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## **Studying and Assessing the Impact of Peer Mentoring on Students from Working Families: A View from Teachers' Perspectives**

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Studying and Assessing the Impact of Peer Mentoring on Students from Working Families: A

View from Teachers' Perspectives

Taylor Reynolds

University of Arkansas

### **Abstract**

This study focused on the impact that a specific after school peer-mentoring program had on students from working families based on their teachers' perspectives. The research surveyed teachers from a local elementary school who had students enrolled in the SOAR after school program. The teachers were interviewed, and data was collected and coded according to trends in responses. Teacher responses were then analyzed in a cross-case analysis to recognize trends among teacher responses in the categories of program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy among SOAR students. The research lasted one semester. Through the study, the data suggested that the SOAR after school peer-mentoring program had a positive impact on students from working families.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Peer mentoring can provide a valuable connection between younger elementary students and older college-aged students. For this reason, peer mentoring programs have been implemented into after school programs. After school programs with a peer mentoring emphasis aim to foster student growth through intentional relationships and guidance. Students from working family backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school early. By implementing peer-mentor based after school programs into these students' communities, programs are hoping to combat this dropout rate and improve student resilience and self-efficacy. The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families from teachers' perspective.

### **Background of the Problem**

Local Elementary School, located in one of the larger school districts in Northwest Arkansas, has 85% of their students reported as coming from low-income families (Home-Report Card, n.d.). At-risk youth is defined as, "Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, from minority groups, or whose parents are not directly involved in their education, are at risk for educational failure-either by failing to learn while in school or by dropping out of school altogether," (Kaufman and Bradbury, 1992, p. 1). The majority of Local Elementary's students fall into this at-risk category, making them a prime group to receive a peer mentoring after school program. Without some form of intervention, these students run the major risk of drop out at an early age. The goal of an after school program for these students is to give them a safe place to be while encouraging the development of twenty-first century skills and life skills. Through peer mentoring programs, students are given opportunities and resources to help build

character and develop life tools to help them be successful students and take a step into breaking their families' cycle of poverty. The idea is that at-risk students would grow in aspects of self-worth, self-efficacy, and resilience as a result of an after school peer mentoring program.

### **Definition of Terms**

To facilitate understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:

*Resilience* – the ability to thrive in the face of adversity and bounce back (Thomas, 2018).

*Peer Mentoring* – operationalized in this study is the form of mentorship that takes place between an older person who has lived through more life experiences and a younger person who is new to these experiences. The mentor serves a group of youth with longer-term contact, frequent contact, and specified program activities and locations (Saito and Blyth, 1992).

*Self-efficacy* – the belief we have in our own abilities to succeed, specifically our ability to meet the challenges ahead of us and complete a task successfully. (Ackerman, 2019). Having a strong sense of self.

*Grit* – Courage and determination despite difficulty; strength of character (Grit definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.)

*After School Program* – Operationalized in this study is a program that students participate in outside of the traditional school day.

*Working Family Student* - typically referred to as “at-risk students.” Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, from minority groups, or whose parents are not directly involved in their education, are at risk for educational failure-either by failing to learn while in school or by dropping out of school altogether,” (Kaufman and Bradbury, 1992, p. 88).

## **Purpose and Significance of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate from a teachers' perspective the impact peer mentoring has on students from working families. This study is designed to determine if students have an increased sense of self-efficacy and resilience as a result of being a part of an after school program like SOAR. Because after school programs enable students to believe in themselves more and build a stronger sense of resilience in the face of adversity, teachers and community members may encourage after school programs in order to help students who struggle with self-esteem and resilience be more successful. To date, no research has been conducted about the SOAR program's impact. This study will look at the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families from their teachers' perspectives. The research question that was addressed throughout the project was, "Does the SOAR peer mentoring program have an impact on students from working families from their teachers' perspective?" This study is of significance because there has been increasing awareness in the importance of students from working family backgrounds to have mentors in their lives as well as safe places to go after school. Regionally, this study is of significance as Local Elementary is a school with a high English Language Learner and low-income population, and it is important to assess the impact outside programs are having on this population.

## **Summary**

This chapter served as an introduction to the study. The background of the problem, definition of significant terms, and purpose and significance of the study were included in the chapter. The next chapter will examine the review of literature relevant to this study.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter includes a comprehensive, yet not exhaustive, review of literature related to the topics of mentoring, peer mentoring, at-risk youth, resilience, self-efficacy, and the associating school systems that play a role in these topics. The intent of this section is to review relevant research and other literature that supports the arguments that peer mentoring has a positive impact on at-risk, low socioeconomic status students. This chapter is organized so that all comprehensive topics are addressed.

#### **Minorities and School Support**

There is an overrepresentation of minority students in Special Education classes simply because of race and assumptions (Gardner, 2001). The lack of proper intervention for these students is a major contributor to this disproportionality. Students from minority backgrounds are often placed in SPED classes due to inadequate implementation of academic and behavioral interventions in the classroom. They usually end up getting referred because they are initially receiving poor quality instruction and inadequate implementation of interventions. The impact of such an oversight is that minority students have less exposure to general education peers and less exposure to curriculum being taught by the general education teachers (Adams, 2016). This directly impacts a student's self-efficacy. The reason for the lack of proper intervention and lack of academic success as a result goes back to the complex exchange of knowledge, skills, and social networks between schools, families, and students (Kundu, 2019).

## **History of Mentoring**

Mentoring has its origins in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the Progressive Movement in the United States, when mass production and efficiency were key to societal success. This time drew attention to a growing concern for the balance of technological needs and the needs of a society in general. In association with these growing feelings, societal concerns included issues of immigrations, poverty, education, and vulnerable youth. New immigrants to the U.S. were largely poor and uneducated, drawing attention to this concern. In response, child labor laws, children's aid societies, and educational reforms were developed to protect those children (Dubois and Karcher, 2005). The juvenile court system was also developed around this time in response as well. Volunteers were then requested to support youth brought into court, which led to the establishment of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program in 1910 as one of the earliest and largest mentoring programs in America. As the positive impact of mentoring realized, it continued to gain momentum as a model of success in the business world. In 2001, Congress passed the Mentoring for Success Act, as part of the No Child Left Behind Act and was helpful in further development of the mentoring movement in the U.S. (Waits, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act included funding for the newly renamed Mentoring Program Act. Today, the pressure felt from the No Child Left Behind Act promotes the interest in mentoring as a way to help improve academic performance and school outcomes (Waits, 2010).

## **Mentoring**

Mentoring can be defined as adults who develop and maintain a relationship with a younger person. The mentor acts as a companion, supporter, teacher, challenger, and role model while engaging in activities of mutual interest to the mentee and mentor, (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1990). Mentoring is about building mutual trust, respect, and empathy that develops in a

mentoring relationship (Waits, 2010). Mentoring plays a critical role in a student's socio-emotional and cognitive development (MENTOR, 2006). Mentoring can be effective in enhancing positive student development, increasing school attendance, improving student's attitude towards school, and reducing overall at-risk behavior (Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002). Students with high academic achievement, basic skills, and the ability to apply those skills to real world situations is critical to a student's successful future (Waits, 2010) and mentoring can help fuel these needs. When students know that effort makes a difference in outcomes, they are more likely to increase the development of perseverance skills (Hootstein, 1996). In a study assessing the effect of a mentoring program on at-risk youth, mentoring was deemed successful in helping to decrease problematic behaviors, suggesting that student exposure to a caring adult helped them feel better about themselves, engage in less destructive behavior, and overall keep these students from developing stronger delinquency behaviors (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). A report to Congress from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1998) on a national juvenile mentoring program, JUMP, showed:

“1. 49.1% of mentees and 30.1% of mentors indicated that mentoring at-risk youth improved grades, 2. 64.3% of mentees and 36.5% of mentors indicated that the relationship encouraged the mentee to attend classes and 3. 61.6% of mentees and 41.3% of mentors indicated that the relationship improved family relations,” (Waits, 2010, p. 4).

Mentoring programs have a mutual beneficial learning experience for both the mentor and mentees. “Success is not measured only by the academic achievement of the mentees, but also by the increased personal confidence” and overall development (Salinitri, 2005, p. 867).

## **Teaching and Mentoring**

Students spend the majority of their time during the day and throughout the week in school. As a result, their classroom teachers are the adults the students will interact with for the majority of the time. These teachers have an important role in setting the foundation for student self-efficacy and resilience. The message that every student can succeed, no matter the circumstance they are currently in, and that every child has potential is important for educators to help instill. If educators believe in their students and promote positive values, then they can make a difference (Kelly, 2006). The implementation of an engaging curriculum is also helpful for setting these specific students up for success. To address disengagement, curriculum and instruction should focus on interesting and relevant content that incorporates student interest, helping students expect success, and teaching positive self-talk (Hootstein, 1996.) It is important for teachers to be aware of the social contexts within their classroom and to be sensitive to the variety of needs present within their classroom walls. Relationships in a student's life with parents, families, teachers and other community members directly relate to a student's success and motivation (Schmitz, Wagner, & Menke, 2001).

