

**A MODEL FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT  
AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL**  
A Glimpse into One School's Attempts to  
Reform Traditional Student Assessment

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## DEDICATION

To my family (Gina, Chris and David) who were forced to bear with my distractions, frustrations and absence in the building of the S.O.A.R. program.

To my colleagues in the S.O.A.R. program (Val Wooders, Sandy Axmann and Carra Brand), I've appreciated their strength and dedication.

To Gary Babiuk (friend, mentor and principal), who believed in us and gave us the opportunity and support to make our dreams a reality.

To the parents and students of the S.O.A.R. program, thanks for your trust.

## ABSTRACT

This work contains information related to an innovative program which was implemented, September, 1993, at Jubilee Junior High School, in Edson, Alberta. The program called S.O.A.R. (Striving to **O**btain **A**cademic **R**ichness), has become symbolic of educational reform within both Jubilee Junior High School and Grande Yellowhead Regional Division #35.

Although the main focus in this work is on the student assessment system, its is difficult to separate program from assessment. Therefore, this work also contains a discussion of the S.O.A.R. program's inception, its philosophical foundation and its general program structure, which is necessary for an understanding of our restructuring of the traditional student assessment model which existed at Jubilee Junior High.

This work contains an explanation of our transition towards a more outcome based approach to student evaluation with its emphasis on authentic assessment. It presents a picture of our non-marks based system with a rationale for the structure which replaced the traditional marks based system. This includes a look at strategies used to involve students and parents more directly in the student assessment process and to increase the level of commitment by each.

Presented are explanations, including examples, of our use of Student Portfolios, Student-Led/Parent/Teacher Conferences, as well as a look at our general recording and reporting procedures. This work concludes with a examination of our successes and shortcomings related to our changes to traditional student assessment.

## PREFACE

To understand the nature of our student assessment structure and the rationale behind it, it is necessary to understand the S.O.A.R. program itself. The program is all part of a larger context which involves the creation of a learning community. Within this community, program and assessment are carefully intertwined. It is essential that as complete a picture of the program as possible be advanced, while focusing primarily on the student assessment procedures and practices.

This work is not seen as an answer to the problems faced by teachers at the junior high or middle school level, it is a program developed to meet the needs of our students, our parents and our teachers within the context of the school in which we work and the community in which we live. The principles behind the S.O.A.R. program are not new, rather they are a compilation of principles and practices available in educational research and literature to all teachers. We have selected, modified and implemented those which we deemed necessary to meet our needs.

CHAPTER 1  
THE S.O.A.R. PROGRAM  
(Striving to Obtain Academic Richness)

**Program Inception**

The program which was to become S.O.A.R. began as a concept in the mid 1980's. I had been teaching primarily social studies and language arts at Jubilee Junior High School, in Edson, Alberta. Jubilee Junior High School is a school of approximately 500 students which is supported by seven feeder elementary schools.

A colleague, who taught math and science across the hall from my classroom, and I began a dialogue based on notions of team teaching and our beliefs about educating junior high aged students. We found that we shared many of the same concerns regarding;

- student motivation,
- the difficulty in the tracking of student progress,
- the restrictions of the traditional timetable,
- the large numbers of students (up to 150) that we saw on a daily basis,
- the lack of student accountability for behaviour and learning,
- the lack of parental involvement in their child's education,
- the disconnectedness of our subject matter,
- a general feeling that, despite our hard work we were somehow failing to provide for our students.

We determined that our students were perhaps suffering from a type of "middle child syndrome". That is to say that much of our traditional junior high practice did not support an appropriate transition between the elementary level and high school.

Generally speaking, our students represented an amalgamation of students from seven much smaller elementary schools who were thrust together in the traditional junior high setting with little consideration being given to the number of teachers they saw each day and the general

social climate in which they found themselves. We sensed that many of our students were feeling lost, that they did not really belong anywhere or to anyone. This perception led us back to our initial educational concerns. Our goal was to address the questions which we determined were relevant; questions involving:

- students taking ownership for their own learning,
- a sense of belonging,
- more student, parent and teacher accountability

Our continuing dialogue led us to examine potential alternatives to the traditional junior high structure under which we had been working.

Initially we were interested in team teaching models. Our concept of this involved the notion that if my colleague and I were able to teach math, science, social studies and language arts to the same classes, we would then be able to better communicate on issues related to problems and progress. The idea would be that we would see fewer students each day and would spend more time with them. As well, fewer teachers would mean fewer obstacles (mostly time related) when it came to meeting on student progress.

The administration of the time was not interested in deviating from the traditional practices which had been in place. Thus our ideas remained just that. However, the dialogue continued and expanded to include other colleagues who began to think similarly. We also began to examine our ideas in the light of educational research and literature.

By the early 1990's the school administration had changed and the new administration shared our vision of reform and held many of the same beliefs we had regarding school restructuring. They were not only interested in our ideas but actively supported us in our pursuit of reform. By this time there were three teachers, myself and two colleagues, who were actively involved in setting up a teaching and learning situation (program) unique to Jubilee School.

During the 1991-92 school year, the groundwork was set for the development of the S.O.A.R. program. Presentations were made by my colleagues and the administration to the School Board introducing them to the S.O.A.R. concept and seeking support for restructuring.

By the fall of 1992, the Yellowhead School Division #12 had given us a research and development grant and their authorization to spend the 1992-93 school year developing and refining the program. Much of the funding was spent on release time which allowed us to develop the project with implementation set for the 1993-94 school term. In September of 1993 the S.O.A.R. program was implemented.

## **Principles of the S.O.A.R. Program**

The principles which underlie the S.O.A.R. program have evolved from several sources, including educational research and literature, but are predicated on the Strategic Plan of Grande Yellowhead Regional Division #35, the personal beliefs of the S.O.A.R. teachers regarding teaching and learning, and information received from surveys of students, parents, and teachers in general.

### The Strategic Plan of Grande Yellowhead Regional Division #35

During the 1992-93, Yellowhead School Division #12 developed a long range plan to guide the delivery of educational services in the division (for a more complete overview of the plan, see Appendix #1). This long range plan was called the Strategic Plan and was a major component in the development of the S.O.A.R. program, and more specifically in the directions which would be undertaken in terms of evaluation procedures. The Strategic Plan is supported by the assertion that:

Life-based outcomes will drive all learning in Grande Yellowhead Regional Division #35.

These life based outcomes include;

- effective communicator
- critical thinker
- creative thinker
- competent problem solver
- team participant

The Strategic Plan provided us with a foundation on which to develop the S.O.A.R. program.

With the development of the Strategic Plan came a divisional movement to examine outcome based education as an effective tool for teaching and learning. With the encouragement of our school administration and the support of YSD #12 we attended a High Success Network

conference (Bill Spady), in Vancouver, in the summer of 1992. Understanding the direction in which the division had intended to move regarding outcome based education we undertook to make it one of the principles which would guide our S.O.A.R. program. We used much of the material provided by The High Success Network to help us establish direction in the program. We used the principles of future-focused and learner centered instruction to help us establish our goals. The major principles we utilized in getting started were:

- creating the vision
- enhancing the learning culture
- establishing real-life contexts
- connecting curriculum, instruction and assessment
- alignment of instruction and learner outcomes
- involving stakeholders and the greater learning community

These principles were in line with our own goals and helped us clarify our own thinking and allowed us to focus more clearly on the direction the program would take.

We augmented our initial plans with other components of the outcome based approach including:

- student-led/parent/teacher conferences
- a non-marks based evaluation system
- the notion of 100% assignment completion
- student portfolios
- rubrics (a predetermined and specified list of assignment criteria)

These were not simply ideas that we had gleaned from the High Success Network, most were ideas that were already part of our planning process. However, clarification and direction were part of what was gleaned.

## Personal Beliefs Regarding Teaching and Learning

We the teachers of the S.O.A.R. program held several beliefs about teaching and learning based on our experience with junior high students. These were not mutually exclusive from those of other teachers, but when we began to consider how we could alter our working environment, classroom structure, planning, and teaching strategies to best meet our (our, being the students/parents/teachers) needs, S.O.A.R. was for us the inevitable outcome.

