students who are below grade level. Students who test above grade level on the pretest could be

dismissed from S.O.A.R. to allow teachers to concentrate on students who really need their help.

- Hire only teachers experienced in balanced literacy. Much time is required of the mentor teacher and principal when a teacher needs additional help with the components of balanced literacy.
- Provide two aides to any school with over 100 students.
- Do a better job of advertising S.O.A.R. to the community and to parents.
- Establish a central checkout leveled library at each campus.
- Assign a special education teacher for each grade level.
- Standardize policies for on-site registration.
- Encourage principals to select teachers from several campuses to encourage sharing of new ideas.
- Increase principal involvement in classroom and debriefing sessions.
- Produce a video of AISD classrooms where balanced literacy is implemented.
- Have more specific curriculum training instead of an overview of balanced literacy.
- Require accurate student information from home campuses.
- Level all books to DRA or Reading Recovery levels and post the leveled correlation chart in the leveled library at the summer campuses.
- Hire more district level mentor teachers (one per two campuses) next year.

Principals were also asked to make suggestions for improving the S.O.A.R. program.

They offered the following suggestions:

- The preregistration process needs to be examined. More detailed information about bilingual and special education status of students needs to be included on the registration form, as well as student identification numbers.
- A policies and procedures manual should be provided to all teachers and principals before the program starts so that expectations will be clearly outlined. This should help provide consistency to a program in which training is conducted at separate campuses by different teams of trainers.
- Some discretionary funds should be available to provide appreciation activities for the teachers. According to one principal, "Teachers are the key to the success of this program and they need to be appreciated."
- Foster better communication between the host school and the S.O.A.R. program. As one S.O.A.R. principal noted, if the host principal "is not committed to having S.O.A.R. at the campus then another site should be selected."

PROJECT DIRECTOR COMMENTS

"The 2000 S.O.A.R. program served more students, trained more teachers, and involved more parents than ever before. This is a great program that has made a difference for kids."

-Terry Ross, Project Director-

Terry Ross, the 1999-2000 AISD administrative supervisor for language arts K-12, was the director of S.O.A.R. for the third year. She is largely responsible for the structure of the summer reading program and has useful suggestions to improve the program for next year.

The number of persons planning, organizing, and hiring for the S.O.A.R. program has not changed since the first year of S.O.A.R. even though the number of students in attendance has increased six fold, according to the project director. Ms. Ross supervises the program and orders materials. Kathryn Stone, the facilities personnel director, is in charge of hiring, monitoring, facilities, transportation, and general organizational duties. Three secretaries take time from their regular duties to do the payroll, complete registration, and handle attendance.

Ms. Ross believes that several aspects of the program ran more smoothly this summer. Arranging for transportation was not the major headache that it was last year when they were "licking stamps" for parent letters over Memorial Day weekend because the bus schedule was provided so late. This year they were able to get information to transportation by April, which allowed time to schedule buses and get notices to parents.

A major concern about transportation for the summer program is that there are not enough people to drive buses in the summer. According to Ms. Ross, many of the drivers need daycare for their children. If S.O.A.R. expands to fourth and fifth grade, she adds, transportation will be difficult. Ms. Ross suggests that transportation use software that the bilingual program used this year, which schedules routes for buses.

Training was done by grade level again this year because of the size of the program and because teachers needed to hear information specific to the grade level they were teaching, according to Ms. Ross. Suggestions were made by teachers that training be structured differently for new and returning S.O.A.R. teachers. Ms. Ross thinks that it would be difficult to do training by experience because even a teacher with experience could need more training. It would be hard to know the level of expertise of teachers. Principals were asked to hire experienced S.O.A.R. teachers and those who have had balanced literacy training, but, she says, "Sometimes this does not happen."

Ms. Ross believes that the training was not as strong as it could be because mentor teachers want to give ideas and opinions. According to Ms. Ross, "Teachers need fewer options because the program is very structured."

There was more supervision this year than ever before. In addition to the campus mentor, Ms. Ross, Kathryn Stone, the two roving mentors, and Reading Recovery teacher leaders observed in classrooms and gave feedback to teachers. Because it is impossible to learn all that is needed in the 1½ days of training, there is ongoing training through walk-throughs and debriefing meetings. According to Ms. Ross, in effect, "Teachers get 21 days of training in addition to the 1½ days at the beginning of the program."

Ms. Ross says that she observed that the majority of teachers were implementing the balanced literacy model well. Ms. Ross indicated that she “saw very good things happening” on her campus visits.

