Dear Parents,

We would like to welcome you and your child to the Academy at SOAR! You both are about to embark on a significant adventure, and it is important for you to prepare ahead of time to ensure this is a successful experience for all. You are giving your child a wonderful gift by enrolling them in The Academy at SOAR.

The Academy at SOAR is certified as a Non-Public School by the state of North Carolina. Therefore, we have been granted authority to provide academic instruction, credits and diplomas to students enrolled in the program. What this means is that the Academy at SOAR has undergone a rigorous inspection process and complies with the high academic and facilities standards required to provide a safe and outstanding experiential learning environment for your child. SOAR is also accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA), a group comprised of community and camp professionals who are dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults through the camp experience. This unique blend of academics and adventure have allowed us the opportunity to create a truly unique and remarkable experience for your child.

More specifically, we believe experiential education is one of the best ways to teach teens to be successful, independent, and self-sufficient in a close cooperative learning community that is supportive of their individual gifts and differences. Our goal is to give students a wide range of activities, skills, and experiences that will not only challenge them while they are enrolled at the Academy at SOAR, but will also relate to their experiences at home and in the future. After students return home, parents frequently comment to us about how much their youth has grown, not only physically, but in their attitudes and self-esteem. These are important and positive changes we strive to instill in our students while on their adventure at the Academy at SOAR.

We look forward to providing your child with a year full of growth, learning, fun, friends, and many unforgettable memories!

Sincerely,

Logan Walters
Academy at SOAR Director

John Willson
Director of AD/HD & LD Programs

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Checklist for Parents

- ❑ Carefully read the ENTIRE Academy at SOAR Handbook.

- ❑ Complete the Required SOAR forms packet included in this envelope ASAP. This packet includes the emergency contact information, medical history, student goals worksheet and the assumption of risk. Be sure to send the following back to SOAR: (Fax: 828-456-3449)
    - Completed Required Forms Packet.
    - Signed Semester Contract
    - Physical Form **(REQUIRES DOCTOR SIGNATURE)**.
    - Copy of immunization records.
    - Copy of insurance and prescription card(s) (front & back).
    - Copy of flight itinerary (if applicable).

- ❑ Call SOAR to schedule inbrief time and confirm arrival times.
  Call (828) 456-3435 (Eastern Standard Time).

Academic Checklist for Parents

- ❑ Please mail or fax Academic Records. Fax is (828) 456-3449 attn: Academic Director

- ❑ Submit Academic History
    - Academic Records – Report Cards / Transcripts (Last 2 years is sufficient)
    - IEP – If available contact most recent school
    - Assessments – Most recent standardized tests scores (includes Stafford, PSAT, SAT, ACT, CAT and Nova). Send any Psychological evaluations if available

- ❑ Submit course titles and academic subjects for the semester.
    - Note: Course names vary from state to state, so you will want to inquire at your child's current school district in order to determine what he/she would take this year. If your child will be enrolled at a different school post semester, then you will want to align his courses with that state or school's curriculum.

- ❑ Additional Support Materials - Instructional materials are available for standard courses, however, additional textbooks, workbooks, and novels may be requested to meet the needs of the individual student.

MY INBRIEF and Arrival TIME:_____

- ❑ Final payment is due before your child's course begins. Payments can be mailed, charged to credit card via telephone, or made online.

- ❑ Pack and prepare school supplies, gear and personal belongings (see gear lists and guides on pp 13-20).

SOAR SEMESTER COURSE PHILOSOPHY

"Learning to thrive and not just survive"

The Academy at SOAR is designed for individuals whose primary learning style is experiential and/or kinesthetic in nature. Based on the Walkabout Education Model, emphasis is placed upon applying knowledge to real situations, developing the whole person, and demonstrating competence to thrive in society (Gibbons, 1994). Activities are experiential, challenging, risk-oriented, and student-directed. As well, they provide a significant confrontation with self and facilitate appropriate transition to adulthood (Knapp, 1989).