## **Mentees and Mentors**

The impact of mentoring programs is a mutually beneficial relationship with both parties gaining knowledge (Trepanier, 2007). In a report assessing the impact of mentoring on mentees mentors reported feeling more confident in their abilities to communicate effectively to groups, take leadership roles, work with people from diverse backgrounds, work effectively on a team, meet the needs of a child, and gain awareness about more appropriate expectations for youth and child-centered teaching as a result of such a program (Trepanier, 2007). Mentoring helps mentees by improving school attendance, increasing protective factors, decreasing likelihood for

the risk of substance abuse, lowering juvenile delinquency, lessening physical abuse and improving peer and family relationships (Waits, 2010). There are many forms of mentor and mentee relationships and programs. Specifically, in group mentoring, an adult serves as a mentor to a group of youth. The program structure includes longer-term contact, frequent contact, and specified program activities and location (Saito & Blyth, 1992).

### **Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs enhance academic success, prevent failure in school, and strengthen youth, families, and communities, thus leading to a decrease in at-risk factors (Dryfoos, 1990; Miller 2003). While no one program can completely make up for the distance many children experience in their lives, different students get different benefits from different resources and mentoring programs can be one of the resources that protects them from negative choices and supports healthy development, (Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring programs can provide an additional resource and safe place for such students. Mentoring is about creating an enduring and meaningful relationship with another person, with the focus on quality relationships and an emphasis on learning (Geri, 2005). Without intense contact, mentoring is not as effective (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). Studies have shown and researchers agree, youth development and mentoring programs should include objectives that:

“1) promote bonding, 2) foster resilience, 3) promote social competence, 4) promote emotional competence, 5) promote cognitive competence, 6) promote behavioral competence, 7) promote moral competence, 8) foster self-determination, 9) foster spirituality, 10) foster self-efficacy, 11) foster clear and positive identity, 12) foster belief in the future, 13) foster recognition for positive behavior, 14) provide opportunities for



prosocial involvement, and 15) foster prosocial norms” (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins, 2004, p. 101-102).

At-risk youth benefit from connecting with mentor adults who serve as role models in structured environments to benefit development of positive behavior and improved academic performance. If students are able to see their network expand, they are more willing to work harder and develop stronger twenty-first century skills because of the additional support in their lives. A study of high school students having a mentor showed that having an advisor increased student success and school attendance. Programs like this could be implemented with little economic and personal cost but have vastly significant outcomes (Testerman, 1996). As a result, peer mentoring programs can provide beneficial resources and opportunities for at-risk youth.

### **Student Resilience and Grit**

Successful students develop resilience and grit. Resilience is a focus on coping and having hardiness to continue as an individual and is a skill that can be developed (Dever, 2009). Resilience operates in a circular system. At the core is the student who has external factors like family and community. From there, there are protective factors that benefit the student such as family and environment. There are also, at the same time, internal risk factors that can negatively impact the student such as poor coping, emotional fragility, and cognitive deficits. These factors develop into adaptations, and ideally, resilience will become the dominant adaptation which will lead to positive outcomes for the student through social, emotional, academic, physiological, and developmental resilience (Dever, 2009). The idea is that the student gains more and more protective factors, or positive factors, from resilience. This resilience has an impact on at-risk students that helps them grow grit and be receptive to seeing themselves as capable of success.

**Summary**

This chapter examined the review of literature related to the topics of this study. The literature reviewed examined mentoring, mentoring programs, and minority education. The next chapter will discuss the methodology involved in the study.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The study investigated the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families from their teachers' perspectives. The study was designed to assess the SOAR program impact on students by targeting the aspects of program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. This chapter describes the setting of the study, the participants, and the data collection methods.

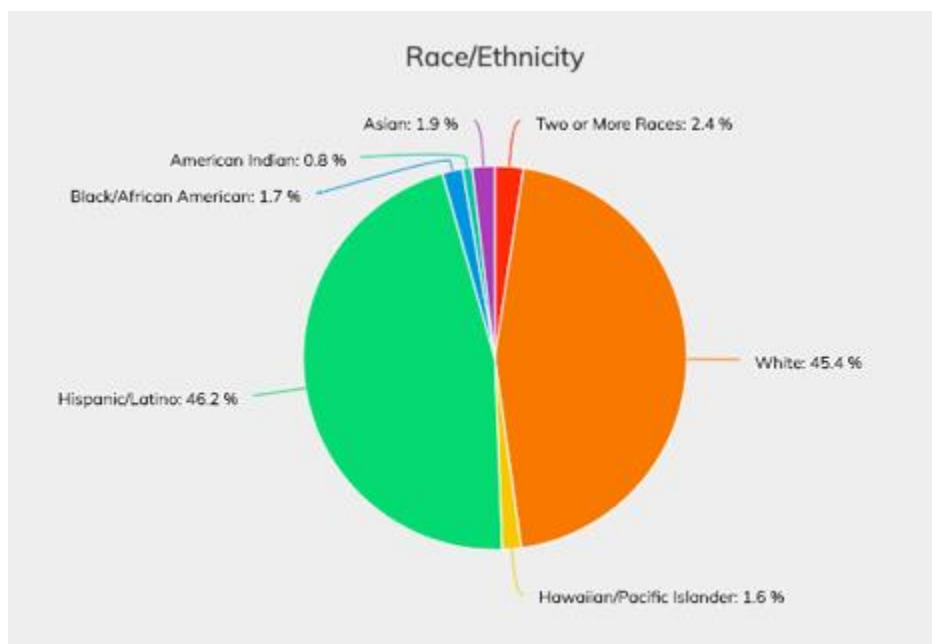
#### **District and Program Setting**

SOAR is an after school program that aims to provide a fun and safe educational environment for elementary-age students living in Northwest Arkansas. It connects elementary students with college-aged peer mentors to help students focus on Service, Opportunities, Academics, and Recreation. SOAR's six core values are, be courageous, be grateful, be honest, be kind, be respectful, and be responsible. SOAR is a place where students are encouraged to "rise up" and be the best leaders they can be. All SOAR sites are a part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers. For this study, the Local Elementary SOAR students' teachers were interviewed.

#### **Description of District and School Demographics**

**District.** The study took place using the teachers of Local Elementary School in a larger public-school district in Northwest Arkansas. The school district comprises 23 schools that serve 15,721 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Approximately 55% of the students are considered low-income students, 29% of students are English Learners, and 12% of students are eligible to receive special education services. The district has an ethnically diverse student

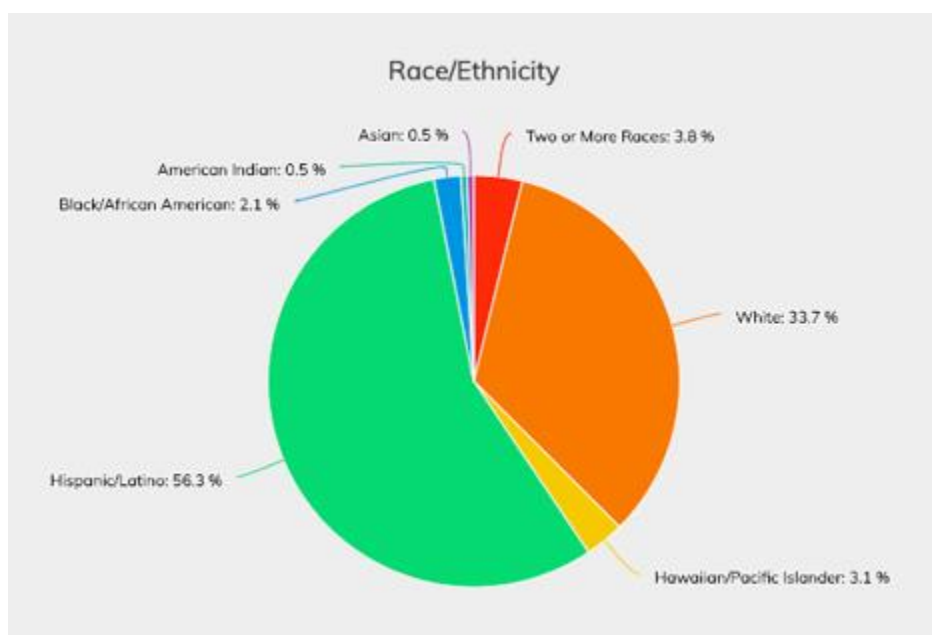
population consisting of 47% Hispanic, 44.1% White, 2.8% Two or More Races, 1.9% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.9% Asian, 1.7% African American, and 0.7% American Indian. Figure 1 illustrates the race/ethnicity demographics for the school district. Demographic information in this section was retrieved from the 2019-2020 District Report Card (Arkansas Department of Education, 2020a).