Hiring posed a difficulty this year because many of the district first grade teachers were involved in professional development during the summer including the First Grade Academies, Math Investigations, and Capital City Writes. Ms. Ross says that this created more competition with other summer programs and the LEP summer school for pre-K and kindergarten.

Two new Spanish reading systems by Hampton Brown, *Cancionero* and *Elefanetica*, were a big hit this summer, according to Ms. Ross. The bilingual team helped her decide which materials to purchase. They also bought Spanish nonfiction books, *Making Words* in English and in Spanish, and alphabet cards. The glossy-cover take-home books that were sent home each week were not available in Spanish, but take home books in Spanish in black and white were provided weekly.

Because attendance was lower than expected for first grade (last year’s kindergarten students), there was \$140,000 of the state *Student Success Initiative* money not spent for S.O.A.R. After speaking with the Statewide Initiatives Office at TEA, Ms. Ross decided to use the money for take-home books, tapes, and bag for each first grader. “Many of the parents were very excited and said they would work with their children on reading,” according to Ms. Ross.

Ms. Ross believes that the January PALM score that was used for eligibility was a “reasonable indicator.” PALM scores were sent to schools in April with instructions to delete the names of students who had made appropriate progress. According to Ms. Ross, “Many of the schools recommended the students anyway.” Next year, the district will use the *Texas Primary Reading Inventory* (TPRI) in place of the PALM. Ms. Ross says that a reading level will have to be identified that shows a need for intervention.

According to Ms. Ross, the 2000 S.O.A.R. program “served more students, trained more teachers, and involved more parents than ever before.” She believes that “this is a great program that has made a difference for kids.” Other strengths of the 2000 S.O.A.R. program include the following:

- amount of coverage by monitors (mentor teachers and district staff);
- ability to buy extra materials with the kindergarten monies; and
- adding the bilingual reading system.

Improvements can always be made to this changing program. Ms. Ross recommends the following changes to S.O.A.R. 2001:

- Continue to improve training before S.O.A.R. Quality control is needed with so many teachers.
- Administrative staff could be more involved with the hiring of teachers.
- Transportation needs to look at the software that the bilingual program used this summer for scheduling bus routes.

Ms. Ross says that the S.O.A.R. program has impacted AISD by giving 400 teachers on-the-job training during the last three years of S.O.A.R. Teachers have had coaching, as well as opportunities to try balanced literacy strategies and to use good materials. Feedback of home school principals has been very positive, according to Ms. Ross. Teachers have gone back to

their campuses, implemented balanced literacy, and many have helped establish literacy libraries after working with those created for S.O.A.R.

FACILITIES PERSONNEL DIRECTOR COMMENTS

According to the Facilities Personnel Director, Kathryn Stone, S.O.A.R. was more difficult to manage this year than in previous years because of the size of the program. Even with all of the difficulties she says, "This is a great program. It is helping students read."

Kathryn Stone, the facilities personnel director for S.O.A.R., is an elementary instructional coordinator during the regular school year. Ms. Stone's role for S.O.A.R. includes supervising principals; hiring, training, and supervising mentor teachers; and filling in for S.O.A.R. principals in case of absence. She serves as facilities coordinator, which includes working with district personnel who are in charge of custodians, classified, food service, nurses, transportation, substitutes, and human resources. "Kathryn Stone is amazing at running S.O.A.R.," according to Terry Ross.

Ms. Stone begins as early as December looking at the S.O.A.R. evaluation report from the prior year. She believes that someone needs to start talking to principals in October to let people know that the program is available and encourage them to make it a priority. An abbreviated timeline for S.O.A.R. can be found in Appendix E.

Ms. Stone was aware that some important student information is left off the registration form. She says that home campuses did not report language of instruction, which made it difficult to know how many Spanish materials and bilingual teachers are needed at each campus. Other information that would be helpful is an indication of special needs students and student identification numbers. The identification numbers are necessary for the assessment piece of the program. Program evaluation staff will work with Ms. Stone to develop a plan whereby this information can be reported on the registration form for S.O.A.R. 2001.

The S.O.A.R. training this year was not as strong as the 1998 training when all the teachers heard the same thing about the components of balanced literacy, according to Ms. Stone. It could be possible for there to be two levels of training—one for experienced teachers and one for new teachers, according to Ms. Stone. She said experienced S.O.A.R. teachers would have to be assigned to training based on previous evaluations, which might not make all teachers happy.