"Every opportunity to succeed"

The Academy at SOAR is designed to promote the gifts and strengths of each participant. The challenges on this program and their resultant successes build self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance. One success, however small, builds on another as students begin to recognize and acknowledge their own worth. Each student is challenged at their own ability level, with a variety of adventure opportunities, such as backpacking, sea kayaking, rock climbing, and whitewater rafting. They are asked to stretch past perceived limits and are provided the necessary support and encouragement to make such a move. They are asked to take responsibility for all aspects of their life.

Nature plays an essential role in this kind of experience. For some, it provides a place to examine and discuss personal issues. For others, it's a chance to clarify personal values as the natural world reminds us of those things truly important. For all, it's an opportunity to discover innate creativity and resourcefulness in the absence of technological crutches. As such, it's a time to strengthen the inner self.

The group also plays an integral role in the success of each student. The peer group provides the necessary motivation and encouragement to examine individual choices and behaviors. The group does not move forward until each of its members is ready. The team creates a culture of accountability where unfulfilled responsibilities have logical and natural consequences.

While not a formal treatment program, the Academy at SOAR is able to facilitate a significant amount of personal growth and development. Adventure experiences, the natural environment, committed staff, motivated participants and the group process all contribute to promote personal growth and development of the whole person.

THE ACADEMY AT SOAR DESIGN

"*Learning that goes beyond books*"

The Academy at SOAR realizes the critical need for quality education, and the necessity to meet students at their individual level of achievement and to key into their unique learning style. To do so requires developing an individualized academic plan for each student and providing instruction utilizing traditional and alternative teaching methods. Understanding the individual learning style of each student is one critical step in this process. Students will complete the C.I.T.E. Learning Styles Inventory to identify learning style strengths, as well as a StrengthsQuest © Evaluation, identifying their "Top 5" individual strengths. This increases student's self-awareness, and is utilized in the presentation and reinforcement of academic material. Mathematics, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Art and Family Consumer Science are presented in an academic format combining classroom instruction and educational field experiences. Each course typically begins with a 2-week training phase as students learn critical skills necessary to work as a team.

"*Survival skills for the real world*"

The program is designed to provide students the opportunity to develop what are called "Life Success Attributes". The qualifiers listed in the Life Success Attribute Model are those identified by MH Raskind, RJ Goldberg, EL Higgins and KL Herman in Life Success for Children with Learning Disabilities: A Parent Guide; Frostig Center, Pasadena, CA; 2003 pub.; www.Ldsuccess.org. The 6 life attributes are indicators of future life success, and as such can be nurtured to help develop resilience and a deeper understanding of one's abilities, challenges and strengths. The Academy at SOAR has adapted this groundbreaking research and applied it to

our course design. The 6 life Success Attributes include: Self-Awareness, Proactivity, Perseverance, Goal Setting, Support Systems, and Emotional Coping Strategies.

Each program begins with all distractions removed from the environment. At the start of the program, no I-pods, video games, personal computers, internet, TV's, movies, junk food, etc, are permitted (students may bring these items, but they must be handed in at the start and they will not have access until a proposal is passed). This gives our students the opportunity to become a unit and to learn how to complete their responsibilities. Once students and their team are moving forward on their goals and responsibilities, they have the opportunity to advocate for their additional needs, through writing and presenting their proposals to the Director. When students and teams are progressing in a positive direction, they often find that most of their proposals are passed when they advocate for their needs and wants in a positive manner.

Students are involved at each level of the planning process to facilitate the development of critical life skills. Organization, time management, and communication skills are developed as students plan and implement each activity. Decision-making skills are enhanced as students are empowered to make the day-to-day decisions that affect their lives. Likewise, problem-solving skills are developed as they find solutions to real-life problems. Critical life skills, self-reliance, and social responsibility are difficult to teach, but are easy to learn once students are invested in what they are doing and excited about their chosen endeavors.