The major beliefs regarding teaching and learning which motivated us were that:

- students needed to take (and be given) more ownership of their education.
- parents must be more actively involved in their child's education (in our experience, junior high parent response tended to be much more passive or non-existent).
- what was necessary for effective learning and participation by all stakeholders was the development of a learning community,
  - the traditional timetable limited contact with students and did not foster within them a sense of belonging and thus any sense of responsibility to anyone or any place. We wanted an environment which would allow us to work with a group of students
  - traditional methods of subject delivery tended to render subjects as fragmented bits which could not be united as whole. Students were often unable to see the connections between subject matter, (why would one have to spell correctly in science).
  - traditional curriculum overlapped, such that the teaching of a similar concept or skill may be done several times a year. We believed this to be somewhat of a waste of time and resources. Teach the concept or skill, yes, but then utilize time for reinforcement, not re-teaching. We believed that the curriculum should be much more integrated in nature.
  - students needed more time for remediation and enrichment. This was something that was not occurring effectively in our regular classroom because of resource disadvantages. There simply was not enough of time in each period to be effectual in dealing with students' needs. We realized that we wanted a structure which would allow for more time and resources available for remediation and enrichment.

- students needed to be more responsible for their work. They would not be able to pick and choose what they would hand in, rather they would be required to hand in everything and that it must meet a predetermined standard which was consistent for all of the teachers.

- we needed to make better use of the community. We wished to develop a structure which would allow us timetable flexibility to better utilize community resources and provide more opportunities for job shadows and work placements (things that had traditionally gone to students at risk).

- we wanted an environment where collaborative planning in program development and delivery would occur. We desired the support and feedback regarding our own teaching that would come from a more collaborative setting.

These were some of the principle beliefs and feelings we held about teaching and learning and led the development of the S.O.A.R. program.

### Jubilee Junior High School Student/Parent/Teacher Surveys

During the 1991-92 school term the administration of Jubilee Junior High School began to enlist the aid of students, parents, teachers and the community in general as stakeholders in school reform. This was new for Jubilee School. Initially, the administration surveyed students, parents, and teachers, then later other community stakeholders. Survey results related to teaching and learning can be summed up as follows:

#### Students

The students when surveyed suggested more hands on lessons, more opportunities outside the classroom, more P.E. opportunities, more help from teachers, more activity based learning, more computers for classroom use, job shadowing and work experience, advanced classes (enrichment), life-skills training, more basics (reading, writing, arithmetic), less homework/more class time for homework, and an opportunity to get to know their teacher better

## Parents

The parents responded to the survey with a focus on three significant areas, academic skills, social skills, and personal skills. Academic skills of concern included, stressing academic basics, critical and creative thinking, and problem solving skills. Social skills issues included, communication, respect and knowledge of others, leadership, and notions of responsibility and consequences. Personal skills included, time management, self-discipline, career awareness and development, goal setting and personal motivation.

## Teachers

Teacher responses were also grouped into the areas of academic skills, social skills, and personal skills. Related to academic skills teachers responded by including, a focus on reading, writing, math, and public speaking, critical and creative thinking, study skills, communication skills, and problem solving strategies. Social skills issues included, tolerance, respect for others, citizenship, community awareness, and community involvement. Personal skills of consequence included, goal setting, personal responsibility and acceptance of consequences, personal motivation, cooperation, life-long learning, work ethic, time management, and the notion of students as educational risk takers.

The results of the survey again provided direction for the S.O.A.R. program. We used many of the responses as a guide for S.O.A.R. program development. Much of the survey information related to program we saw as inseparable for the student assessment procedures. The survey information tended to support our personal beliefs, related to the needs of junior high students, as well as supporting the principles of the Grande Yellowhead Strategic Plan. The survey result also helped to provide specifics on which to focus S.O.A.R. planning and development.

## **The S.O.A.R. Program - General Procedures**

The result of initial discussions on education and the movement toward reform of educational program and delivery within Jubilee Junior High School culminated with the implementation of the S.O.A.R. program (Striving to Obtain Academic Richness) in the fall of 1993.

Yellowhead School Division #12 had by September of 1993 converted an area of the school into a large classroom. This classroom was fully furnished including the installation of six computers for classroom use. The S.O.A.R. program itself involves this single classroom, with three full-time teachers, and approximately 70 students.

### Selection of Students

The students were selected at random from the incoming grade 6 students (half of the grade 7 students from that year were in S.O.A.R., the other half were in traditional grade 7 classrooms). The grade 8 and 9 classes in 1993-94 involved the traditional structure. The idea was that these students would enter in grade 7 and would remain with these same three teachers throughout grades 7, 8 and 9. We felt this would provide a stable environment for students, would allow us to get to know our students and their parents well, and allow for a consistency of program and tracking which previously had been virtually impossible.

### Program Structure

The teachers in the program plan and teach together in the classroom, providing for core subject (math, science, social studies, language arts and physical education) delivery. This allows us to place students into any groupings or configurations which suit our delivery needs. Students leave the classroom to take complementary courses (options) with various other teachers. A common preparation period was assigned during this time. While we were, and are still, technically tied to the traditional bell schedule, we were not limited to a single period/single

subject format. Our time is our own to modify and utilize in which ever manner suits our delivery. This has given us the flexibility to explore remediation and enrichment strategies as part of program delivery. Because of our timetable flexibility we have also been able to offer work experience, job shadowing, and other curricular support activities to students without adversely affecting their program (it becomes part of it). The flexibility of the timetable has meant that parents have been and felt more welcome to come into the classroom to visit or assist. Our structure has allowed parents to come in when they are available or would like. This type of structure was all but impossible in our traditional time-specific classrooms.

The subject material is integrated into thematic units as much as possible. This allows for connections to be made between subjects and subject matter, it also allows us to provide a focus for planning and assessment. We have attempted to focus as much as possible on life-based skills by developing a unit each year focusing on the real world and real world skills as they relate to the skills learned in school.

### Reporting

The Jubilee Junior High School has a three term formal reporting system. This primarily developed as a result of the assessment needs of our program and the student-led/parent/teacher conference system of reporting. Students are expected to complete all assignments (100% assignment completion is a requirement), but because we teach them all of their core subjects, we are able to manage the amount of homework given. The S.O.A.R. program does not assess students in terms of a mark or grade. Rather, student progress is assessed in terms of assignment completion rates and the development of student skills (as related to curricular objectives and the YSD #12 outcomes).

### Benefits for Teachers

The benefits for the teachers of the program have included seeing and tracking fewer students, as well as, having the opportunity to identify all subject area progress. Consistency of

routine and classroom expectations have served to provide guidelines for our learning community. Students often have input into these decisions and react favorably because they have a stake in this "place" which is theirs. We have a greater dialogue on students on a minute by minute, daily and weekly basis. This allows us to discuss concerns and perhaps contact parents sooner than we had traditionally been able to. We have also found that this has led to increased parent contact.

The collaborative planning and teaching has been of great benefit to all of the teachers involved. More minds, more ideas and constant evaluation of procedures and practices have been a great benefit to the program. As well, while one teacher may be teaching there are two other teachers available to deal with behavioural concerns, thus fewer lesson interruptions and immediate consequence for inappropriate actions.

Another benefit for teachers as well as students is that, if one of us is away (ill etc.) program delivery does not change, we continue to move on with the task at hand. This continuity of program has proven to be beneficial for us.

This represents only a brief overview of the program and the fundamental principles involved in the learning community which we have fostered. The intricacies of the program and details of its operations would be considerably more lengthy. Ultimately, we feel that there is a greater commitment from us to our students and their development, from our students for their learning and contribution to the learning community, and from parents who have become more involved than had traditionally been the case.

## CHAPTER 2

### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

#### **Student Assessment Principles**

As stated earlier, the assessment procedures of the S.O.A.R. program are part of the larger context of program. In our move towards a more outcome based approach to learning we developed an student assessment structure which was non-traditional in nature. The system we developed was a non-marks based system where students received credit for demonstrating understanding or knowledge of concepts or skills. The idea was that if students could not demonstrate proficiency then more time or assistance would be given until they were able to make that demonstration. We realized that by having these students for three years, that skill development would be something that may happen more over time. The curriculum specifications provided the guideline by which overall assessment was patterned. Focus on the YSD; Strategic Plan objectives or outcomes was critical in program development.

