

Tulare and Riverside County Offices of Education: In support of novice teachers

**PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
JULY 2018**



As part of an innovative partnership with REEd, Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) and Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) worked with content partners to develop a context-based approach for integrating the SOAR Teaching Frames into their existing teacher development programs. During the 2017–2018 academic year, 105 instructors, coaches, and instructional leaders were introduced to a set of high-impact teaching practices designed to enhance their ability to foster the professional growth of teacher interns and beginning teachers in Tulare, Riverside, Kings, Fresno, and northern Kern counties.

Learning Focus — Strategic Observation and Reflection (SOAR) Teaching Frames

The Strategic Observation and Reflection (SOAR) Teaching Frames help teachers, coaches, and administrators drive student learning by focusing on the most effective teaching practices. REEd is piloting the use of SOAR to support districts' implementation of new standards and to engage them in a process of continuous improvement. The Teaching Frames are research-based, and aligned with College and Career Readiness Standards, including the California Common Core State Standards.

Additional information about the SOAR Teaching Frames and related resources can be found at <https://www.soarpractices.org/>.

Partnership Objectives

- › Develop TCOE and RCOE's understanding of SOAR high-impact teaching practices
- › Support the integration of SOAR high-impact teaching practices into professional learning opportunities

Professional learning opportunities included a joint webinar (between RCOE and TCOE), two deep-dive sessions at TCOE and at RCOE, options to use the SOAR online platform, and the development of additional customized online modules for RCOE.

Project Impact

Professional development providers gathered comments from coaches and instructors about the professional learning opportunity at the close of each professional learning session. In addition, REEd staff conducted interviews with key program stakeholders (TCOE and RCOE program staff members). Feedback indicates that the SOAR Professional Learning Sessions were extremely well received, and that participating coaches and instructors have integrated disciplinary

SOAR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FEEDBACK

90%

OF SURVEYED PARTICIPANTS INDICATED:

- Content was current and relevant
- Content was cohesive
- Materials and handouts were valuable
- Presenters were knowledgeable

86%

- Indicated that the session met their needs

83%

- Indicated that they will be able to apply the content to their practice

discussion and metacognitive practices into their respective teacher preparation programs and various mentoring, coaching, and supervisory roles.

Integration of SOAR Teaching Practices

The following examples illustrate how the SOAR Teaching Frames are serving as a lens through which to improve core instructional practices across disciplines. As one instructor noted, “It [SOAR] really helps teachers with the ‘how’ part of the Common Core.”

› Practicum supervisors are using SOAR strategies to facilitate deeper, collaborative coaching conversations with interns. As one instructor-supervisor commented, “I thought I was really good at facilitating conversations.... It was very eye-opening to go through the training and see the possibilities I hadn’t considered before.”

› With support from SOAR consultants, RCOE structured cycles of inquiry around the SOAR Disciplinary Discussion Frame to support coaches for a deeper level of implementation. “Coaches tell us that they found it very helpful in offering resources, in offering guidance, and promoting beginning teacher thinking around the topics that SOAR addresses.”

› When re-evaluating course alignment with the new Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE) and California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP), an instructor observed that colleagues took the additional step of integrating SOAR practices into their courses: “We changed our questioning, assignments, and activities. Our questions are more in-depth and more aligned to really get at metacognition for our interns.”

› Instructors reported rewriting general education courses and also incorporating SOAR practices

into their special education courses for interns, commenting “We got a lot of good feedback, especially from the interns.” For example, after analyzing a SOAR practice video of a kindergarten teacher facilitating constructive conversations with young English language learners, mild-to-moderate special education interns immediately connected with practices they could implement in the classroom with their students.

› A mild-to-moderate special education program instructor noted, “It [SOAR] just goes across disciplines. A VAPA teacher totally loved it, [and] a science teacher incorporated it right into his science lesson, as did the social sciences instructor.”

› A TCOE participant said, “I am anxious to work with the team to pursue opportunities to collaborate as we design and implement a plan to ‘adopt’ SOAR as a common teaching-learning process (lesson design) throughout our TCOE Impact and iLead programs.”

Uptake: Actual and Anticipated Shifts in Practice

Instructors reported shifts in their own practices and anticipate similar shifts in teachers who are exposed to the SOAR Teaching Frames. For example:

› One instructor noted, “One of the biggest things [shifts] is you need to talk to your students



about the strategy you're using, why you're using it, and how it's going to help them." Subsequent to the SOAR training, instructors are refining their coursework around metacognition, and also are stressing the importance of deconstructing the metacognitive process for students.

- › Instructor evaluations from TCOE sessions indicate that "instructors are already implementing the strategies and using disciplinary discussions and layered texts." At the program level, more explicit feedback from interns is expected during exit interviews upon program completion, because interns already are implementing practices in their classrooms and bringing that learning back to their course sessions. One program implementer noted the idea of incorporating specific questions about implementation of SOAR disciplinary discussion strategies in

the end of program survey and exit interviews and course evaluations to continue exploring "how they've implemented SOAR and what additional training they feel might be helpful."

- › The recommended online training course, to meet the additional state-mandated training hours for mentors, was reviewed by TCOE staff members who noted connections between the stages of coaching and SOAR practices: "how the highest levels of teaching and coaching are really those disciplinary discussions ... and to see that research is showing how important that is."
- › RCOE staff members noted that embedding SOAR into their mentoring cycles of inquiry goes beyond, "setting a great foundation" for beginning teachers and also impacting coaches: "with Common Core, for coaches,

you know, Common Core was new to them, mid- or late-career, so it's helping them see the 'how' as well. As our coaches are learning the SOAR Frames, most of them are still classroom teachers themselves, so they're going into their classrooms, learning, applying, and in some cases sharing with colleagues and getting colleagues excited about [SOAR]. But then, as they work with beginning teachers, their own practice gets better."

TCOE program staff members anticipated that supervisors in the teacher development programs will continue to see evidence of implementation of SOAR practices for fostering disciplinary discussions during their field supervision of interns, and that they also will utilize these practices in their mentoring with interns. RCOE program staff members feel confident that the investment they are making in beginning teachers is an investment in the number of students that teachers will make over the life of their career.

Next Steps

Follow-up professional development on SOAR practices, coaching, and access to SOAR, and additional resources to supplement their courses, were the most-requested form of support from instructors following SOAR professional learning sessions. Sustaining instructors’ and supervisors’ instructional capacity building for deeper and broader implementation of high-impact practices is an important consideration beyond the initial partnership.

Participants mentioned numerous options to resource intern program instructors and supervisors – including making a self-paced SOAR module available online, and an observation-guiding questions tool to support supervisors with on-site mentoring.

Program staff members anticipate that they will leverage the connections and alignment between mentoring, TPE, CSTP, and SOAR practices through collaborative unit meetings with supervisors and instructors, reasoning that “We’ve seen such great results around what we’ve done so far.... They really need to be connected and know what they are learning in classes and what they should be expected to see when they go out in the field.”



Q2. MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



- Reflection & Discussion
- SOAR Tools and Strategies
- Practicing Coaching and Applying Strategies