Service learning projects are a significant component to the Academy at SOAR program model. This component increases student awareness of their role in the human family through volunteer service, and provides tangible opportunities for learning social responsibility. The semester course model provides an abundance of both investment and excitement. In the end, students walk away recognizing learning as a life-long pursuit and come to view life as a journey, rather than just a destination.

ACADEMIC DESIGN

Academic Mission Statement

The overall mission of the academic component is to provide an alternative, experiential environment that nurtures self-discovery and independent inquisition. Many students have experienced difficulty in the traditional academic setting, stemming from a variety of factors including, but not limited to, LD, AD/HD, negative feedback from peers and teachers, inability to self-advocate, peer influences, and poor academic performance. Beyond providing content instruction in each course, the Academy at SOAR seeks to modify the student's perception of him or herself as a student, allowing them to become aware of their unique strengths, abilities, and challenges, along with techniques to overcome academic hurdles.

Accommodations

This mission is carried out by providing individualized instruction based on the needs of each student. As a predominately transitional program, a great deal of attention is given to the academic setting the student will transfer to upon completion of his time at the Academy at SOAR. Flexibility in instructional methods and course-work offerings is necessary to meet the needs of each student. Though traditional instruction is used at times during classroom days, the Academy at SOAR seeks to implement multi-sensory and experiential methods whenever possible to make learning experiences more relevant and meaningful. Accommodations, including alternative assessment, oral testing, audio support (disc recordings of content text and reading assignments), and project based activities, are frequently implemented to meet the needs of students.

Learning Environment

Further, it is the Academy at SOAR's desire for every student to maintain a safe, accepting environment that allows students to make mistakes, yet learn from these mistakes. This goal is implemented by creating an environment of respect and kindness between students, their peers and teachers as we examine material worked on. We then find ways to improve each assignment until a degree of mastery has been accomplished. Though feedback is critical in the development of young minds, it is constructive and focuses on both strengths and areas targeted for growth. The Academy at SOAR's philosophy is to prompt students to verbalize

feedback to themselves, whereby taking ownership of successes and challenges, rather than relying on others for praise and criticism. This method has been selected for its utility in shaping students into independent, self-aware learners.

Classroom Days

The typical school day begins at 9am and ends at 3 or 4pm, with one hour for lunch at 12pm. There are typically 5 to 6 periods each day, depending on the curricular needs of the group. Students may be dismissed early for exceptional performance or kept later for additional instruction. Classes typically run for 50-55 minutes with a 5-10 minute break in between for restroom use, socialization, and preparation time for teachers. There are two classrooms, each with a white board and space for students to sit at either desks or tables. Although the classrooms are smaller than those found in traditional schools, their average class size is 4. Computers, printers and internet access are available for projects and research. Many students also bring laptops for personal use.

Expeditions

The Academy at SOAR operates on a 3-week cycle: one week on base and two weeks on expedition. Realizing students are not always able to cover a comparable amount of material in the backcountry as in the classroom, emphasis is placed on successful classroom weeks. Expedition curriculum is adapted from textbooks and/or drawn from outside sources to ensure relevance to each expedition locale. For example, students backpacking on the Appalachian Trail will typically read Cherokee folktales about the region, learn about Civil War battle sites nearby, calculate average daily miles per hour or plot their course on a grid, and study deciduous trees commonly encountered on that portion of the trail. Though great care is taken to relate material to expedition locations, the overall goal is to provide a consistent level of instruction for students regardless of their location—classroom or trail.

Instructional Design

It is the responsibility of semester teachers to modify and adapt the curriculum to provide appropriate, meaningful learning experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers plan lessons and activities for students to complete on a daily basis, five days per week, while on expeditions in each subject. Support materials including audio recordings of text, solution manuals and answer keys are made available to wilderness field staff, as well as a detailed list of each student's daily work assignments. Wilderness Field Staff are not responsible for providing instruction, however, do ensure students complete work at an acceptable pace and provide basic support in the form of checking answers and answering questions. Mainstays in the academic structure of the program include expedition newsletters, letters home, journaling, weekly budgets and final presentations. The teaching staff facilitates the production of expedition newsletters and weekly letters to be mailed home. Students will also produce and deliver an academic presentation during the Parent Weekend, with support from the teaching staff. Journaling and weekly budget are overseen by the Director and Wilderness Field Staff.