The major premise behind the assessment procedures was to make students more responsible for their work and more accountable for their learning. As a result of having fewer students to assess we found that every student in class ultimately ended up with their own I.E.P. (Individualized Education Plan). Traditionally this was something that had been done only for students with special needs. We believed that each of our students should be on their own plan, one that supported their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as allowing them to set reasonable goals for improvement or excellence. These I.E.P.'s according to divisional policy were written up for students with special needs, however, for the most part ours were not formalized in any way, but rather developed out of discussions with individual students and through their student portfolio. Our students came to us with a variety of skill and ability levels, they were randomly selected from the incoming grade 6 students.

It is important to restate here that the other half of the grade seven students were in traditional marks based classes, as well the grade 8 and 9 classes were also traditional. This did create some logistical problems for us with respect things like report card format, reporting periods (three vs. four), parent teacher interview dates and practices, and the traditional marks based awards system.

One idea important to us was the notion of creating a real work mentality. The idea was that in the real world, work was assigned (or needed to be done) and choosing not to do it was not an option. Also, because of our non-marks based system, students were not given the option of accepting a mark of zero for assignments that were not completed. This led us to the expectation for 100% assignment completion. Again, because we were able to control the number of assignment given, we the teachers would be able to make classwork and homework completion a manageable process. As part of this, it was a given that all assignments would be required to be submitted.

Another component of this system was work habits. We found that some of our students came to us from situations where very little emphasis had been placed on work habits or routines. Traditionally, as junior high teachers we had taken it for granted that students came to us with skills in studying, notebook organization, editing of work, note-taking, and doing homework to name a few. We wanted to assist students in learning these skills if they did not possess them and to reinforce them if they did. This was not only built into the student assessment structure but became a focus for many aspects of program in general.

The program and its evaluation system became a true partnership between teachers, students and parents. We were able to track student progress (or lack of it) more quickly and accurately. We relied upon daily open dialogue on the progress of students to help guide many of the practices and procedures we had implemented. This constant dialogue meant that we were able to conference with parents and students before serious problems began to arise. The greater discussion of our student assessment structure involves many components which include,

reporting procedures, individual teacher record keeping, student portfolios, and student-led parent conferences.

## **Reporting Procedures**

With the S.O.A.R. (Striving to Obtain Academic Richness) program, we viewed reporting as more than just a report card and interview process. Aside from the generally summative component of reporting we believed that a strong formative component was necessary. We wanted to provide parents with as much information as possible on the progress of their children. With the inception of the program in September of 1993 we implemented a reporting format that was to continue through the next three years.

It was decided that it was necessary for students to be significant players in the reporting process. In keeping with students being responsible for their own learning we began a program where students wrote letters home each week to provide their parents with information related to what they were learning, what assignments had been given, and how successful they had been at completing the necessary work. These letters were signed by parents and returned by students, to the teachers, for accounting. By the 1995-96 school year the process had been refined and students kept a weekly journal, however the underlying principles and expectations did not change.

As a result of our belief in 100% assignment completion, we felt it was necessary to inform parents on a regular basis as to their child's assignment completion rate. During the 1993-94 school year this was accomplished by sending an assignment listing home on a bi-monthly basis. During the 1994-95 school year, it had been determined that this reporting process should occur on a monthly basis. This continued throughout the 1995-96 school term.

There was also an informal aspect to our reporting procedures. Parents would often drop by or telephone us to inquire as to their child's progress. Again, the flexibility of our environment allowed us more freedom of interaction with parents. We encouraged parents to be active participants in their child's education, and this conformed to our beliefs regarding the creation of a learning community partnership.

### Teacher Records

As teachers we divided the marking responsibilities in terms of expertise. We split Science, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Physical Education between us and each teacher was responsible for the record keeping for the subject they were assigned. Care was taken to create assignments that would meet the curricular objectives of each subject.

Again, rubrics (assignment criteria) were set out ahead of time and individual assignments were not considered complete until the criteria had been met. Once an assignment was marked as complete, it was entered into the teacher's record book and the assignment was considered to be done. If the assignment did not meet the rubric criteria, it was handed back to the student with appropriate comments on how to complete the assignment. With respect to quizzes, tests and exams, a minimum level of achievement would be set and once that level had been met the student was considered to have reached successful completion. Flexibility was the key, some students had different needs from others and those needs were reflected in our assessment structure and identified for parents.

The performance skills of the students were met in this way and records of assignment completion were kept without assigning an individual grade to the piece of work. We found that S.O.A.R. students learned not to be focused on the grade as much as completing the assignment to the level of the quality expectation. From our experiences in traditional classrooms we found that students tended to focus more on the comments and corrections rather than the grade. We also discovered that our students became more interested in the quality of their work, as most of them were not interested in having to rewrite assignments.

### Formal Reporting Procedures

Formal reporting occurred three times per year; the end of November, early March, and near the end of June. The formal reporting procedures for the S.O.A.R. program were comprised of three major components. These included the student portfolio, the formal report issued by the teachers, and the student-led parent conference. Our concern was that if we were not giving

marks/grades to our students, how could we provide the necessary student progress information to parents. Our formal reporting procedures were designed to inform by having all of the stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) take an active, rather than traditionally passive, involvement in the reporting process.

### Student Portfolios

Each student in the S.O.A.R. class was responsible for maintaining an individual student portfolio, which contained information related to the type of work they were doing and the quality of that work. We were unfamiliar with the procedures for creating a student portfolio, and as a result we researched the topic as thoroughly as possible. We did this by visiting two schools who were using portfolios with their students, one of which was a junior high and one of which was an elementary school. We struck a dialogue with anyone within the school division who had been reading or working on the portfolios. We also went to conferences and took in sessions related to student portfolioing. Another means of gathering information was to research literature regarding student portfolios. All of this led us to strengthen our resolve regarding the importance of portfolios as a medium for parents to understand what their children were doing and to place more of the responsibility for demonstrating progress in the hands of the student.

The portfolios while student based, were teacher structured. Initially (in our first year) this happened because we had never attempted them before and we were looking for structure to help us and the students with the process. Later, parents and students became comfortable with the structure, and the process became a permanent part of our assessment procedures. Typically, a wide cross-section of subject and curricular material would be included, and the portfolio was seen as a snapshot of the students performance. Student portfolios were presented, by students, to parents at each of the three student-led parent conferences during the course of the year.

The student portfolio consisted of several components. In the front of the student portfolio was a menu. Menu items varied according to our needs in assessing student work for each school term (Appendix #2). The structure and content requirements for the portfolio were

built into the portfolio menu. Students were required to follow the menu when structuring their portfolio, however, they were able to select the material which would be presented.

A critical component of the students' initial portfolios (grade 7) was the introduction of their parents, an explanation of what the portfolios was, as well as information related to work habits and goal setting for the term (Appendix #3). This process changed somewhat through each of the three years (Appendix #4), however the major principles behind it remained consistent. Students got into the habit of introducing their parents at each interview whether they had been asked to or not.

Typically, the initial portfolio submissions of the year included information related to goal setting for the current year, along with subject related elements. The second portfolio submission was often more general, an update of progress. The final portfolio submission of the year contained an additional component which included a reflection on their current year and goals for the following year (Appendix #5). There was a separate reflection for physical education included each term and a final summary for the end of the year (Appendix #6).

For each of the subject items a student selected, for their portfolio, they were required to complete a personal reflection sheet related to it (Appendix #7). The theory behind this was that students, during the course of the student-led parents conferences, discussed their work with a parent using a predetermined format which was consistent for each submission. It was critical to us that students gave thought to and talked about their work rather than just showing it. It is important to note here that as our students matured and as they became increasingly comfortable with the portfolio process, the portfolio process itself matured and changes were made with each successive portfolio. For example, the reflection sheet for grade 9 changed from the one that was used during the grade 7 and 8 school year (Appendix #8). However, again the initial underlying principles of the portfolio and the general content remained the same throughout the grades 7, 8 and 9. By the end of the school year the compilation which was their personal portfolio became an excellent album of progress. Student portfolios became an integral part of our overall student assessment process. With each successive term entry, students were able to see improvements that

they had made to their work. The quality of their portfolios and their ability to represent themselves and their progress through their portfolios evolved throughout the three years.

