



**Cradle Beach School  
Based Program:  
Impact on Academic  
Achievement  
*Executive Summary***



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## Overview

This report builds on an earlier research report entitled “Cradle Beach School Based Program.” That document provided descriptive information in comparison to district-wide data about the performance of students in the Cradle Beach Project SOAR program. This report, building on recommendations of the previous study, focuses specifically on the academic performance of students and utilizes a more rigorous experimental design to explore program impact relative to a control group of students who attended the same school, but did not participate in Project SOAR.

## Program Description

Project SOAR places Cradle Beach staff in the schools to work alongside teachers and other school personnel, providing a variety of services including individualized tutoring, cultural activities, active learning experiences, group work and enrichment activities. Additional programming occurs outside of traditional school hours. For instance, Cradle Beach staff conducts weekend retreats that are used to provide experiential learning opportunities for students, enhance their classroom learning, conduct individualized programming, and enhance science and math development. Weekend retreats are held throughout the year at Cradle Beach’s facility in Angola where students experience educational stations that include but are not limited to sports, computers, culinary arts, dance, music, beach and nature, photography, sensory, and theater. Weekend retreats are incorporated into the program to provide an off-site experience that many of these students have never experienced. Furthermore, the weekend retreats strengthen students’ commitment to their education and the program, increasing the overall impact on their educational and personal lives.

The current study focuses on students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades at one school in the Buffalo Public Schools. Academic records were obtained from 37 students who participated in Project SOAR and 116 control group students who did not participate in Project SOAR, but are from the same school and in the same grades.

## Program Objectives

The ultimate goal of the school-based program is to promote academic performance, the acquisition of skills that promote academic and life success, and positive behavior in the children it serves. A number of the program activities (e.g. tutoring) directly address the current academic needs of the children, while other activities (e.g. enrichment and cultural activities) are designed to foster positive attitudes toward learning and school. Consistent with their traditional camp-based programs, Cradle Beach staff seek to help children throughout the

program expand their developmental assets. The current report seeks to determine if participation in Project SOAR had an impact on school absenteeism, overall grade average including specific academic performance in math, English Language Arts, science, and social studies as well as performance on the NYS math and ELA assessments.

## Executive Summary

Overall academic achievement, as measured by overall grade averages was higher for Project SOAR students at a statistically significant level. The following bullets highlight the results of this control group study.

- **Absenteeism** increased throughout the year in both groups. However, it was consistently higher among students in the control group, suggesting that Project SOAR had a meaningful impact on reducing the level of absenteeism that would have otherwise been observed in students.
- **Grades** for all students exhibited modest declines between the first and fourth quarters of the academic year. However, overall grade average was consistently higher in each quarter for Project SOAR students when compared to the control group.
- **Math** grades for all students exhibited modest declines throughout the year. However, Project SOAR students consistently scored higher than control group students in Math, suggesting a positive impact of the Project SOAR program on Math skills.
- Results for **ELA** grades were similar to previous findings. ELA grades declined in both groups of students over the four quarters of the academic year. However, the ELA grades of Project SOAR students were consistently higher than those of students in the control group.
- While the average **Science** scores for Project SOAR students were higher from quarter to quarter, the difference was not statistically significant. Both groups of students saw a decline across the four quarters of the academic year.
- While the average **Social Studies** scores for Project SOAR students were higher from quarter to quarter, the difference was not statistically significant from grades in the Control Group. Both groups of students saw a decline across the four quarters of the academic year.
- Average scores were higher for Project SOAR students on both the **Math** and **ELA NYSAA** tests; however, the difference was not sufficiently large to be statistically significant. Furthermore, a higher proportion of Project SOAR students scored at the proficient level (3 or 4) than did the control group in Math (29.7% vs. 27.7%) and ELA (59.5% vs. 41.8%). The higher averages on NYSAA tests are consistent with the grade data reported above, but fell just short of being statistically significant.