Assessment and Feedback

For planning and instructional purposes, units of study are broken down into 3-week periods to create a streamlined and benchmark oriented structure. Students often perform at a higher level when they are aware of the frequency of assessments and timeline for completion of a curricular unit. In addition to breaking down units of study into 3-week segments, instructors also develop and implement goals for each student based on his needs, much like an IEP.

Academic Course Offerings

The following courses of studies are available in our academic programs

- ❑ Math
  - Middle School Math
  - Pre-Algebra
  - Algebra I
  - Algebra II
  - Geometry
- ❑ Science
  - Earth Science
  - Natural Science
  - Biology
- ❑ Language Arts
  - Survey of American Literature
  - Narrative/expressive writing
  - Expository writing
  - Argumentative/Persuasive writing
- ❑ History
  - Social Studies
  - Civics/US Government
  - World History
  - US History

Summary

In summation, the overall mission of The Academy at SOAR's academic program is carried out through individualized instruction both in and out of the classroom with the use of accommodations and adapted curriculum. Students are encouraged to develop self-awareness through learning and to advocate and provide feedback to his or herself. The curriculum is broken down into three-week units that are composed of at least one base week and one expedition, focusing on content in the classroom and relevant application in the field. Additionally, students have weekly and semester-long responsibilities while in the program that further support the mission.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

Packing for Camp

As you begin planning and packing, keep in mind students have a limited amount of space to store their belongings. Don't over pack! We've carefully selected each item on the gear list to ensure your child will have everything he or she needs while on course. All items on the gear list are required unless stated otherwise. It's essential you purchase all items on the gear list before your child arrives, as there are not many places to purchase gear near our bases. Be sure to label all of your child's belongings, including clothing, cameras, gear…everything! An excellent label source is Campbound.com. While we make every effort to help your child keep track of their belongings, we will not be responsible for lost items.

Gear Lists & Gear Guides

At the end of this handbook, and online at www.soarnc.org, you will find gear lists for all SOAR semester courses. Find the semester course your child is attending and purchase the gear listed for that course only. All expedition equipment will be furnished with exception of personal clothing, personal gear, and sleeping bag. A limited number of backpacks are available for loan. Please contact SOAR Admissions if you would like to reserve a backpack as soon as possible. Backpacks will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Do Not Bring:

Cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, sparklers/fireworks, weapons (including knives), hair dyes, expensive or valuable jewelry, skateboards, cell phones, computers, pagers, boom boxes, CD players or radios with speakers. If any of the above items are brought to SOAR, they will be gathered & held until the end of the course. However, SOAR will not be responsible for any lost or damaged items. Walkmans, Discmans, iPods, MP3 players, or hand held video games brought will be held by semester staff, and will only be available for use pending approval by staff.

Laundry
Students will do their own laundry while on base, as this is an essential life skill to learn. Students will use their spending money to complete this task at our local laundry mat. In addition to your large laundry bag, you are welcome to send a small mesh laundry bag that can help keep track of smaller items (socks, underwear, etc.).

Appearance Guidelines
The Academy at SOAR is dedicated to providing students with meaningful experiences, which allow them to learn and grow. To that end, we feel an obligation to insure each person feels comfortable in his or her attire and is not overly distracted by the clothing of those around them. Therefore, we have formalized our dress and personal appearance code. This dress code takes into consideration the need for self-expression, while also eliminating distractions that might undermine our students' experiences. Clothing that depicts violence, drugs, alcohol, or sexualized references are unacceptable.