### The Formal Teachers' Report

It was our contention, during S.O.A.R. planning phase, that the student portfolio and interview process would not be enough to inform parents as to the progress of their child. As part of our program we were eliminating the traditional marks-based structure that most parents had grown up with and were used to having in our school. We felt that it was incumbent upon us to provide adequate student progress information from our professional prospective. This process began with a great deal of trust from our parents in terms of our abilities to assess the progress of their children.

Once again we were required to research information in our creation of a non-marks based report format. The big question was, "How would we provide information for parents which was complete enough to afford a clear understanding of progress, while ensuring a format with which parents would feel comfortable?" It became evident that the teachers' report was only one part of a larger context which was reporting. This meant that all of the parts, the student portfolio, the student-led parent conference, and the teachers' report were not mutually exclusive. They were all necessary in order to provide a complete picture of student progress. Thus, the involvement of the stakeholders (parents, teachers and student) was crucial to a successful understanding of student progress.

The teachers' report was predicated on our view that there were two critical components to student assessment. The first and most traditional, was the meeting of curricular requirements. "Did the student successfully complete the requirements for the subject, for the grade level?" Secondly, we believed that it was necessary to formally present information related to performance skills. More specifically, the kinds of things that, from our research and beliefs, made a good student and an effective contributor to the overall learning community.

The formal teachers' report thus consisted of two parts. The performance skills evaluation page (Appendix #9) was loosely based on a format and on information we had acquired at a Outcomes-Based Evaluation conference presented by the High Success Network. The foundations for our format were based more specifically on the outcomes, as set out in the strategic plan, established by the Yellowhead School Division;

- effective communicator
- critical thinker
- creative thinker
- competent problem solver
- team participant

We also considered our personal beliefs, based on our extensive experience with junior high students, as to what performance skills were necessary as part of our assessment of students. The format for the performance skills evaluation remained the same for grades 7 and 8, however it was modified slightly for the grade 9 year (Appendix #10).

The individual subject reports were contained in two parts. The first was a listing of curricular objectives which had been met during the term (sample: Appendix #11). The second was an anecdotal report (Appendix #12) completed by the teachers for each subject. These anecdotal reports commented on student progress and areas of concern or excellence. The details of this anecdotal report were to be discussed during the student-led parent conference in order to provide a complete understanding of the information contained. This two part subject related anecdotal report was used for grades 7 and 8. For the grade 9 year a new format was struck (Appendix #13) which melded both components of the original subject report into one that endeavored to provide information related to the successful completion of general curricular objectives and anecdotal comment.

We also realized that the term reports that we used for terms one (November) and two (March) would not be sufficient as a final report (June). We found it necessary to develop a final report which would be more summative in nature, that is to say, it would provide parents with a

picture of the student's progress for the year. The format we decide upon took aspects of the curriculum and generalized them into manageable and understandable components related to each subject (appendix #14). These subject related reports along with a performance skills evaluation sheet, filled out as to sum up the years development, were used as the final teachers' report for the year. The format of the final assessment remained the same for grades 7 and 8, however, the format of the individual subject reports changed somewhat for grade 9 (appendix # 15).

Part of our final report was a recommendation for grade promotion based on whether the student had passed, placed or failed, according to the teachers. According to the school student handbook the categories are defined as;

Passed - The student has completed the necessary work and skill development and warrants promotion to the following grade.

Placed - The student has failed to complete all the necessary work and aspects of skill development may be in question, however with applied effort the student may be capable of completing the following grade and increasing skill development.

Failed - The student has failed to complete the necessary work and skill development required for the grade, therefore the student does not warrant a pass or placement in the following grade.

The Grande Yellowhead Regional Division, has a policy of age appropriate placement. As a result student retention is a decision left in the hands of parents, in consultation with the school administration.

### Student-led Parent Conferences

One of the most powerful aspects of our formal student assessment procedures was the implementation of student-led parent conferences. It was our contention that in order to create a true learning community, within our classroom, it was important that all stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) in that community be involved. From our experience in traditional

classrooms within our school, we had become aware that parents took far too passive a role in the education of their children.

### Traditional Parent -Teacher Interviews

Traditionally, a computer generated marks/grades based report card had been sent home with the student and within a short period of time afterwards parent-teacher interviews occurred. The process for the parent-teacher interviews involved circling the teachers around the perimeter of the gymnasium and having parents attempt to see the teachers who taught their child. Generally, interviews occurred on a Thursday evening from 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. and Friday morning from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 a.m. and took place twice per year (fall and spring). Typically, if a teacher taught 150 students, they were lucky if they saw fifty parents. Most of the parents that we did see were generally ones who took an active interest in their child's education and, while it was great to see them they were not necessarily the parents with whom we really felt a need to meet. Parent-teacher interview attendance was voluntary on the part of parents and a majority chose to opt out. Another factor of the traditional parent-teacher interview, that was of concern to us, was the fact that only on very rare occasions did the child accompany the parent to interviews. It was our belief, during the development of our S.O.A.R. student assessment process, that parents were the "primary educators" of their children and therefore must be actively involved in their child's educational progress. It was also our view that if discussions on the educational progress of students were taking place, that not only was it important for the student to be present but it was their right and obligation. The result of this was our development and implementation of the student-led parent conference.

### Suggestions for Change

In consultation with the school administration we had devised procedures for student assessment which included the three components of, student portfolios, teachers' reports and student-led parent conferences. While typically there had been four formal reporting periods per

year, we quickly found out during the course of our first year (1993-94) that with our S.O.A.R. program three reporting periods was the optimum number. We were granted permission to have trimester based system that became school wide the following year. As part of our commitment to the notion of student-led parent conferences we had decided that we would hold three sets of conferences corresponding to each term (November, March and June).

Based on our belief that parents and students must be actively involved with teachers in the learning and assessment process, we made a decision that it would be mandatory for all parents and students to attend the student-led parent conferences. We did this by informing parents that the report card (formal teachers' reports) would only be available upon attendance at the student-led parent conference. There would be nothing sent home if a parent did not attend the conference. In order to meet the needs of parents, we were willing to be as flexible as possible in terms of setting up conference times.

#### Student-Led Parent Conference Scheduling

As mentioned, there were three student-led parent conferences held per year, corresponding to each of the three school terms. Near or at the end of each term we set aside two weeks which were to be used as our conference period. Typically, conferences were held each evening, Monday through Thursday from approximately 4:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.. This was not a fixed format, times changed according to the needs of teachers and parents. If parents requested conferences during the day, because of our three teacher format, we were able to accommodate them. Essentially, we set a schedule for the times that we (the teachers) were available for conferences, making every attempt to create blocks of time, then a parent volunteer phoned all parents and scheduled them in for a conference time. Once this had been completed, prepared the necessary materials and divide up the interviews among us. Conferences were scheduled for one-half hour and were held in our classroom, with three to four occurring simultaneously. For the most part, unless we deemed it a conference of critical need, not all three

teachers sat in on all conferences. This arose as a result of the need to make the best use of our time.

In March of 1994 (grade 7) we made a decision to try a set of conferences with all teachers present for each conference. It took us almost a month, nearly every evening, to complete the series. Our realization was that this was too time intensive and we had to divide the conferences among us. This process worked well for us. Parents were given the option of requesting all three of the teachers should they felt a need. Also, because we held our interviews in our classroom, at the same time, if a parent wished to see one of the other teachers an arrangement could be made immediately. For parents who were unable to attend we were prepared to visit them in their home to have a conference (this did not happen). Parents who missed their conference were re-scheduled by having the student telephone the parent from our classroom and arrange another time. Every opportunity was made to have student-led parent conferences arranged at the parent's convenience.

The student-led parent conference itself was divided into two parts. The first part was the student's presentation of their portfolio. Parents and teachers occasionally interjected to ask for clarification or to ask direct questions of the student. The second part of the interview included the teachers' assessment of the student's progress. This is where the formal teacher's report was presented and discussed.

### Results

We were not prepared for the powerful results of the student-led parent conference. While initially, students were shy and found it difficult to talk about themselves, they soon gained confidence and were able to dialogue about their learning in a confident manner. Many parents reported to us that, for them, this was the first time that their child had spoken to them about their learning in any significant way. As one parent commented, "Usually when I've asked him what he has been doing in school he has replied, "nothing", and when I've asked how he was doing in school he would have replied, "O.K."." Most parents responded in similar ways, for the most part

one-half hour three times per year seemed to be a reasonable commitment for them and they were generally satisfied with the results.