*Figure 1.* Race/ethnicity demographics of the public school district where the population was used.

**School.** The study took place with the Local Elementary School teachers about their SOAR program students. Local Elementary is a public school in Northwest Arkansas and is a part of one of the largest school districts in Northwest Arkansas. The school has a total enrollment of 426 students. Of the students, 44% of students are English Learners, 79% of students are low income, and 12% of students are eligible to receive special education services. The race/ethnicity demographics of Local Elementary are 56.3% Hispanic, 33.7% White, 3.8% Two or More Races, 3.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.1% African American, 0.5% American Indian, and

0.5% Asian. Figure 2 illustrates the race/ethnicity demographics of Local Elementary. This data is based on the 2019-2020 School Report Card (Arkansas Department of Education, 2020b).



*Figure 2.* Race/ethnicity demographics of Local Elementary, where teachers from this school were interviewed about their students.

## **Study Setting and Participants**

### **Study Setting**

The setting of the study was set to take place at the Local Elementary teacher's location of preference. Teachers were interviewed in the location of their choice for ten to twenty minutes. Due to current global events, in person interviews were not an option for the safety of all participants. All five teachers were interviewed one time. Four teacher interviews were over the phone through a call or Zoom call. One teacher interview was done through email response.

## Participants in Study

The participants in this study ranged from kindergarten to fifth grade teachers (see table 1) who work at Local Elementary in one of the biggest school districts in Northwest Arkansas. These student's teachers were interviewed and surveyed for this study.

**Table 1**

*Participants in the study.*

Teacher Name	Grade Level	Number of SOAR Students
Teacher H	3rd	5
Teacher P	2nd	5
Teacher L	4th	8
Teacher M	1st	6
Teacher R	1st	7

## Permissions and Confidentiality

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), as well as the administration of the after school program where the study was situated (see Appendix B). Permission for teachers to participate in this study was obtained prior to the interview for the study through a letter and an Informed Consent form (Appendix C). The Informed Consent explained the purpose and procedures of the study. It also explained that participation was completely voluntary and that there was no reward or penalty for participating. It explained that the teachers could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The teachers' interview data were kept confidential by issuing participating teachers pseudonyms. Teachers were informed prior to consent that the data were to be considered collectively in order to find trends in responses. Consent from all five teachers was received.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families' school performance, self-efficacy, and resilience from their teacher's perspective. One instrument was used to collect data during this study. The data collection instrument was researcher-created and administered as the form of qualitative data assessment. The data instrument was a nine question teacher interview (Appendix D). These questions asked teachers how many SOAR students they had in their class, behaviors they have noticed about their SOAR students and how this compares to their class, and how students perform in the school setting. The focus of the teacher interview questions was on asking teachers about how SOAR students compare to students not in the program in their class, if SOAR students show resilience skills, and if anything about SOAR students is noticeably different than other students in the classroom setting.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Data were to be collected in two potential ways due to global events. The first data collection option for teachers was through interviews on the phone with SOAR students' teachers to discuss student behavior and school performance. The second data collection option for teachers was through interviews through an email response form with SOAR students' teachers to discuss student behavior and school performance. Each teacher was interviewed only one, either by phone or by email. This information from the interview was used to deeper assess SOAR student's self-efficacy, attitude toward school, and the impact that peer mentoring has had on the student's behavior.

**Timeline**

The timeline of the interviews began in the first week of January 2020. IRB permission for this study was received on March 9, 2020. For the purpose of this project, communication with teachers began March 10, 2020 by discussing the study and permission to participate. The interviews with teachers were collected between the months of March 9, 2020-April 10, 2020.

**Data Analysis**

For this study, data was analyzed based on the teacher interview responses. Interviews were examined individually first to identify overall trends in each teacher's interview. Interviews were then examined in a cross-case analysis to identify trends among all five teachers' responses. Trends were then determined by identifying a majority sentiment in teacher responses.

**Summary**

The study examined the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families from these students' teachers' perspectives. This chapter described the setting of the study, the participants, the permission sought for the study, the data collection instrument, the data collection methods, and the timeline for the study. This process was organized in order to attempt to answer the question, "Does the SOAR peer mentoring program have an impact on students from working families from their teachers' perspective?"



## Chapter IV

### Results

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the analysis of data collected to address the research question, “Does the SOAR peer mentoring program have an impact on students from working families from their teachers’ perspective?” The data is qualitative in nature and is extracted from the following interview questions:

- 1) How many SOAR students do you have in your class?
- 2) From your perspective, what have you noticed about SOAR students that is the same or different compared to other students?
- 3) From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?
- 4) From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?
- 5) From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?
- 6) How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom: (please provide evidence)
  - a. In regard to resilience
  - b. In regard to school performance
  - c. In regard to school motivation
- 7) How would you describe your SOAR students school performance overall? (i.e. academics, achievement, socially, confidence, etc.)
- 8) Is there anything else you would like to share in regard to your students in the SOAR program?

The data presented in this chapter was collected from five teacher participants. One interview was conducted with each participant. The interview was conducted by phone, video call, or written response. Teachers were given the choice of interview format and provided consent to participate in the interview. Interviews lasted from ten to fifteen minutes if conducted over the phone or video call format. All teachers were asked the same questions in the same order.

The results section is organized as follows. Each interview is analyzed individually beginning with the teachers' name and grade level. Their interview answers are then analyzed question by question to seek trends in each teacher's answers. After this, the interviews are cross-case analyzed to identify trends in responses among all five teachers. The categories that give structure to the interview cross-case analysis are resilience, school performance, school motivation, and school perception, and self-efficacy.

### **Within-Case Analysis: Teacher H**

**Table 2**

*Teacher H's interview responses by trend*

<b>Trend</b>	<b>Comments made by teacher during interview</b>
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fun loving and childlike, very playful</li> <li>● More outspoken and familiar with student personalities a little more</li> <li>● Seem to be more comfortable speaking in groups of people in large group discussions</li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More of a confidence attribute within those students</li> <li>● Hard to compare her SOAR students to her non-SOAR students</li> <li>● Know they have more people in their life they can count on to feel connected with outside of just their family</li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does not really see an academic difference between her students</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All SOAR student's motivations are so different</li> <li>● Two SOAR students specifically have really grown a lot</li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Half and half among her students</li> <li>● Attributed to personality about who enjoys school</li> <li>● Doesn't think they know that school is for learning</li> <li>● Love to socialize</li> <li>● School is friendship and family</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not always her best academic listeners</li> <li>● Has seen the ones who were not so confident grow into more confidence</li> <li>● Other students have always been more outspoken and confident</li> </ul>

Teacher H is a third grade teacher at Local Elementary. Her interview was completed over a video call format and her responses were recorded for data collection. Her responses were

categorized by trend (see table 2) after the interview analysis. Her responses to the questions are as follows:

Teacher H has 5 SOAR students in her class. When asked from her perspective what she has noticed about SOAR students that is the same or different compared to other students she shared that her SOAR students are still fun loving and childlike, very playful. She said that maybe something that is different is that her SOAR students are more outspoken, and she is familiar with their personalities a little more. These students seem to be more comfortable speaking in groups of people in large group discussions.

When asked, “From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?” Teacher H shared that it is half and half among her students, which she attributed to also being personality about who enjoys school. She shared that she thinks they all know school is a safe place for them and they feel comfortable at school. She said she doesn’t think they know that school is for learning, but they love to socialize. School to them is friendship and family. She also added that these students are not always her best academic listeners.

When asked, “From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?” Teacher H shared that she has seen the ones who were not so confident grow into more confidence. She shared that one student in particular really grew in terms of confidence this year. She said that the other students have always been more outspoken and confident.

When asked, “From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?” Teacher H said that she believes SOAR students handle these

settings better than most. Some may still refuse to participate in speaking settings but that, in her perspective, is more of a confidence attribute within those students.

When asked, “How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom in regard to resilience?” Teacher H shared that it is hard to compare her SOAR students to her non-SOAR students. She said that all her students are pretty resilient. She shared that, in a way, her SOAR students know they have more people in their life they can count on to feel connected with outside of just their family. She concluded with saying she wouldn’t say just her SOAR students are more resilient than the others. When asked the same question, but in regard to school performance, Teacher H shared that she does not really see an academic difference between her students. When asked the beginning question in regard to school motivation, she shared that all her SOAR students’ motivations are so different. She said one student doesn’t seem to care about school. She added that she thinks it really comes down to personality, not SOAR. Some kids already get “it”, so they don’t care; some are insecure and unmotivated. Throughout the course of the year, Teacher H did say she has seen growth. Two of her SOAR students specifically have really grown a lot.