Staff and students are not permitted to wear provocative clothing. Male staff and students are not permitted to wear pants exposing underwear or clothing with rips in inappropriate places. Additionally, shirts are required unless involved in water activities. Female staff and students are not permitted to wear: short-shorts, tube tops, or any garment that exposes an excessive degree of cleavage or the midriff area, pants that expose their underwear, or clothing with rips in inappropriate places. Uncovered bathing suits should be reserved for water activities and must be either a one-piece bathing suit or bikini with ½ inch straps. String bikinis are not permitted.

Significant appearance changes while at camp are not permitted. These include but are not limited to the following: drastic changes in hair style or color, piercings of any kind, and henna (temporary) tattoos.

HEALTH AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Overall Wellness
Students will experience physically challenging activities requiring overall physical fitness. Students complete an exercise routine each day, which may include a morning jog, walk or other aerobic activities while on base. Staff will perform a weekly health check on each student to ensure physical and emotional well being. Please communicate all health concerns or physical limitations of your child prior to arrival.

Prescription Medications
Students taking prescription medication are expected to arrive with a full month's dose of each medication in the original bottle with dosage instructions. Parents must make arrangements with staff for refills that coincide with scheduled expeditions, to prevent any lapse in treatment. Please refill medications and send them to SOAR Balsam Base ASAP. Staff will utilize a daily medication tracking form per student to document accurate administration. SOAR staff receives training on medication administration, including information about the common types taken by LD and AD/HD youth, their purpose and contraindications, and a standard protocol for administering the medication.

Doctor Visits
Please perform routine doctor check ups and shots before the start of the program. SOAR staff will utilize local doctors offices for students with unexpected medical issues and will contact parents if their student needs medical attention.

Insurance
If an accident or injury does occur, your child will be transported to the nearest medical facility. Any charges for sickness related to doctor or hospital visits (including prescription medications) will be the sole responsibility of the parent. Family health insurance information must be written on the camper's medical form, and a copy of your insurance and prescription card (if applicable) must be on file with SOAR.

Parent Notification of Injury and/or Illness

Parents will be notified of student injuries and illness under the following circumstances:

1. When the injury or illness requires medical care beyond the scope of staff certification.
2. When the student is to be seen by anyone other than SOAR staff for medical care.
3. When an illness or injury results in the student being separated from the group for a significant length of time (i.e.: more than one day).
4. When an illness or injury requires a student be removed from the course.
5. To obtain permission for administration of over-the-counter medication not included in SOAR's first aid kit (e.g.: cough or cold medication).

Personal Hygiene

Due to the wilderness nature of our program, traditional bathroom facilities may not always be available. Nevertheless, SOAR still requires students to maintain hygiene. Students are required to brush their teeth 2x a day, wash hands before meals and after bathroom use, wash their face, and take care of all other hygiene matters each day. Shower facilities will be used when available on trips. While on base, students are required to shower a minimum of every other day. If students are not attending to their hygiene responsibilities, staff will monitor the hygiene process.

Food at Camp

SOAR promotes healthy food options for our students. In keeping with our philosophy of developing independence and life-skills, students plan their own menus as well as purchase and prepare their own food. We will accommodate vegetarian and non-orthodox kosher diets; however, students are ultimately responsible for their own food choices. Parents are strongly discouraged from sending packages full of junk food and other food items, as sharing and storage of these may become an issue.

COMMUNICATION

One of our students' greatest opportunties in the program is developing independence. However, this may mean limited communication with family and friends. With over 30 years experience working with ADHD and LD students, SOAR has found that while limiting comunication can be challenging, it provides the student with the opportunity to disconnect from their past environment and allows them to fully focus on themselves and their current experience. This enhances their ability to become self aware and proactive in advocating their needs to staff, verses only communicating frustrations to their famlies. With this in mind SOAR has designed the following communication procedures.