Adding the extra day of preparation this year to S.O.A.R. was a change made in reaction to statements made by teachers last year. Ms. Stone said, "We could not have made it without the extra day at the beginning."

There is a need for a bilingual mentor. Ms. Stone says that "this is not an option—we need this position." She tried to hire a bilingual mentor this year, but there was no one available.

Ms. Stone indicated that the S.O.A.R. program was more difficult to manage this year than in previous years because of the size of the program. Some of the teachers needed to be moved around after the first few days of school when the enrollment was known. Predicted enrollment has always been a problem because many of the students who register do not show up. Competition with other summer school programs made hiring more difficult this year.

Monitoring all 10 sites is necessary to the success of the program. According to Ms. Stone, with 10 sites it would have been impossible except for the two district mentors who visited, observed, and gave feedback at eight of the campuses. The growing inventory of materials is also difficult to manage because materials have to be packed in the appropriate boxes, labeled, and sent to the warehouse. Calls from parents about transportation problems were received daily by all the district personnel involved. Many students do not attend S.O.A.R. because of transportation issues.

“The administrative support staff is phenomenal,” according to Ms. Stone. Some of the other strengths of the S.O.A.R. program listed by Ms. Stone include:

- the intensity of the program;
- the amount of monitoring;
- evaluation of staff;
- materials used;
- on-the-job training provided by the mentor teachers; and
- debriefing sessions.

There are areas in need of improvement, as well. Ms. Stone recommends the following:

- Make a firm decision on who needs services. She says, “This is not a regular summer school program. It should be for students who need help in reading.”
- Recognize S.O.A.R. as “the” district program for reading intervention. There are many independent summer programs that compete with S.O.A.R. in the area of hiring. She wonders if it would be beneficial to have just one summer reading program. As many as 13 Title I schools have reading and literacy summer programs that target some of the same grade levels served by S.O.A.R.
- Create a position for a S.O.A.R. director, and increase program staffing, in general. Also needed are people in transportation and budget to help with the program, according to Ms. Stone.
- Improve training, especially in how to use the materials.
- Hire five district mentors to cover two campuses each. At least one of these mentors should be bilingual.
- Try to keep the pupil-teacher ratio at 12:1 generally, with a maximum of 15:1.

Even with all of the difficulties, Ms. Stone believes that “this is a great program. It is helping students read.”

EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The S.O.A.R. program has grown and evolved during its three years of existence. In 2000, reading intervention was offered to 2,406 grade 1-3 students during the summer reading program. The S.O.A.R. program is a strong model based on a balanced literacy framework. Students have consistently made gains in the one-month summer program. This success is possible through the efforts of the teachers, mentor teachers, and principals. District staff plays an important role in the program as well through their efforts to observe teachers and offer suggestions on ways to improve reading instruction to accelerate reading for students who are functioning below grade level. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. *Continue the S.O.A.R. program for summer 2001.* The program has proven successful for approximately 4,000 students in its three summers of operation. Students have consistently shown average gains of two reading levels or more each year. An additional benefit is that S.O.A.R. teachers receive professional development and hands-on learning in balanced literacy that they can use in their classrooms throughout the year.
2. *Recognize S.O.A.R. as "the" AISD program for reading intervention for grades 1-3.* There are many summer programs at individual AISD schools that compete with S.O.A.R. for resources, teachers, and student attendance. This year, at least 13 Title I schools had reading and literacy summer programs that targeted some of the same students served by S.O.A.R. If individual school summer reading programs continue in AISD, these programs should be evaluated for effectiveness to assure that students are receiving effective reading intervention. Otherwise, S.O.A.R. should be the model for summer reading intervention in the early grades.
3. *Increase staffing for S.O.A.R.* Even though the program has grown each year, no additional staff have been added. The district should consider appointing a director for summer programs who has limited additional duties during the regular school year. Reasons for this include the need for increased and/or enhanced districtwide summer programs as the state moves toward stronger accountability for promotion. Additional support staff (clerical support and bilingual mentor teachers) are needed to continue the program at its current 2000 enrollment and beyond.
4. *Maintain the current average class size of 14:1.* While the average class size in 2000 was 14 students, 34% of classrooms had from 15-19 students. Sixty percent of the bilingual classes had 15 or more students. The DRA results do not indicate a difference between this year's average gain of 2.1 reading levels, when the average class size was 14:1, and previous years' gains when the class size was 9:1 in 1998 (average gain of 1.9) and 12:1 in 1999 (average gain of 2.0). However, teachers are very sure that one of the reasons this program works is because of a small class size. Teachers of large classes say that a class size of 17-19 students does not allow for the amount of one-on-one and small group reading instruction students need. As the number of Spanish-speaking students attending S.O.A.R. increases, it is necessary to hire more bilingual teachers to achieve an actual class size of 14:1.
5. *Restructure the training to take into account the fact that many of the teachers have received the same training in previous summers or in balanced literacy classes.* Teachers, mentor teachers, and principals offered many suggestions for changing the