When asked if there was anything else Teacher H would like to add to the interview in regard to her students in the SOAR program, she shared that they all really love SOAR and enjoy being a part of it. She said it is cool for them to have another place in their lives to have adults who pour into them. She said she does think that because SOAR groups students during the program by grade level, that if they don’t get along with a student at school and they go to SOAR together, that they are stuck together all day. She said for that reason, such SOAR kids don’t congregate together but they can also be the ones in class who bicker and fight like a family and can start class drama because they are around each other all the time. She also added that if there

is a hard kid in the classroom, and that student attends SOAR, then the other SOAR students from the grade are around those kids all day at SOAR too so they never get a break. She shared that this can be hard on the students and on the class dynamic.

Overall, Teacher H was consistent in her interview responses about how her SOAR students do not have specific strengths that are stronger than her other students in regard to resilience, school performance, school perception, and school motivation. She shared that she appreciates the program and that it is great for helping these students feel more connected and cared by adults. Teacher H's tone towards SOAR was appreciative, but she was firm in the fact that her class as a whole is diverse, not just her SOAR students. This can be seen specifically in her responses to the questions about student's resilience, school performance, and school motivation.

## Within-Case Analysis: Teacher P

**Table 3**

*Teacher P's interview responses by trend*

Trend	Comments made by teacher during interview
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gained more confidence and work on their behavior</li> <li>● Having additional adult support helps them make good decisions in school and out of school</li> <li>● Greatly improved student's speaking skills</li> <li>● <i>"I am all for the after school program!"</i></li> <li>● <i>"SOAR boosts their self-esteem and it is great seeing them come in happy and leave school with a smile going towards somewhere they are excited about."</i></li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Definitely"</i> helps students with resilience</li> <li>● Gain empowerment by being more social and having more support in their web</li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Academic performance is much higher with these students because of the extra help that they don't get from their parents</li> <li>● Have more time to practice their social skills at the program, so it is easier for them to speak up and participate in class</li> <li>● Always increase in school performance</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"They are much more motivated."</i></li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seem to enjoy school more</li> <li>● Look forward to SOAR after school</li> <li>● Large portion of these kids do not want to go home and do not have the food and support they need in their lives</li> <li>● Are excited to go to school and then SOAR</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SOAR seems to give students more confidence</li> <li>● Feel more at ease and taken care of in their life as a result of this after school mentoring program</li> </ul>

Teacher P is a second grade teacher at Local Elementary. Her interview was completed over a video call format and her responses were recorded for data collection. Her responses were categorized by trend (see table 3) after the interview analysis. Her responses to the questions are as follows:

Teacher P has five SOAR students in her class, out of a class of twenty three. When asked from her perspective what she has noticed about SOAR students that is the same or

different compared to others she shared that these students gained more confidence and work on their behavior. She said a couple of them already had great behavior at the beginning of the year, but a couple were not, so having that additional adult support through SOAR helps them make good decisions in school and out of school.

When asked, “From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?” Teacher P shared that she notices SOAR students seem to enjoy school more. She said they look forward to SOAR after school. A large portion of these kids, she shared, do not want to go home and do not have the food and support they need in their lives. So, they are excited to go to school and then SOAR. She added this seems like a long day for students, but they’re so excited. They like the variety they get through the program. She also added that academic performance is much higher with these students because they have that extra help that they don’t get from their parents sometimes after school.

When asked, “From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?” Teacher P shared that SOAR seems to give students more confidence. She shared that it is sad to say, but a lot of these students don’t have a safe home, so they feel more at ease and taken care of in their life as a result of this after school mentoring program. She said it is just a better environment for them, adding that it is a safe and structured environment.

When asked, “From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?” Teacher P shared that SOAR has greatly improved students’ speaking skills. She said that the school has a new reading curriculum and that the students who attend SOAR are more outspoken during the new program, after they have attended SOAR. She

also added that they have had more time to practice their social skills at the program, so it is easier for them to speak up and participate in class.

When asked, “How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom in regard to resilience” Teacher P’s view was that the after school mentoring program definitely helps students with resilience. She shared that they gain empowerment by being more social and having more support in their web. When asked the same question, but in regard to school performance, she says school performance with these students always increases. She said that “SOAR always does that.” She felt that they have more time to work on homework, social skills, and that she just loves “it when my students go to SOAR, they just have that additional support.” When asked the beginning question in regard to school motivation she shared that yes, the after school program makes a big difference in school motivation for these students. She said, “They are much more motivated.”

When asked, “How would you describe your SOAR students’ school performance overall? Teacher P said that she is really for the after school programs. She thinks they are so helpful to teachers and parents. She reiterated that these students have a long day whether they are at home or at school, but the difference is SOAR is a safe place. She said, “I am all for the after school program!”

When asked if there was anything else Teacher P would like to add to the interview in regard to her students in the SOAR program she said, “They’re amazing! I love teaching second grade and feel like SOAR boosts their self-esteem and it is great seeing them come in happy and leave school with a smile going towards somewhere they are excited about.”

Overall, Teacher P was enthusiastic in support of a mentoring after school program, specifically SOAR. She shared that the program makes noticeable differences in students in



regard to students' resilience, school performance, and school motivation. She seems confident that it is because of the SOAR program that these students have made the growth in their academic progress that they have.

### Within-Case Analysis: Teacher L

**Table 4**

*Teacher L's interview responses by trend*

Trend	Comments made by teacher during interview
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"SOAR students are different."</i></li> <li>● Students get excited about performance and speaking settings</li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All of her students are very resilient</li> <li>● Hard to pinpoint the SOAR kids specifically in this category</li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are really good with taking leadership roles and wanting to present to the class</li> <li>● <i>"Emerge a little more like willing leaders"</i></li> <li>● Public speaking is <i>"the strongest difference with SOAR students versus other students in the class"</i></li> <li>● SOAR students had math fact fluency and were better with reflex math facts than other students</li> <li>● Six out of eight were in the top of the class this year</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have the attitude of <i>"if I want to work hard at something and do it then they know they can do it."</i></li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seems the same as about other kids</li> <li>● Hard to tell because each student is very different</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helps build their confidence that they come into school with</li> <li>● <i>"All seem pretty confident with themselves"</i></li> <li>● Impact student confidence and develop a growth mindset <i>"for sure."</i></li> </ul>

Teacher L is a fourth grade teacher at Local Elementary. Her interview was completed over a video call format and her responses were recorded for data collection. Her responses were categorized by trend (see table 4) after the interview analysis. Her responses to the questions are as follows:

Teacher L has eight SOAR students in her class, out of a class of twenty one. When asked from her perspective what she has noticed about SOAR students that is the same or

different compared to others, she shared that she has noticed that SOAR students are different. She added that it is not all the time because kids are different, but on the whole the SOAR kids are really good with taking leadership roles and wanting to present to the class. They seem to emerge a little more like willing leaders. She shared that she thinks a lot of that has to do with SOAR and helps build their confidence that they come into school with. She added specifically that this year's group of SOAR kids were really into competition in a great way that bled into the whole class. They were motivated to turn assignments into group work or challenges. They were good at coming up with new ideas and really tried to help to structure the culture in our classroom.

When asked, "From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?" Teacher L shared that it seems the same as about other kids. She said it is hard to tell because each student is very different.

When asked, "From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?" Teacher L shared that her SOAR students all seem pretty confident with themselves. We talked earlier about their leadership and being willing to take that role. She added that they have the attitude of "if I want to work hard at something and do it then they know they can do it." She said she didn't know if that's exclusive to SOAR students, but it is a noticeable trend among them. She said that SOAR programs like "The Amazing Shake" and other programs SOAR puts on like that impact student confidence and develop a growth mindset "for sure."

When asked, "From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?" Teacher L said she really does think this is the strongest

difference with SOAR students versus other students in the class. She said these students get excited about performance and speaking settings. She clarified that still, some get nervous because that's who they are, but overall SOAR students prefer to have those opportunities. She said that it is almost like these students seek out these types of opportunities, "which is awesome because it's a great skill to have as you grow up."

When asked, "How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom in regard to resilience?" Teacher L said she doesn't know. She said that on the whole, all of her students are very resilient. She added it is hard to pinpoint the SOAR kids specifically in this category. When asked the same question, but in regard to school performance, she said this year homework time was still a struggle with all students. SOAR students weren't doing better or worse than other students in regard to school performance and behavior. One thing for sure she shared that SOAR students had was math fact fluency and they were definitely better with reflex math facts than other students. She said SOAR students knowing these facts made a huge difference at school. Most of them performed as well or better than other students depending on the subject. She said of her SOAR students, six out of eight were in the top of the class this year.