Having the student at the center of this conferencing process had some unexpected results. During the conference the student always presented first. What tended to happen was that students “spilled their guts” so to speak well before the teacher had an opportunity to present. If they had been talking too much in class, getting behind in their assignments, or been involved in anything else that may have interfered with their learning they most often told parents themselves. This was usually followed by some informal goal setting, related to how they might improve. When these issues showed up in the formal teachers’ report there was very little need for added explanation from the teacher. Shy students became more comfortable, and in many ways more outgoing, with each successive student-led parent conference. Overall, students seemed to gain a measure of confidence in their ability to identify patterns in their learning and in the ability to discuss their learning in a meaningful way.

The process was not successful for all students. Our reluctant learners were very intimidated by the student-led parent conference. It was sometimes difficult for them to complete their portfolio, due to a lack of work, thus they were not eager to make presentation to their parents. Some students simply did not want to have to make a presentation to their parents or their teachers. These were not the shy students, but rather the students who wished to shun the authority of their parents and teachers. A few parents showed up to the conference without their child. While we were prepared to talk to the parents, arrangements were made to re-schedule so that the student could be part of the process and make their own presentations. If a student did not show up to the conference, and if alternate arrangements could not be made for parent(s) to come in, then at a later time a surrogate was used for student’s portfolio presentation. A parent or school administrator volunteered to sit with the child as they presented their portfolio. The student was not excluded from this obligation simply because they had not attended the scheduled conference.

### Parent Involvement

During the course of the S.O.A.R. program attendance at student-led parent conferences was approximately 98%. Occasionally we had parents who did not want to attend a term conference for one reason or another, that right we considered to be theirs. During the course of three years there were the parents of one student who had refused to come in. They did not attend even one of the student-led parent conferences and nor was any information regarding progress forwarded to them. The student made portfolio presentations to the surrogate and we discussed their progress with them.

With our initial foray into a new strategy of assessment we knew that informing parents of our intentions was critical. In September of 1993, we held a meeting to outline the procedures of our student assessment structure. Also, a newsletter (Appendix #16) was sent out to parents near the beginning of the first student-led parent conferences. This newsletter outlined information related to student portfolios and student-led parent conferences. It also explained, to parents, what they should expect and asked them to be patient with us (teachers and students), as what we were developing was part of a three year process.

As part of our goal to create a learning community, parent feedback was very important. After our first set of conferences (November 1993), we issued a "Parent Reflections" form (Appendix #17) which asked parents for their input and reflections on our formal reporting procedures. The information was gathered and used to improve the format. After the initial reflections form was completed we did not issue it again, however, we did keep anecdotal records of parent comments during the course of conferences to help us refine the process.

The combination of student portfolios, our formal teachers' report format and student-led parent conferences resulted in a student assessment structure which worked well for our classroom. Student accountability in the learning process and active parent participation were just a few of the benefits of the procedures which we implemented. Another benefit was that as teachers, once we moved away from our traditional marks/grades based evaluation system and in

combination with the principles and structures of the S.O.A.R. program, we came to know our students better as learners.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The S.O.A.R. (Striving to Obtain Academic Richness) program, an innovative program at our junior high school, was an opportunity for us to look at alternative methods of program delivery and alternatives to traditional student assessment. As illustrated earlier, for us, program and assessment were inseparable. The principles of program delivery were intertwined with student assessment and vice versa. There is little question in our minds as to the power of this type of student assessment. The opportunity for increased student, parent and teacher interaction can only have a positive impact on learning. Through the development and evolution of the S.O.A.R. project, the accountability of teachers, parents and students became evident.

This was a three year process of student development. Teachers felt compelled to provide more opportunities for students, to better understand them as learners, and to refine student assessment and development. Parents became more actively involved in their child's education than had been previously seen under our traditional system. Students became more responsible for their own learning, and gained a measure of personal growth by being able to communicate that learning.

Not everything worked as well as we would have liked. The idea of 100% assignment completion, while idealistically sound, did not work out in reality. There were students who chose not to do all of their assignments, and a few who chose to do very little, despite the best efforts of teachers and parents. This is seen as a challenge for the future. As well, it was previously mentioned that not all parents attended every student-led parent conference. While we would have liked to have had full attendance, we were generally satisfied with the commitment of our parents. Despite its misgivings, there was more interaction amongst stakeholders than had ever happened at Jubilee school.

All in all, we have endeavored to think differently about teaching and learning. For us, a significant component of that transformation has been in our approach to student assessment. It has been a growth experience for teachers, parents and students, and the creation of a learning

community came with both positive and negative risks. Accepting the challenges of the program have been a benefit to all the stakeholders, for we understand that there may be a different way.

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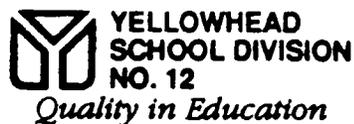
## APPENDICES

# **Yellowhead School Division #12**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 1993 - 1998**

**Dare to Dream**

**November 11 - 13, 1992**



**YELLOWHEAD SCHOOL DIVISION #12**

**WE BELIEVE:**

- Each individual is unique
- Each individual can learn
- In the worth of each individual
- Learning is a lifelong process
- Learning occurs in different ways and at different rates
- In holistic learning
- Each individual has the right to a safe and secure environment
- The community has the responsibility and the right to participate in the learning process
- The parent is the primary educator of the child.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to inspire all students to develop a passion for learning and to become socially responsible citizens in a changing society.

Our commitment is to provide relevant challenging, life-based learning opportunities in union with the community.

Yellowhead School Division will issue an educational guarantee when competency has been demonstrated.\*

\* This last statement did not receive consensus and will again be discussed on November 28, 1992 at 1 PM at the Education Services Center. Strategies will also be finalized at this time.

## STATEMENT OF VALUES

We believe that our statement of values is consistent with those held by the majority of people in the Yellowhead community as well as in our school Division. We commit ourselves to the following values which are reflected in our daily activities.

- **PASSION FOR LEARNING**  
To stir the heart to awaken the joy and excitement of learning.
- **CARING FOR OTHERS**  
To promote genuine concern for and healthy relationships with others.
- **RESPECT**  
Esteem for self, others, and the environment
- **EXCELLENCE**  
The pursuit of personal excellence through continuous lifelong improvement
- **INTEGRITY**  
To Strive for fairness, sincerity and honor in all interactions
- **HONESTY**  
Freedom from deception
- **WORK ETHIC**  
To inspire individuals to be responsible and accountable for personal excellence
- **ADAPTABILITY**  
To dynamically and progressively respond to change
- **CREATIVITY**  
To nurture originality and innovation
- **TEAM LEARNING**  
To foster cooperation toward synergistic outcomes

**LIFE-BASED OUTCOMES THAT WILL DRIVE ALL LEARNING IN  
THE YELLOWHEAD SCHOOL DIVISION**

- **Effective Communicator**
- **Critical Thinker**
- **Creative Thinker**
- **Competent Problem Solver**
- **Responsible Citizen**

## Portfolio Menu

1. Title Page
2. Portfolio Menu
3. Meet This Person
4. Selected Piece of Written Work and Reflection
5. Selected Lab and Reflection
6. Selected Piece of Math Work and Reflection
7. Selected Sample of Note Writing and Reflection
8. Personally Selected Piece of Work and Reflection

## MENU

1. Introduction Sheet
2. Reflection Sheet "This Year/Last Year"
3. Reflection Sheet - Creative Writing Assignment
4. Reflection Sheet - Math Assignments
  - a) Whole Numbers
  - b) Integers
  - c) Math Test
5. Reflection Sheet - Science Assignments
  - a) Science Lab
  - b) Science Test
6. Reflection Sheet - Theme (Unit) Work
  - a) Journeys
  - b) Mystery
7. Reflection Sheet - Set of Notes (example of writing)
8. P.E. Summary
9. Reading Record Sheet
7. Resume with Cover Letter
8. The Piece of Work of My Choice
9. P.E. Summary for the Final Term/Year

**Introductions:**

Mom and/or Dad, this is \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher's name

\_\_\_\_\_ these are my parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher's name

\_\_\_\_\_

**The Portfolio:**

1. What is a portfolio? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Explain your title page. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Explain the "Meet This Person". \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**The Student:**

What kind of student are you? (How have you been working in class?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Discuss the contents of your portfolio with your parent(s).