training model, but said that the training should be consistent for all grade levels. The director of S.O.A.R. 2001 and experienced teachers and mentor teachers should meet to brainstorm ideas for a new training model. Some of the ideas suggested by teachers included more hands-on training with the S.O.A.R. materials and breakout sessions to offer a more in-depth training for experienced teachers, while new teachers receive the current orientation training for balanced literacy. There is agreement by teachers, mentor teacher, and supervisory staff that the training does need to be changed to make it interesting and informative.

6. *Develop and uphold stricter eligibility requirements to include only students who are below grade level in reading at the end of the school year.* Principals and teachers would need to be educated on the purpose of S.O.A.R. and how to identify these students. This year's assessment tool will be the *Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)*, which does not have a running record assessment. The district needs to establish early the process for identifying students for S.O.A.R. and enforce the criteria that are established. There is little doubt that all students benefit from S.O.A.R., but many of the students who attended S.O.A.R. 2000 were well above grade level in reading and could have participated in the public library summer reading program instead. With the money saved by not including the 239 students who were above grade level at the beginning of S.O.A.R., the program would have \$170,407 (estimated cost of \$713 per student) to hire additional staff, purchase materials, enhance professional development, or serve additional students who are below grade level.
7. *Develop a policies and procedures manual for S.O.A.R. teachers and principals available prior to the beginning of the summer program.* Teachers and principals requested a manual that would include specific information about the curriculum, classroom procedure, employment issues, eligibility requirements, and attendance and behavior policies. This could lay the groundwork more clearly for teachers and principals and reduce the frustration for teachers who believed that all expectations were not made clear this year. This manual has probably not happened because those who run the program have had S.O.A.R. administration to do on top of their regular language arts team duties.
8. *Revise the registration forms to include information about special needs and LEP status to improve staffing and grouping of children.* Valuable teacher time was required this year to determine special needs and LEP status of students. Instruction will go more smoothly if teachers and principals are aware of special needs situations in advance. Also, secretaries and monitors spent time finding student identification numbers for S.O.A.R. students because the numbers were required for the assessment form, but were not available on the registration form. Many hours were wasted on this task.

The data indicate that the structure of the S.O.A.R. program can withstand change and growth and still be an effective reading intervention. The program should focus on providing reading intervention to those students who are below grade level in reading. Training, supervision, and materials need to be of utmost quality to accomplish this goal.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

2000 S.O.A.R. Attendance Data, by School

School	# Students with 5+ Days	Avg. Daily Attendance	Daily Attendance Percentages	Students With 19+ Days in Attendance
Brown	260	228	88%	156
Graham	286	233	81%	141
Houston	241	201	83%	161
Jordan	153	129	84%	91
Linder	199	171	86%	105
Oak Springs	230	185	80%	103
Pecan Springs	198	172	87%	131
Pleasant Hill	335	307	92%	214
Reilly	119	103	87%	79
Sunset Valley	385	331	86%	241
Total	2,406	2,060	86%	1,422

APPENDIX B: READING LEVELS

The following chart roughly illustrates how these levels correlate to each other and to school grade levels.

Grade Level (Basal Level)	Guided Reading Level (Fountas-Pinnell)	DRA Level ** (Joetta Beaver)	Reading Recovery Level
K (Readiness)	-	A	-
	A	1	1
K (Readiness)	B	2	2
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	C	3	3 & 4
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	D	4	5 & 6
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	E	6-8	7 & 8
Grade 1 (Primer)	F	10	9 & 10
Grade 1 (Primer)	G	12	11 & 12
Grade 1	H	14	13 & 14
Grade 1 (Late)	I	16	15 & 16 (17)*
Grade 2 (Early)	J		
Grade 2	K	18 - 20	
Grade 2	L		*(17), 18, 19, 20
Grade 2	M	24-28	
Grade 3	N	30	-
Grade 3	O	34-38	-
Grade 3	P		-
Grade 4 (Early)	Q		-
Grade 4	-	40	-
Grade 4 (Late)	R		-
Grade 5	-		-
Grade 5	-	44	-

Note: Levels and how they correlate are subjective. Teachers are encouraged to freely adjust this correlation according to their personal evaluation.