When asked if there was anything else Teacher L would like to add to the interview in regard to her students in the SOAR program she said, "I just love the SOAR program. There were growing pains with the program in the beginning and things we had to work through, but I really love that program and I think as it continues to go on and they have more opportunities, and more students have opportunities, it will grow and be great. It is a fun and different program and the leadership is strong. It's so important. As it continues to grow, I can't wait to see how it gets better and better and better."

Overall, Teacher L was appreciative of the program. She believed the program uniquely strengthens students who participate in public speaking and presenting skills. She did not feel that being in the program, in comparison to students not in the program, made them more resilient. She mentioned areas, like math facts, where SOAR students were stronger, due to having the additional adult help after school and that six out of eight of her SOAR students are in the top of her class. She shared that SOAR students seem to enjoy leadership roles and are willing to take on that role. Teacher L did not think that SOAR students perceive school any differently than other students.

## Within-Case Analysis: Teacher M

**Table 5**

*Teacher M's interview responses by trend*

Trend	Comments made by teacher during interview
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A couple of her SOAR students have the most trouble sitting still and not talking during whole group instruction</li> <li>● All talk about how much they like SOAR</li> <li>● All doing really well in the area of public speaking</li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can't say that she has noticed a difference in resilience</li> <li>● Seems to be unique to each individual student</li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Three students out of six that participate in SOAR struggle in the classroom with academics</li> <li>● Confidence seems to be high, even though they are struggling in reading specifically</li> <li>● Love to share during their morning meeting</li> <li>● Socially these students stand out</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Has a highly motivated class as a whole</li> <li>● <i>"First graders tend to love school and want to please their teacher."</i></li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Different for each student</li> <li>● Of the six students that go to SOAR, all but one like coming to school and enjoy it</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Big jump in self confidence"</i> in her girls, more so than the boys</li> <li>● <i>"Beam with pride and excitement!"</i></li> <li>● Very happy, have several friends and stand up for their classmates.</li> </ul>

Teacher M is a first grade teacher at Local Elementary. Her interview was completed over a written response format and her responses were categorized by trends for data collection. Her responses were categorized by trend (see table 5) after the interview analysis. Her responses to the questions are as follows:

Teacher M has six SOAR students in her class. When asked from her perspective what she has noticed about SOAR students that is the same or different compared to others, she shared

that a couple of her SOAR students are the students who have the most trouble sitting still and not talking during whole group instruction. She added that they all talk about how much they like SOAR and they love to tell her about the different activities and things that are happening in SOAR.

When asked, “From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?” She shared that she thinks it is different for each student. Students who struggle in school seem to have a different perspective. These students don’t really like it, because it is difficult. Of the six students that she has that go to SOAR, she thinks they all like coming to school and enjoy it, except for one.

When asked, “From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?” she said she has noticed a big jump in the self confidence in her girls, more so than the boys.

When asked, “From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?” She said that this is something they have worked hard on in class all year as well and she feels like they are all doing really well in this area.

When asked, “How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom in regard to resilience?” She said she can’t say that she has noticed a difference in resilience. She said it seems to be unique to each individual student. When asked the same question, but in regard to school performance, she said that three students out of the six that participate in SOAR struggle in the classroom with academics. Of those three, their confidence seems to be high, even though they are struggling in reading specifically. When asked the same question, but in regard to school motivation, she said she has a highly motivated class as a whole.

“First graders tend to love school and want to please their teacher.” Her SOAR students love to share during their morning meeting about the events and happenings at SOAR. When they talk of their experiences, they “beam with pride and excitement.”

When asked how she would describe her SOAR students' school performance overall, she said that in addition to what she has already mentioned, socially these students stand out. This group of SOAR students are very social. They are overall very happy, have several friends and stand up for their classmates.

When asked if there was anything else Teacher M would like to add to the interview in regard to her students in the SOAR program she said, “I miss them so much!”

Overall, Teacher M seemed to have a lively, playful group of first graders in her classroom. Teacher M shared that in regard to resilience it is hard to say that SOAR students are more resilient than her other students. She seemed to reference a trend that her SOAR students are enthusiastic, talkative, and eager to share about their SOAR experiences. She shared that SOAR seems to have impacted the girls in her class from SOAR's self-confidence.

## Within-Case Analysis: Teacher R

**Table 6**

*Teacher R's interview responses by trend*

Trend	Comments made by teacher during interview
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More engaged in learning</li> <li>● Have <i>"a heart for helping others"</i></li> <li>● <i>"A lot of the time they are even better people. They care for others and will do anything they can to make sure that other people around them feel loved, respected, cared for, and positive about themselves."</i></li> <li>● Have a positive relationship with peers and teachers</li> <li>● Get along well with others and treat their peers with respect and kindness</li> <li>● <i>"I have noticed the positive impact SOAR has on my students"</i></li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have a level of resilience higher than the typical student</li> <li>● Willing to keep trying even when things get tough</li> <li>● <i>"They have a level of toughness when it comes to doing hard things that some other students don't have."</i></li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enjoy learning and are eager to learn more</li> <li>● Most participate in discussions and contribute to the learning environment</li> <li>● Have seen more growth in these students because of the extra homework time they have at SOAR: sight words, math facts, reading</li> <li>● Strong school performance and achievement overall</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Very motivated in terms of completing schoolwork and doing their best job</li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Always some students that don't perceive school as a positive in their lives</li> <li>● The majority of students that attend SOAR have a positive outlook on school</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Perceive themselves as smart, strong, and kind people</li> <li>● Have a sense of purpose in life <i>"and it shows in how they treat others, do their schoolwork, and their passion for life."</i></li> </ul>

Teacher R is a first grade teacher at Local Elementary. Her interview was completed over a written response format and her responses were categorized by trends for data collection. Her responses were categorized by trend (see table 6) after the interview analysis. Her responses to the questions are as follows:

Teacher R has seven SOAR students in her class. When asked from her perspective what she has noticed about SOAR students that is the same or different compared to others, she shared that some of the students she has had in her class that attended SOAR are more engaged in



learning, but most of all they have “a heart for helping others.” She said they are typically good students, “but a lot of the time they are even better people. They care for others and will do anything they can to make sure that other people around them feel loved, respected, cared for, and positive about themselves.”

When asked, “From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these students perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?” Teacher R said that there are always some students that don’t perceive school as a positive in their lives but the majority of my students that attend SOAR have a positive outlook on school. They enjoy learning and are eager to learn more. Most of them participate in discussions and contribute to the learning environment.

When asked, “From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?” I have noticed that most of her SOAR students perceive themselves as smart, strong, and kind people. They have a sense of purpose in life “and it shows in how they treat others, do their schoolwork, and their passion for life.”

When asked, “From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?” Teacher R said she hasn’t noticed a huge difference in how SOAR students handle performance or speaking settings in comparison to students who don’t attend SOAR. She says she thinks feeling comfortable speaking is based on your personality, so she has some students that attend SOAR that are more timid and don’t speak as often as the ones that aren’t attending SOAR.

When asked, “How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom in regard to resilience?” She said that she feels that all of her SOAR students this year have a level of resilience higher than the typical student. For example, most of them are willing

to keep trying even when things get tough. She added that in first grade, students dive into more difficult math problems. Most of her SOAR students don't give up when they first see these problems. They continue to push through and even if their answer isn't accurate; they have the strength to continue to try no matter how hard it is. "They have a level of toughness when it comes to doing hard things that some other students don't have." When asked the same question, but in regard to school performance, she shared that she wouldn't say that their academic performance is any more on grade level than the rest of her students. However, she said she will say that she has seen more growth in these students because of the extra homework time they have at SOAR. She said she has seen growth in sight words, math problem solving, and reading that she may not have seen if they didn't have this extra time to work on academics at SOAR. When asked the same question, but in regard to school motivation, Teacher R shared the majority of her SOAR students are very motivated in terms of completing schoolwork and doing their best job. She added that there are a select few that don't give their best effort. However, she added, many of them will do their best work and then continue to do extra things to extend their learning so they continue to grow even more. For example, she shared that when they finish a math problem, they will complete it using their best effort and then get the work for early finishers to help them extend on their learning.

When asked how she would describe her SOAR students' school performance overall, she said that her SOAR students have a strong school performance and achievement overall. She doesn't see much of a difference in the on-grade level academic abilities between SOAR and non-SOAR students, but she does see more growth academically from SOAR students because of their extra time to work on academics at SOAR. Socially, the majority of her students have a positive relationship with peers and teachers. They get along well with others and treat their

peers with respect and kindness. They are active socially for the most part with exception of a few who have quieter personalities. Some of her SOAR students have a strong sense of self-confidence but the majority don't differ much from non-SOAR students. She said there are some students with a more timid personality, so they don't speak up or exude confidence as much as others.