# My Portfolio

## Introductions

Mom and/or Dad, this is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Teacher's name

\_\_\_\_\_ this is my Mom and/or Dad  
Teacher's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent(s) name

### **The Portfolio:**

This is my portfolio it is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **My Goal(s) for 1994-95:**

My goal(s) for 1994-95 are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## THIS YEAR/LAST YEAR, A REFLECTION

1. Things that are better for me this year include:

---

---

---

---

---

2. Things that are difficult for me this year include:

---

---

---

---

---

3. How I am doing in my assignment completion is:

---

---

---

4. The kind of student that I think that I have been is:

---

---

---

**Reflections on My Grade 8 Year**

1. The areas where I feel I have improved in the most include;

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---

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---

2. The areas where I feel that I still have some difficulty include;

---

---

---

---

3. The skills that I feel I have gained include;

---

---

---

---

4. The type of student I have been this year is;

---

---

5. How I have changed as a student this year include;

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---

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**My Goals for 1995-96 - Grade 9**

1. The goals that I set for myself as a student in Grade 9 include;

---

---

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---

---

2. Some of the things that I would like to do (learn or pursue) next year include;

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---

3. Things that I could do over the summer to help maintain my skills include;

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---

**P.E. Summary**

1. The types of things that we have done in P.E. the last interview;

---

---

---

---

---

2. My participation in has been;

---

---

---

---

3. In P.E. this year I feel that I have gained or improved skills related to the following athletic activities (identify the skill you've learned);

---

---

---

---

4. My goal for P.E. next year is;

---

---

---

## *Reflecting on My Work*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Piece: \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this piece because: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

The strengths of this piece are: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

If I were going to redo this piece now, I would: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

## Reflecting on My Work

Title of Piece: \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this piece because: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

List Two (2) strengths of this piece: \_\_\_\_\_

---

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---

---

List two (2) improvements which could be made to this piece: \_\_\_\_\_

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## S.O.A.R. PERFORMANCE SKILLS EVALUATION

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Reporting Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**D** - Demonstrated  
**I** - Requires Improvement  
**N/A** - Not applicable at this time

<u><b>INTERACTION:</b></u>	<b>D</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>COMMENTS:</b>
Cooperation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Working with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Communication				
- written	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
- oral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

**DAILY PERFORMANCE SKILLS:**

Meets Deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Positive Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Respects Others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Respects Property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Takes Positive Risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Self-Starter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Responsible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Takes Responsibility for Learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Takes Advantage of Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

**QUALITY PRODUCER:**

Sets High Quality Standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Meets High Quality Standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Seeks Continued Improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**S.O.A.R. STUDENT PROGRESS ASSESSMENT**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**D - Skill/Attitude Demonstrated**  
**I - Increased Effort Required**  
**N/A - Not Applicable at this time**

**INTERACTION:**

**COMMENTS:**

Cooperation	D	I	N/A	_____
Working with others	D	I	N/A	_____
Uses acceptable language	D	I	N/A	_____
Listens attentively	D	I	N/A	_____
Shows leadership qualities	D	I	N/A	_____

**DAILY PERFORMANCE SKILLS:**

Meets deadlines	D	I	N/A	_____
Attends class on time	D	I	N/A	_____
Positive attitude	D	I	N/A	_____
Respects others	D	I	N/A	_____
Respects properties	D	I	N/A	_____
Self-starter	D	I	N/A	_____
Comes prepared to class	D	I	N/A	_____
Seeks help when needed	D	I	N/A	_____
Organization skills	D	I	N/A	_____
Takes Responsibility for learning	D	I	N/A	_____
Participates in free reading opportunities	D	I	N/A	_____

**QUALITY PRODUCER:**

Sets high quality standards	D	I	N/A	_____
Meets high quality standards	D	I	N/A	_____
Seeks continued improvement	D	I	N/A	_____
Completes homework regularly	D	I	N/A	_____
Uses class time effectively	D	I	N/A	_____
Effective group worker	D	I	N/A	_____

**CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES COVERED TO DATE**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting period: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MATH**

- \* Review of place values
  - \* Review of rounding
  - \* Percent of a number
  - \* Writing three forms of ratios
  - \* When and how to represent data
  - \* Rounding decimals
  - \* Identifying ratios as ordered pairs
  - \* Order of Operations
  - \* One number as percent of another
  - \* Define proportions
  - \* Linear measurement
  - \* Data collection using tally sheets
  - \* Interpreting bar graphs
- 
- 

**SCIENCE**

- \* Observing variations between major groupings of organisms by identifying and describing common features and differences between groups of living things
  - \* Recognize, describe, and evaluate structural adaptation of plants and animals
  - \* Recognize the need for organisms to sense and respond to specific environmental conditions and identify examples of stimulus response linkages of organisms, distinguishing between instinctive and learned responses
  - \* Identify examples of behavioral adaptations
  - \* Making inferences based on observations of living things
  - \* Monitoring and measuring
  - \* Appreciation of the adaptive value of structural and behavioral characteristics of plants and animals
  - \* Designing structures to serve a given function
  - \* Predict changes in material due to heat and cooling
  - \* Predict the final temperature produced by mixing measured volumes of water at different temperatures
  - \* Measuring temperatures
  - \* Respect precision in measurement
  - \* Recognize the importance of searching for heat sources to replace fossil fuels
- 
- 

**LANGUAGE LEARNING**

- \* Independently read and write and discuss what they have read or written
  - \* Predict the probable content or events in a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts, using a variety of clues
  - \* Formulate hypotheses relating to probable outcomes
  - \* Recognize that the purpose for reading or listening (pleasure, information or ideas) influences the strategy used
  - \* Select and write on topics of interest to unfamiliar audiences
  - \* Use guide words to locate information in dictionaries
  - \* Use visual cues in conjunction with print to make sense of their reading (charts, pictures, illustrations, maps, posters, graphs)
  - \* Concentrate on expression and creation in their initial writing drafts
  - \* Adapt, change or rearrange ideas in response to feedback received during development of initial writing drafts
  - \* Recognize how point of view (their own and a speaker's or writer's) influences communication
  - \* Identify a writer's or speaker's underlying theme
  - \* Differentiate between important ideas and supporting details in their reading and listening
  - \* Summarize and paraphrase information and ideas on a particular topic from several sources
  - \* Focus their talk on important ideas related to topics, themes or concepts and provide support for the ideas
  - \* Respond to the writing of their peers by singling out effective elements of style, development, organization or content
  - \* Share personal responses and interpretations of what they hear or read
  - \* Question or respond to others in collaborative learning settings
  - \* Develop a logically supported argument for formal presentations
- 
-

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

- \* **Concepts:**
    - communication
    - language
    - community
    - socialization
    - institutions
    - behaviour
    - beliefs/values
    - laws
    - conformity
    - role
    - customs
    - individuality
    - identity
  - \* Identify possible sources and location of information
  - \* Acquire information to find answers to questions through listening, observing, reading and utilizing community resources
  - \* Identify relationships among variables within charts, graphs and tables
  - \* Identify the purpose, message and intended audience of visual communications
  - \* Read and interpret maps to identify relationships between geography and culture
  - \* Determine values underlying a position
  - \* Converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small group, and whole class
  - \* Observe the courtesies of group discussion, such as speaking in turn, using appropriate tone and giving feedback in a non-threatening manner
  - \* Contribute to the group and group processes - staying on topic, extending the ideas of others, paraphrasing and working toward a consensus or decision
  - \* Respect for the rights, needs, opinions and concerns of self and others
  - \* Appreciation for the need for cooperation in group work and community life
  - \* Willingness to contribute to group efforts and accept group decisions
  - \* Confidence in expressing their own ideas
- 
- 

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- \* The development of a strong body
  - \* The development of a wholesome interest in physical activities for wise and constructive use of leisure time
  - \* The development of desirable standards of behaviour and the ability to get along with others
  - \* The development of:
    - rules and officiating
    - selection and care of equipment
    - skills and techniques
    - team play and strategies
    - terminology
  - \* Volleyball:
    - position, volleying, setting, forearm pass
    - serving (underhand)
- 
- 