* Level 17 is transitional. Placement of Reading Recovery levels 17-20 varies among school districts. (A few school districts place Reading Recovery levels 15 & 16 at grade 2.)

** *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA), developed by Joetta Beaver in collaboration with primary classroom teachers, also provides a leveling system appropriate for classroom use. DRA benchmark titles were field-tested by 78 primary classrooms from urban, suburban, rural, and small town school districts throughout the United States and Canada to assess the accuracy of the levels. The DRA system uses a numeric code and offers a broad range of texts appropriate for guided and independent reading.

APPENDIX C

Mean Responses to S.O.A.R. Teacher Survey by Campus and Across Campuses

Survey Questions	Brown (n=18)	Graham (n=17)	Houston (n=17)	Jordan (n=11)	Linder (n=14)	Oak Springs (n=17)	Pecan Springs (n=11)	Pleasant Hill (n=23)	Reilly (n=9)	Sunset Valley (n=24)	All (n=161)
1) The S.O.A.R. balanced literacy training sessions were informative and interesting.	4.3	3.3	3.8	3.5	4.1	2.9	3.9	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.6
2) I received enough information during training to feel confident that I administered the <i>Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)</i> correctly in my classroom.	4.4	3.4	4.3	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.7	3.7	3.9
3) The number of students in my S.O.A.R. classroom was conducive to providing a high level of instruction for each student.	3.1	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.2	4.0	2.9	3.7	3.1	3.2	3.4
4) The 2000 S.O.A.R. program was well planned and coordinated.	4.0	4.1	3.9	4.2	3.9	2.8	3.4	4.0	3.0	3.3	3.7
5) S.O.A.R. instructional materials were appropriate to meet the needs of all students.	4.1	3.9	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.7
6) The assistance I received from the mentor teacher was helpful in meeting the needs of below-grade-level readers.	4.4	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.4	3.7	4.3

Note: Scale is as follows: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3=Unsure; 2=Disagree; and 1=Strongly Disagree

Mean Responses below 3.5 are highlighted to indicate responses with lesser agreement.

APPENDIX D: S.O.A.R. DAILY SCHEDULE

8:15-9:00	SSR*/DEAR**
8:30-9:15	Shared Reading Shared Writing (Interactive) Phonemic Awareness Activities (grade 1 or as needed) Word Work (teacher demonstrates/mini-lesson)
9:15-11:15	Reading-Writing Workshop/Literacy Centers Guided Reading (each group lasts approximately 20-25 min.)
LUNCH (30 min.)	(Flexible Schedule)
(15 min.)	Read Aloud (Sharing/Reflection)
12:00	Dismissal
12:00-1:15	Debrief/Planning

* SSR - Sustained silent reading.

** DEAR - Drop everything and read

APPENDIX E: ABBREVIATED S.O.A.R. 2000 TIMELINE

According to Kathryn Stone, the following list includes some of the activities and events that happened prior to S.O.A.R. 2000:

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom teachers completed the PALM scores and mailed them to central office for data entry. Secretaries in the language arts department entered the PALM data.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting of principals began. A letter was mailed to helping teachers in the district to invite them to apply.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews for S.O.A.R. principals were held. • Mentor teachers were hired by Ms. Ross and Ms. Stone. • S.O.A.R. materials are ordered by Ms. Ross. • Student registration begins. Letters are sent to parents. (There was no definite deadline for registering. Registering at the door is also allowed.) • S.O.A.R. sites are decided. The buildings must serve 50% low-income students during the regular school year to qualify for the federal feeding program at which breakfast and lunch can be served.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.O.A.R. principals meet to go over the program in mid-April. • Principals begin hiring teachers. • A list is sent to transportation by April 15 to begin the bus and school assignments
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with mentor teachers two days in May. Substitutes are paid out of the language arts budget. • Meet with principals about six times during April and May. • Teacher training begins May 28.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come to S.O.A.R. on June 1. • Assessment with DRA is conducted the first and last week of S.O.A.R. • Last day of school on June 29. • Materials are packed up on June 30. • Assessment materials due to Office of Program Evaluation June 30.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.O.A.R. data are analyzed and an evaluation report is written.

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