When asked if there was anything else Teacher R would like to add to the interview in regard to her students in the SOAR program she said, "I have noticed the positive impact SOAR has on my students. The biggest thing I have noticed is the positive outlook they have on things and the love they have for others. I am very proud of my SOAR students and who they are as people more than anything else."

Overall, Teacher R seems to feel that SOAR students are loving members of her classroom community. She does not think that SOAR students have a difference from non-SOAR students in regard to on-grade level academic abilities, but that SOAR students do tend to grow more academically because of the added support. Teacher R shared that these SOAR students get along well with others and work hard.

### **Cross-Case Analysis**

Teacher interviews were compared for commonalities between responses. A frequency of three out of five teacher responses was expected to establish the majority in a sub-topic trend. Teacher interviews were analyzed in a variety of categories for trends in program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. Analysis was made across all five teacher responses (see table 7).

**Table 7***Cross-case analysis of teacher responses by trend*

Trend	Comments made by teacher during interview
Program Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers directly addressed a difference in gained, or noticeably more, confidence with SOAR students</li> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers concluded that SOAR students exhibit noticeable social traits</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers directly described SOAR students in terms of positive attributes, describing students as fun, confident, motivated, engaged learners, and as having a heart for helping</li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>2 out of 5</b> teachers said that resilience among their SOAR students was higher than normal compared to other students</li> <li>● <b>2 out of 5</b> teachers stated that SOAR students feel empowered by having adults and social support in their lives</li> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers could not state that SOAR students had a greater inclination or showed greater resilience than their other students</li> </ul>
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers stated they could see the benefit of the program in regard to getting assistance on homework because of the extra time spent on homework in the program that translates to academic growth in some form</li> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers referenced that the program addresses skill specific areas of growth with students, but not overall academic growth compared to other students</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers referenced that SOAR positively impacts public speaking skills</li> </ul>
School Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers referenced positive student motivation in their responses</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers referenced a noticeable difference in motivation to perform in school</li> </ul>
School Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>2 out of 5</b> teachers agreed that majority, if not all, of their SOAR students enjoy school and perceive it positively</li> <li>● <b>2 out of 5</b> teachers stated students have an academically higher performance, participate more, and are eager to learn in class</li> <li>● <b>3 out of 5</b> teachers reference how students are excited to attend the after school performance</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers referenced that school perception is different because all students are different</li> </ul>
Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>2 out of 5</b> teachers stated students have a willingness to work or have a strong sense of purpose and drive that translates into their schoolwork</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers specifically address SOAR students with regards to a difference in noticeable confidence</li> <li>● <b>4 out of 5</b> teachers referenced the theme of participants of the after school program exhibiting a positive outlook or as “happy” students.</li> <li>● <b>All 5</b> teachers specifically used the word “<i>confidence</i>” when describing their program participants</li> </ul>

## **Program Participants**

When teachers were asked about what they noticed about SOAR students that was the same or different compared to other students, some commonalities emerged. Teacher P and Teacher L both directly addressed a difference in gains, or noticeably more, confidence with SOAR students. In addition, Teacher R implies a difference in confidence through her responses about engaged learners and being a positive influence. By being engaged learners and positive influences in comparison to other students, it can be inferred that these students feel comfortable being a positive influence and helping hand, as well as more engaged, because they feel comfortable and confident in the classroom. Teacher L and Teacher H both reference how SOAR students seem to be natural leaders and comfortable in speaking settings. Teacher L and Teacher R directly reference SOAR students contributing to the classroom culture. Overall, four out of five of the teachers directly described SOAR students in terms of positive attributes, describing students as fun, confident, motivated, engaged learners, and as having a heart for helping. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers stated that students who participate in the program possess positive attributes when discussed as a group. In addition, Teacher R, Teacher M, and Teacher H referenced to some degree the level of socialness that SOAR students seem to exhibit. Teacher H added that at times these students bicker like family. Three out of five teachers, or the majority, directly address program participants' social traits in regard to school. It can be concluded that SOAR students exhibit noticeable social traits.

## **Resilience**

Teachers were asked how SOAR students compare to other students in regard to resilience. Teacher R and Teacher P said that resilience among their SOAR students was higher than normal compared to other students. Teacher P and Teacher H both stated that SOAR

students feel empowered by having adults and social support in their lives. Teacher H, Teacher L, and Teacher M stated that in terms of resilience, it is hard to say that these students exhibit higher resilience in comparison to their peers. They shared that due to their school demographics, they believe all their students have strong resilience but that it is unique to each student. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers could not state that SOAR students had a greater inclination for or showed greater resilience than their other students.

### **School Performance**

Teachers were asked about how students handle performance or speaking settings at school. Teacher P and L stated that their speaking skills were noticeably stronger in comparison to non-SOAR students. Teacher H also agreed that SOAR students do better compared to non-SOAR students at public speaking and performance settings. Overall, four out of five teachers referenced that SOAR positively impacts speaking skills with students to some degree. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers expressed that this program has an impact on student's performance and speaking skills. When asked to compare SOAR students to other students in their class, teachers also had a variety of answers. Teacher M emphasized that SOAR students have high confidence even when they struggle with assignments, like math. Teacher P shared that because of SOAR she always sees an increase in school performance, and attributes that to SOAR allowing time for homework completion and assistance that they do not get at home. Teacher L and Teacher R referenced skill-specific growth in regard to school performance. Both of these teachers reference math facts and solving as something that stands out with SOAR students, in addition to sight words and overall reading, due to having extra time and help with homework at SOAR as well. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers see the benefit of the program in regard to getting assistance on homework because of the extra time spent on

homework in the program that translates to academic growth in some form. Teacher R, Teacher L, and Teacher H referenced in their answers that they did not see an overall academic difference with SOAR students compared to other students. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers did not see an overall academic difference in program participants. Thus, it can further be concluded that this program addresses skill-specific areas of growth with students, but not overall academic growth.

### **School Motivation**

Teachers were asked specifically to discuss differences in school motivation between SOAR and non-SOAR students in their classes. Teacher P, Teacher M, and Teacher R all referenced student motivation in their responses in a positive way. Teacher P shared that SOAR students seem much more motivated than their peers. Teacher M said her students are highly motivated in class in general, but that SOAR students specifically love to share and discuss their days at SOAR. If students are excited about an after school activity, then they are more excited to go to school so they can attend the after school activity. Teacher R said SOAR students are motivated in completing work and doing their best. In addition, Teacher L referenced leadership in regard to students' school motivation, saying they seek out leadership roles. These leadership roles serve as motivation. Both Teacher M and Teacher R referenced how motivated SOAR students are in their work, and Teacher P references overall SOAR student motivation. It can be concluded that four out of five teachers reference a noticeable difference in motivation to perform in school.

### **School Perception**

In regard to school perception, teachers had a variety of responses about how their SOAR students perceive school. Teacher P and Teacher R agreed that majority, if not all, of their SOAR

students enjoy school and perceive it positively. Teacher R and Teacher P also both mentioned here that SOAR students have an academically higher performance, participate more, and are eager to learn in class. Teacher H, Teacher L, Teacher M, and Teacher R all referenced in their answers that school perception is different because all students are different. They shared that school perception really depends on the student. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers felt like it was hard to say if the after school program impacted school perception because each child is different. In addition to school perception, Teacher P, Teacher H, and teacher M reference how students are excited to attend the after school program. As a result, they are excited to be at school to attend SOAR after. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers stated that students perceive SOAR as a place to be excited about going after school.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Teachers were asked about what they have noticed about how SOAR students perceive themselves. Teacher L and Teacher R both shared that SOAR students have a willingness to work or have a strong sense of purpose and drive that translates into their schoolwork. Teacher H, Teacher P, Teacher L, Teacher M, or four out of five of the teachers, specifically address SOAR students with regards to a difference in noticeable confidence. Teacher R shared that SOAR students seem to exhibit a sense of purpose, which can be related to confidence as having a sense of purpose allows students to feel more confident in their futures and sense of self. It can be concluded that SOAR student participants stand out compared to their peers in regard to confidence at school. Throughout the entirety of the five teacher interviews, all five teachers at some point specifically used the word “confidence” when describing their program participants. They all shared that SOAR students exhibit confidence either in their leadership skills, speaking skills, performing skills, academic facts, or friendships in class. It can be concluded that all five



teachers reference “confidence” in association with SOAR students. Teacher R, Teacher M, Teacher L, and Teacher P all reference the theme of participants of the after school program exhibiting a positive outlook or as “happy” students. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers perceived SOAR students as having a positive outlook or as happy students.