**HEALTH**

- \* Understanding the nature of self-concept
  - \* Understanding and appreciating the importance of developing a positive self-concept
  - \* Understanding the impact of individual growth and change
  - \* Understanding the importance of privacy
  - \* Understanding and appreciating relationships with friends
  - \* Understanding the varied expectations of junior high school
  - \* Recognizing services available to students
  - \* Understanding the importance of safety and emergency procedures when dealing with emergencies or injuries
- 
-

**TEACHER REPORTS RE: STUDENT PROGRESS**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Reporting period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MATH**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SCIENCE**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**LANGUAGE LEARNING**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**HEALTH**

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**S.O.A.R. SKILLS PROGRESS REPORT**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**AB** - Above grade level**D** - Demonstrated skill**A** - At grade level**I** - Requires increased effort**B** - Below grade level**N/A** - Not applicable at this time**SCIENCE: ( AB A B )****DIVERSITY OF LIVING THINGS:**

- |  |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|-----|
| - demonstrate awareness of the diversity of forms of life and in structures                | D | I | N/A |
| - identify special adaptations of animals  | D | I | N/A |
| - describe the process of selective breeding and its use to enhance desirable traits       | D | I | N/A |
| - construct and use a dichotomous key  | D | I | N/A |
| - describe the Linnean classification system, its taxonomic levels and its advantages      | D | I | N/A |
| - define the intended meaning of the word species, identify problems in its interpretation | D | I | N/A |
| - identify general features of major groups of living things                               | D | I | N/A |
| - identify and describe life cycles of plants and animals                                  | D | I | N/A |
| - recognizing patterns and discrepant events and asking questions about them               | D | I | N/A |
| - observing and describing variation and distribution within a group of living things      | D | I | N/A |
| - classifying by use of a dichotomous key  | D | I | N/A |
| - awareness and appreciation of the diversity and interrelatedness of life forms           | D | I | N/A |

**CONTROLLING HEAT:**

- |  |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|-----|
| - distinguish between heat and temperature / define temperature in particle theory terms                                       | D | I | N/A |
| - infer heat gain or heat loss and identify these heat transfers in terms of joules  | D | I | N/A |
| - predict and interpret temperature change in relation to specific heat and compare the specific heat of various substances    | D | I | N/A |
| - interpret conduction in terms of the particle theory, compare conduction rates, and identify applications of heat conduction | D | I | N/A |
| - predict flow patterns of fluids, interpret heat convection   | D | I | N/A |
| - identify and interpret examples of heat radiation and factors affecting radiation rates                                      | D | I | N/A |
| - identify the purpose and specific requirements for solving heat problems   | D | I | N/A |

**GENERAL SKILLS:**

- |  |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|-----|
| - lab write-ups are of consistent high quality | D | I | N/A |
|--|---|---|-----|

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

**MATH: ( AB A B )****NUMBER SYSTEMS**

- |   |   |   |     |
|---|---|---|-----|
| - understands and is able to perform calculations with: |   |   |     |
| * exponents   | D | I | N/A |
| * constructions   | D | I | N/A |
| * Pythagorean theorem                                   | D | I | N/A |

**MEASUREMENT AND GEOMETRY**

- |  |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|-----|
| - understands and is able to manipulate geometric tools involving: |   |   |     |
| * constructions  | D | I | N/A |

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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**LANGUAGE ARTS: ( AB A B )****WRITTEN WORK**

- the student is able to make effective use of the following:
  - \* capitalization D I N/A
  - \* punctuation D I N/A
  - \* paragraph structure D I N/A
  - \* sentence structure D I N/A
  - \* language mechanics (grammar, etc.) D I N/A
  - \* follows guidelines for assignment completion D I N/A
  - \* editing skills D I N/A
  - \* completing a quality final draft D I N/A
- the student can successfully write an essay D I N/A
- the student is able to answer questions based on a novel "The Wild Children" D I N/A
- the student is able to define vocabulary from context based on a novel D I N/A

**READING SKILLS**

- reads at an acceptable level D I N/A
- uses free reading time effectively D I N/A
- the student is able to read and comprehend information from a novel D I N/A

**COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**SOCIAL STUDIES: ( AB A B )**

- able to read and construct maps D I N/A
- able to gather and organize information D I N/A
- able to evaluate and utilize information D I N/A
- able to effectively take notes D I N/A
- displays an understanding of the concepts involving:
  - \* Early Russian History D I N/A
  - \* Centrally Planned Economies D I N/A
- works well in groups on S.S. related topics D I N/A
- able to communicate clearly and concisely D I N/A

**COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION: ( AB A B )**

- shows a positive attitude D I N/A
- participates daily D I N/A
- always changes into appropriate P.E. clothing D I N/A
- participates well in all activities D I N/A
- is an effective team player D I N/A
- demonstrates appropriate sportsmanship D I N/A
- able to perform required skills D I N/A
- understands and follows the basic rules of the sport D I N/A

**COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATH SKILLS EVALUATION**

**Final Report 1993 - 1994**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Whole Numbers				
Fractions				
Decimals				
Algebra				
Geometry				
Problem Solving				
Rate, Ratio & %				
Integers				
Measurement				
Data Management				

Grade 7 Math Overall Performance				
----------------------------------	--	--	--	--

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SCIENCE SKILLS EVALUATION**

**Final Report 1993 - 1994**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b>Science Process Skills:</b>				
Questioning				
Proposing Ideas				
Designing Experiments				
Gathering Evidence				
Processing Evidence				
Interpreting Evidence				
<b>Technological Problem Solving:</b>				
Understanding the Problem				
Developing a Plan				
Carrying Out the Plan				
Evaluating				
<b>Scientific Attitudes:</b>				
Critical-mindedness				
Suspended Judgement				
Respect for Evidence				
Honesty				
Objectivity				
Willingness to Change				
Open-mindedness				
Questioning Attitude				

Grade 7 Science Overall Performance				
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COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Details:

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**Scientific Process Skills**

1. **Questioning** (identifying questions and defining problems)
  2. **Proposing ideas** (hypothesizing and predicting)
  3. **Designing experiments** (identifying and controlling variables and determining procedures)
  4. **Observing and measuring** (gathering evidence)
  5. **Processing evidence** (classifying and organizing and displaying evidence)
  6. **Interpreting evidence** (inferring and formulating models)
- 

---

**Technological Problem Solving**

1. **Understanding the problem**
  2. **Developing the plan** (identifying the alternatives and planning and designing)
  3. **Carrying out the plan** (testing the design and trouble shooting)
  4. **Evaluating** (evaluating the design and evaluating the planning process)
- 

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**Scientific Attitudes**

1. **Critical-mindedness** (looks for consistency and challenges the validity of statements)
  2. **Suspended judgment** (recognizes the restricted nature of evidence and scientific concepts)
  3. **Respect for evidence** (looks for evidence through an empirical approach)
  4. **Honesty** (reports all evidence and acknowledges the work of others)
  5. **Objectivity** (considers pros and cons and all the evidence available)
  6. **Willingness to change** (alters hypotheses, interpretations, inferences and concepts)
  7. **Open-mindedness** (considers several possible alternatives when investigating a problem)
  8. **Questioning attitudes** (asks many questions: how, who, where, when and why)
-

**SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS EVALUATION**

**Final Report 1994 - 1995**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b>PROCESS SKILLS:</b>				
Identify & Define Topics				
Geography skills				
Note Taking/Webbing				
Gather & Organize Data				
Analyze & Evaluate Data				

Grade 8 Social Studies Overall Performance				
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COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS EVALUATION****Final Report 1994 - 1995**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b>Speaking Skills:</b>				
Exploratory Talk				
Group Discussion				
Appropriate Language				
Ability to Speak				
<b>Listening Skills:</b>				
Effective Listening				
Point of View				
Understanding Concepts				
Comprehension				
Evaluation				
<b>Viewing Skills:</b>				
Understanding Purpose & Message				
Evaluation				
Critical Viewing				
<b>Writing Skills:</b>				
Generating Ideas				
Organization				
Effective Editing				
Spelling				
Use of Language				
Sentence Construction				
Paragraph Construction				

Criteria	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b>Reading Skills:</b>				
Reading Ability				
Comprehension				
Predicting				
Evaluating				