### **Summary**

While all five interviews were not in cohesive agreement in their answers, there was evidence of overlap in trends in teacher responses. The information gathered from the interviews of each teacher provided insight into their perception of the peer-mentoring, after school program’s impact on students from working families. The analysis of the teachers’ responses allowed for the detection of trends among their answers.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

#### **Overview of Findings**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact that peer-mentoring based after school programs have on students from working families from their teachers' perspective. The goal of SOAR as a program is to provide a fun and safe educational environment for elementary-aged students. It functions to help students focus on Service, Opportunities, Academics, and Recreation (S.O.A.R.). SOAR's six core values are, be courageous, be grateful, be honest, be kind, be respectful, and be responsible. SOAR is a place where students are encouraged to "rise up" and be the best leaders they can be. Through this research, the SOAR program impact was analyzed by trends in program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy through teacher interviews. Teachers were interviewed to see if the peer-mentoring after school program had an impact on students at school. The research question presented for this research was, "Does the SOAR peer mentoring program have an impact on students from working families from their teachers' perspective?" The findings of this study indicate trends in program participants in comparison to non-program participants. Majority was determined by having a minimum of three out of five teachers confer on the same topic in their individual interviews. This chapter is divided into the six trends noticed from the data to draw conclusions: program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. The limitations, recommendations for future study, implications, and summary are included in this chapter.

**Trend 1: Program Participants**

Trends in the area of program participants were found through the five teacher interviews. Program participants are the students who attend both Local Elementary and the SOAR peer-mentoring after school program. Four out of five of the teachers interviewed directly described SOAR students in terms of positive attributes, describing students as fun, confident, motivated, engaged learners, and as having a heart for helping. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers expressed that students who participate in the program possess positive attributes when discussed as a group. In addition, three out of five of the teachers interviewed referenced to some degree the level of socialness that SOAR students seem to exhibit. Three out of five teachers, or the majority, directly address program participants' social traits in regard to school. It can be concluded that SOAR students exhibit noticeable social traits. Overall, it can be concluded that program participants possess positive attributes when described by their teachers and exhibit noticeable social traits in the classroom.

**Trend 2: Resilience**

A trend in the area of resilience was found through the five teacher interviews. Three out of five of the teachers interviewed said it was hard to say if program participants were more resilient than non-program participants. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers could not state that SOAR students had a greater inclination or showed greater resilience than their other students. One teacher mentioned that their school's demographic makes all her students more resilient than the average child. This is important to consider when regarding resilience with the Local Elementary population. Overall, it can be concluded that program participants do not exhibit noticeably higher resilience skills than others in their classroom.

**Trend 3: School Performance**

Trends in the area of school performance were found through the five teacher interviews. Four out of five teachers interviewed referenced that SOAR impacts public speaking and performing with program participants to some degree. They shared that program participants' were noticeably stronger in this skill than non-program participants. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers expressed that this program has an impact on program participants' performance and speaking skills. Three out of five teachers interviewed referenced a noticeable difference in program participants specific skills like math facts or sight words. They attributed this gain to the guided extra time the program provides for students to work on homework. It can be concluded that a majority of the teachers see the benefit of the program in regard to getting assistance on homework because of the extra time spent on homework in the program that translates to academic growth in some form. Three out of five teachers mentioned that they did not see an overall academic difference with SOAR students compared to other students. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers did not see an overall academic difference in program participants. Overall, it can further be concluded that this program addresses skill-specific areas of growth with students, but not overall academic growth. In addition, program participants exhibit stronger public speaking skills than non-program participants.

**Trend 4: School Motivation**

A trend in the area of school motivation was found through the five teacher interviews. Four out of five of the teachers interviewed referenced student motivation and student leadership in their responses in a positive way. It can be concluded that four out of five teachers, or the majority of teachers, referenced a noticeable difference in motivation to perform in school.

Overall, it can be concluded that program participants exhibit noticeable motivation in regard to school performance.

### **Trend 5: School Perception**

Trends in the area of school perception were found through the five teacher interviews. Four teachers mentioned in their interview answers that school perception is different because all students are different. They shared that in their opinion school perception really depends on the student. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers felt like it was hard to say if the after school program impacted school perception because each child is different. In addition to school perception, three teachers referenced how students are excited to attend the after school programs. As a result of these students being excited, they are excited to be at school to attend SOAR after, which impacts school perception. School now becomes associated with after school activities as well. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers expressed that students perceive SOAR as a place to be excited about going after school. Overall, it can be concluded that overall school perception is not a defining trait for program participants, as it varies by student, but it can be concluded that program participants are excited to attend the program.

### **Trend 6: Self-Efficacy**

Trends in the area of self-efficacy were found through the five teacher interviews. Two teachers specifically stated that program participants have a willingness to work or have a strong sense of purpose and drive that translates into their schoolwork. Four out of five of the teachers specifically address SOAR students with regards to a noticeable difference in confidence level compared to non-program participants. It can be concluded that a majority of teachers expressed that SOAR student participants stand out compared to their peers in regard to confidence at school. All five teachers at some point in their interviews specifically used the word

“confidence” when describing their program participants. They all shared that SOAR students exhibit confidence either in their leadership skills, speaking skills, performing skills, academic facts, or friendships in class. In addition, four of the teachers referenced the theme of participants of the after school program exhibiting a positive outlook or as “happy” students. It can be concluded that program participants are described by their teachers as showing greater “confidence” in the classroom than their non-program participants. It can also be concluded that a majority of teachers perceived SOAR students as having a positive outlook or as happy students. Overall, program participants are described as confident and positive or happy, and exhibit confidence. Their sense of self, or self-efficacy, can be concluded as positive because of the happiness and confidence they exhibit.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the results from the teacher interviews indicated that the SOAR after school program had a positive impact on the students who attended. This finding is similar to Salinitri (2005) who found that success with a program is not only measured by academic achievement, but also increased personal confidence. The majority of the teachers in this study mentioned the high level of confidence SOAR students possess, or the growth in confidence they have seen in SOAR students.

In addition, the findings of this study are similar to Jekielek, Moore, and Hair (2002) who concluded that mentoring can be effective in enhancing positive student development, improving students’ attitudes towards school, and reducing at-risk behavior. In this study the majority of the teachers addressed how excited students were to attend the after school program. In addition, the majority of the teachers discussed how much they enjoy having the SOAR students in their class and how they seek leadership roles and ways to be kind to others.

Overall, this relates to the article by Schmitz, Wagner, and Menke (2001) that expresses that relationships in a student's life with parents, families, teachers and other community members directly relate to a student's success and motivation. The majority of the teachers in this study referenced how the increased personal network that SOAR provides is important for providing a safe community for these students. The teachers also discussed how they see SOAR students as happy and confident, leading to confidence in classroom activities.

To date, no research has been conducted specifically on the SOAR after-school program's impact on students. This study can provide the SOAR program with information about how teachers perceive SOAR students and the positive difference the program makes to the students who attend.

The SOAR peer-mentoring program can do the following, from a teacher's perspective, for students from working families:

- *Program Participants:*
  - o Are positively described by their teachers as confident and positive or happy students
  - o Grow in skill specific areas academically (sight words, math facts, etc.)
  - o Exhibit confidence
  - o Exhibit noticeable social traits in the classroom
  - o Exhibit stronger public speaking skills than non-program participants
  - o Exhibit noticeable motivation in regard to school performance
  - o Exhibit strong sense of self-efficacy
  - o Are excited to attend the program.

Participants of a peer-mentoring after school program can, expect the above mentioned benefits to be noticeable from their teachers in the classroom. While all students and participants are different, trends are noticeable within the topic of peer-mentoring after school programs for students from working families.

## **Limitations**

Several factors of the design and implementation of the research influenced the results of the study. There are negative, positive, and unknown limitations.

### **Negative Limitations**

#### ***Global Events***

The design and implementation of the research study was in its entirety affected by the global event of the COVID-19 outbreak. Due to global shutdowns, restrictions were placed on research and the project had to be adapted to meet the conditions of the outside world. Originally, the research consisted of a triangulation collection of data. The first part involved having student participants assessed for resilience and school perception. The second part involved surveying parents and guardians of student participants, assessing for noticeable trends among student's behavior, impact of the program, and impact on their home life as a result of the program. The third data collection was the teacher interviews to analyze trends in teacher responses in regard to program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. Because of global events and the safety of participants, the parent/guardian surveys and student assessment were unable to be used for this study. As a result, only teacher interviews could be collected.

Because of the global event, teachers were only available for contact about participation in the study through email. Not being able to meet with teachers face-to-face to introduce and



discuss the study impacted the ability to get teacher participation. Teachers were learning to adapt to online teaching at this same time due to COVID-19 so answering questions for research may not have been a top priority, impacting the thoroughness of answers.

### ***Interview Format***

Teachers were only able to be interviewed through three options: phone call, video call, or typed responses. The limitation of not being able to meet with teachers in their location of preference, in person, limited the ability to have organic conversation potentially. Because of global events, interviews had to be practiced from a safe distance to ensure the safety of all participants. This distance between interviewer and interviewee created a physical disconnect by not being in the same location. In addition, by doing the interviews in these formats, responses may not have been as thorough.

### ***Number of Participants***

Due to COVID-19, teachers were busy transitioning to online teaching formats and what the rest of their school year would look like through a virtual learning format. As a result of chaotic times, only five out of eighteen teachers were able to participate in the interview. The small number of participants can greatly influence the result of the study because the small majority needed to determine significance was not as substantial as it could be with eighteen participants.

### **Positive Limitations**

#### ***Researcher Familiarity***

Prior to the interview, teachers may have been familiar with the researcher performing the questioning. The researcher was a former SOAR employee and current University of

Arkansas student. As a result, it may have been easier for the teachers to communicate with the researcher because of familiarity. The pre-existing relationships may have influenced the data.

### **Unknown Limitations**

#### *Interview Questions*

The teachers were asked a series of eight interview questions. It is unknown if different questions would have revealed other benefits, issues, or trends in the data that might have been important in regard to the study. There may have been questions that were not asked in the interview that may have targeted areas of the data more accurately or exposed greater majorities in data. It is unknown if other questions would have revealed more data significant to the study.

### **Implications of the Study**

Implications from this research can be made based on the identification of trends in interview responses. This research addresses the impact of peer-mentoring programs on students from working families, based on their teachers' perspective. The findings of this study can be used to support the further implementation of peer-mentoring programs based on the observable strengths the program provides to participants.

Based on these results, it can be inferred that other after school programs should examine using the peer mentoring system in their own program. By using a similar program system, programs can expect to receive similar results. In addition, it can be inferred that after school programs that serve students from working families benefit from having the focus of their programs built around strong relationships for those students. By providing students with strong relationships, these programs can help with student motivation, confidence, and school performance. It is additionally clear that communicating with teachers about the influence of a peer mentoring after school program is beneficial in monitoring how well the program is meeting

their goals. These programs aim to build character in students, and by assessing these programs the impact can be determined. Because teachers saw a positive impact on students from working families who attended the peer mentoring program, such programs can create a positive impact on students.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Because of limitations of this study, recommendations for further study can be easily made. The first recommendation for further study would be to complete the research in the original design of triangulation to assess students, survey parents/guardians, and interview teachers. By assessing students more data specifically related to student resilience and school perception would be provided and statistical significance could be determined. This would further allow for a greater amount of analysis to be made by providing charts and figures to support student assessment research. In addition, including parent/guardian surveys would allow the research to have a more holistic view in regard to the impact of the program on students and their families. This would also give the SOAR program valuable information about their program's impact and effectiveness.

Another recommendation would be to study a collection of mentoring-based after school programs. A cross-comparison of programs could be analyzed for common trends, impact, and effectiveness.

Further, this study could be expanded to assess students from working families' resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. Students could be cross-compared based on after school program involvement or other outside activities that students attend to identify trends in responses holistically as well as across specific domains.

## Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected as the results of this research study designed to address the question, “Does the SOAR peer mentoring program have an impact on students from working families from their teachers’ perspective?” The chapter discussed noticeable trends in data found in the topics of program participants, resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy. Limitations of the study were addressed, with specific emphasis on global events as an effect on the research capabilities. Implications of the study were made and recommendations for further research was suggested.

This study was designed to measure the impact of peer-mentoring programs from students from working families. It targeted the trends of resilience, school performance, school motivation, school perception, and self-efficacy to identify the impact of the program on student participants in the classroom setting. Overall, the data suggested that peer-mentoring after school programs had a positive impact on student’s participants' confidence, social skills, speaking and presenting skills, motivation, school performance, and self-efficacy from the teachers’ perspective.

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## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board Approval – Spring 2020




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**To:** Taylor Marie Reynolds  
**From:** Douglas James Adams, Chair  
 IRB Committee  
**Date:** 03/09/2020  
**Action:** **Expedited Approval**  
**Action Date:** 03/09/2020  
**Protocol #:** 2001240895  
**Study Title:** Studying and Assessing the Impact of Peer Mentoring on Students from Working Families' School Performance, Self-efficacy, and Resilience.  
**Expiration Date:** 01/23/2021  
**Last Approval Date:**

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

**Adverse Events:** Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Marcia B Imbeau, Investigator

## Appendix B

### SOAR Program Approval Letter



**SOAR Afterschool Program**  
**922 E Emma Ave, Springdale AR 72758**

January 20, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am aware that Taylor Reynolds is conducting an thesis project at my afterschool program, SOAR Afterschool Program with Grace Hill Elementary in Roger, AR. Taylor Reynolds has my permission to conduct all necessary research at our afterschool site to complete her project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Rediske". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ben Rediske, SOAR Director

## Appendix C

### Teacher Form of Consent to Study

**Studying and Assessing the Impact of Peer Mentoring on Students from Working Families’  
School Performance, Self-efficacy, and Resilience.**

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Principal Researcher: Taylor Reynolds

Hello! My name is Taylor Reynolds, and I am a senior Elementary Education major at the University of Arkansas. I am studying to be an elementary school teacher. I am currently working on an honors research project, and I am seeking your permission to be a part of my study.

My project focuses and serves as a way to assess how SOAR serves the Grace Hill students in regards to their school performance and attitude towards school. SOAR aims to “help narrow the income-achievement gap in math, improve academic and behavioral outcomes and reduce school absences. . . and serves as motivation for success in life.”

**Teacher participation will be at the place and time of the teachers choice and last for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Teacher participation will consist of answering questions, that may be audio recorded, about the impact, if any, the teacher has seen on SOAR students in the classroom.**

“The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families regarding their school performance, self-efficacy, and resilience.”

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you will be allowed to withdraw at any point. There are no possible risks. The data will be considered collectively in order to find trends in responses, so you can be sure that your responses will not be singled out.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this interview. Attached is the consent form needed to participate in the interview. Once this is received, we will schedule a time for your interview. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that may arise!

Sincerely,

Taylor Reynolds  
Honors Elementary Education Major  
University of Arkansas  
(850) 896-2125  
[tmreynol@uark.edu](mailto:tmreynol@uark.edu)

## INFORMED CONSENT

**Title: Studying and Assessing the Impact of Peer Mentoring on Students from Working Families' School Performance, Self-efficacy, and Resilience.**

*Researcher:*

Taylor Reynolds, B.S.E. Student  
 Marcia Imbeau, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor  
 University of Arkansas  
 College of Education and Health  
 Professions  
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*Description:* This study is an honors project designed to assess the impact of peer mentoring on students from working families regarding their school performance, self-efficacy, and resilience. This study requires that you complete one interview at the site of your convenience.

*Risks:* There are no risks associated with this study since it is a voluntary interview.

*Voluntary Participation:* Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.

*Confidentiality:* The data will be considered collectively in order to find trends in responses, so you can be sure that your responses will not be singled out. No identifying information will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this research.

*Right to Withdraw:* If you decide to participate in this research and complete the interview, but at any time and for any reason change your mind, you may withdraw your consent. No consequences will occur for this decision.

*Informed Consent:*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in the research study and give Taylor Reynolds the right to use my responses to assist in collecting data for this research.

## Appendix D

### Teacher Interview Questions

#### Teacher Interview Questions

These questions will be directly asked by the researcher to the teacher.

The following questions are strictly about your students in your class that are enrolled in the SOAR after school program and their impact on your classroom and school environment.

- 1) How many SOAR students do you have in your class?
- 2) Who are they?
- 3) From your perspective, what have you noticed about SOAR students that is the same or different compared to other students?
- 4) From your perspective, have you noticed anything on how these student perceive school? From your perspective, how do your SOAR students perceive school?
- 5) From your perspective, what, if anything, have you noticed about how these students perceive themselves?
- 6) From your perspective, how have you noticed these students handle performance or speaking settings?
- 7) How would you compare SOAR students to other students in your classroom: (please provide evidence)
  - a. In regards to resilience
  - b. In regards to school performance
  - c. In regards to school motivation
- 8) How would you describe your SOAR students school performance overall? (i.e. academics, achievement, socially, confidence, etc.)
- 9) Is there anything else you would like to share in regards to your students in the SOAR program?