Grade 8 Language Arts Overall Performance				
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COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Math Skills Evaluation**

**Final Report 1995 - 1996**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Whole Numbers and Integers				
Rational Numbers				
Ratio and Proportion				
Measurement & Geometry				
Algebra				
Data Management				
Problem Solving				
<b>Grade 9 Math - Overall Performance</b>				

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Science Skills Evaluation**

**Final Report 1995 - 1996**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b><i>SCIENCE PROCESS SKILLS:</i></b>				
Questioning				
Proposing Ideas				
Designing Experiments				
Gathering Evidence				
Processing Evidence				
Interpreting Evidence				
<b><i>TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEM SOLVING</i></b>				
Understanding the Problem				
Developing a Plan				
Carrying Out the Plan				
Evaluating				
<b><i>SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDES:</i></b>				
Critical Mindedness				
Suspended Judgement				
Respect for Evidence				
Honesty				
Objectivity				
Open-Mindedness				
Questioning Attitude				
<b>Grade 9 Science - Overall Performance</b>				

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Scientific Process Skills**

1. **Questioning** (identifying questions and defining problems)
  2. **Proposing ideas** (hypothesizing and predicting)
  3. **Designing experiments** (identifying and controlling variables and determining procedures)
  4. **Observing and measuring** (gathering evidence)
  5. **Processing evidence** (classifying and organizing and displaying evidence)
  6. **Interpreting evidence** (inferring and formulating models)
- 

**Technological Problem Solving**

1. **Understanding the problem**
  2. **Developing the plan** (identifying the alternatives and planning and designing)
  3. **Carrying out the plan** (testing the design and trouble shooting)
  4. **Evaluating** (evaluating the design and evaluating the planning process)
- 

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**Scientific Attitudes**

1. **Critical-mindedness** (looks for consistency and challenges the validity of statements)
  2. **Suspended judgment** (recognizes the restricted nature of evidence and scientific concepts)
  3. **Respect for evidence** (looks for evidence through an empirical approach)
  4. **Honesty** (reports all evidence and acknowledges the work of others)
  5. **Objectivity** (considers pros and cons and all the evidence available)
  6. **Willingness to change** (alters hypotheses, interpretations, inferences and concepts)
  7. **Open-mindedness** (considers several possible alternatives when investigating a problem)
  8. **Questioning attitudes** (asks many questions: how, who, where, when and why)
-

**Social Studies Skills Evaluation**

**Final Report 1995 - 1996**

Criteria:	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Identifying and Defining Topics				
Gathering and Organizing Data				
Analysis and Evaluation of Data				
Geography Skills				
Current Events Related Skills				
Note Taking / Webbing				
Comprehension of Social Studies Concepts				
Grade 9 Social Studies - Overall Performance				

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Language Arts Skills Evaluation**

**Final Report 1995 - 1996**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
<b><i>SPEAKING SKILLS:</i></b>				
Exploratory Talk (Questioning)				
Group Discussion				
Appropriate Language (Level)				
Ability to Speak				
<b><i>LISTENING SKILLS:</i></b>				
Effective Listener				
Able to Determine Point of View				
Understanding Concepts				
Comprehension				
<b><i>VIEWING SKILLS:</i></b>				
Understanding Purpose and Message				
Evaluating Viewed Material				
Critical Viewing Skills				
<b><i>WRITING SKILLS:</i></b>				
Generating Ideas (Content)				
Organization of Content				
Effective Editing				
Spelling				
Punctuation				
Use of Language				
Sentence Construction				
Paragraph Construction				
<b><i>READING SKILLS:</i></b>				
Reading Ability				
Reading Comprehension				
Predicting				
Evaluating				
<b>Grade 9 Language Arts - Overall Performance</b>				

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Education Skills Evaluation**

Appendix #15  
**Final Report 1995 - 1996**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:	Unable to Judge Due to Lack of Work	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Participation				
Positive Attitude				
Appropriate Change				
Team Player				
Sportsmanship				
Skill Development				
Understanding of the Sport with its Rules and Regulations				

Grade 9 Physical Education - Overall Performance				
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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# *The SOARUS*

## Parent Volunteers

One of the primary goals of the S.O.A.R. program is to provide parents with the opportunity to volunteer or visit the S.O.A.R. classroom in order to become directly involved in the learning process. To achieve this goal, each month a PARENT VOLUNTEER SURVEY is sent home with students. However, given to the number of surveys returned (about 1/3), it appears that many of these may not be making there way home. We encourage students to return them by providing the prize of a free lunch, drawn from the names of those who have returned their forms. If you have yet to see one of these....there will be another coming out at the end of November.

---

## Student Portfolios

Portfolios and portfolioing may be one of the best ways to encourage student success and achievement. Portfolios help students take an active role in their learning through ownership, responsibility, and pride in their growth towards goals.

Portfolios are not just a file of work samples. Each portfolio represents a story of an individual child's life at school. When a portfolio is shared, the image of the child as a learner emerges. The pieces chosen must reflect the student's growth and progress and the result is a more personal demonstration of development. Students play an active part in the selection of work which is contained in the portfolio. Students will also be required to reflect on the pieces chosen and their significance in the learning process.

A natural part of reflecting on one's work is goal setting and planning for learning. This helps student's to understand more about themselves as learners, to realize their strengths, and focus on areas to work on.

---

## Student-Led Parent Conferences

The purpose of the student-led parent conference is to have students accept responsibility for reporting their progress to their parents. Such goals as accountability for work produced, improving communication, learning organizational systems and increasing leadership skills are fundamental to learning.

The teacher's goal is to prepare and teach students the basic principles of accepting responsibility for the work they do at school.

The student's goal is to accept responsibility for reporting to parents how they are doing in school, the progress they are making. A secondary goal is to learn to communicate in a way which is understood and satisfying for themselves and the parents.

The goal is to help parents be involved in a meaningful way regarding their child's progress, and to help parents be supportive and encouraging of the child's efforts.

## What Should I Expect.....?

You should expect your child to do their best, and we are convinced that they will do the best they can. This is our first portfolio-conference session and we may need to wade into the water a little before we are ready to dive in. In other words...**please be patient with us**. Over time their portfolios will become more comprehensive and their ability to talk about it more precise and articulate.

The first conference should provide parents with a sense of what their child is doing. The strength is that during the next conference parents will be able to see, (in the portfolio) and the child will be able to explain, their growth as a learner. Using this concept, by year three of the portfolioing and conferencing process students would have a comprehensive summary of their work and growth as a learner as well as, the communication skills necessary to articulately explain their progress. We consider these to be valuable life skills.

All of this is not to say that the teacher will not have any comments to make, indeed we will be actively involved in discussing your child's progress.

---

## Our Belief

It is our belief that students have been left out of the evaluation process for too long. Traditional grading is something that is done to students and does not require them to think much about their own learning and progress. Portfolio assessment and student-led parent conferencing allows (perhaps forces) the student to become an active part of their own evaluation and thus their own learning. Through this process they are able to accurately chart and have direct input into the progress of their own learning. It forces them to think about...what it is they do.

---

## We Want to Hear From You

At the present time we are working on a unit entitled "The Environment: Whose responsibility is it?". The unit focuses on issues related to LAND, FORESTS, HUMANS, ANIMALS, WATER and AIR. If you have some expertise in one of these areas or ideas which we may use please contact us.

If you have any issues, questions or concerns related to any aspect of the program feel free to contact us at 723-5515, we'd be pleased to discuss any matters of importance.

---

***We are looking forward to seeing you at the student-led parent conference.***

## *Parent Reflections*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

We value parent input into the S.O.A.R. project. As a result we would like to provide you with the opportunity to respond to the Portfolio and Conferencing process. Your input regarding the following questions would be most appreciated.

### PORTFOLIOS

1. Would you like to have the opportunity to view the student portfolios before the interview?

Yes       No

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Did the portfolio provide you with a good idea of your child's ability and work?

Yes       No

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you like to have seen anything else included in the student portfolio?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No, it was quite adequate.

4. Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### CONFERENCING

1. Was the length of the conference appropriate?

Yes       No

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Would you like to have seen anything else included in the student conference?

Yes       No

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Other Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### OTHER

1. Are there any other issues or concerns related to any aspect of the S.O.A.R. program which you would like to comment on? (Please respond on the backside of this sheet)