Letters

Students are encouraged to write letters to family and friends whenever they would like. All students are required to write at least one letter home for every week they are in school. Parents are encouraged to write and or send small care packages to their students. Please do not send large amounts of candy or food - it will have to be shared with the entire team. Please respect SOAR guidelines by not sending items that would not be allowed in our wilderness based program (this includes cash that we are not made aware of, video games/psp's, cell phones, etc).

Send letters and US postal packages to:	Send FedEx and UPS packages to:
P.O. Box 388	226 SOAR Lane
Balsam, NC 28707	Balsam, NC 28707

Emailing and Computer Use

Students will have computer access, however all computer use is for school purposes only. A team may earn other computer-use privileges by writing proposals and completing their responsibilities. This includes access to their personal email accounts. If you would like to email your child, SOAR will deliver any email sent to the following address: admissions@soarnc.org. Please put student's name & course in the subject line)

Phone Use

Due to the wilderness setting of expeditions, students will have the opportunity to call home only while on base. Phone calls will be scheduled in advance, after each expedition. Students may talk to their family for up to 15 minutes. After the student finishes their conversation, a SOAR instructor will end the conversation in order to answer any questions.

Parent Visits

For some students, seeing their family may increase the likelihood of homesickness and may be counterproductive to the growing process. Halfway through the program, SOAR may allow one parent visitation for each student, depending on the individual and team dynamic at that time. If a visit takes place, we ask the parent(s) spend time with the entire team (i.e. a meal out or an activity) to allows the parent(s) to see their child interacting with their team. This also reduces the chance of hurt feelings of other students.

Updates from Staff

Field staff will speak with parents during scheduled calls home. Additionally, staff may call to inform parents of issues or needed prescription refills. The Director of Semester Courses may call or e-mail periodically to answer questions, or to discuss behavior and progress towards goals.

Any time your student communicates something that causes questions or concern, please do not hesitate to call or email the Semester Directors Logan Walters and Jeremy Neidens, during business hours. When we are in the field we cannot check our email accounts, so please call our cell phones for time sensitive matters. We would prefer being called during business hours; however for **emergencies** our cell phones are available 24 hours a day. Parents with students in our Western Program should first attempt to speak with Jeremy Neidens.

Important Contact Information:

Logan Walters Academy at SOAR Director	Office: (828) 456-3315 Cell: (828) 400-2562 Loganwalters2@yahoo.com
Jeremy Neidens Assistant Director	Office: (307) 455-3084 Cell: (785) 213-6472 Jeremy@soarnc.org
Katy Pfannanstein Academic Teacher	Office: (828) 456-3315
Main Office	Phone: (828)-456-3435 Fax: (828)-456-3449

Additional Staff

John Willson	Director of AD/HD and LD Services
Kylie Cyr	Admissions Counselor
Cate Munro	Admissions Assistant
Catey Terry	Administrative Director

Addresses:

USPS Address	FedEx/UPS Address
P.O. Box 388	226 SOAR Lane
Balsam NC, 28707	Balsam NC, 28707

Inbrief & Debrief Process

Inbrief and debriefs are crucial to a successful Academy at SOAR experience. If driving, your scheduled inbrief time will serve as your arrival time. During the inbrief, you will meet with staff to review medications and goals, and for any last minute questions. The staff will use information gathered during the inbrief to complete the Student Achievement Plan. This plan is designed to facilitate your child's experience, and is the foundation for the written evaluation completed at the end of the course.

During the debrief, we will review your child's experience and academic progress on the course. You will also receive the written evaluation. While it is crucial for your child to participate in this process, you may call the admissions office to request additional time alone with staff. The debrief, combined with the Parent Weekend, will help your family develop an action plan for the future and the transition back home.

Parent Weekend and End of Course Celebration

The Parent Weekend is your opportunity to celebrate the success of your child while on course. It is very important both to SOAR staff and your child that you attend. This time together will be an invaluable tool to help your family during your student's transition home. It begins the final weekend of the course around noon on Friday and ends with final debriefs of Saturday or Sunday. We will provide both lunch and dinner on Friday. You will be sent more materials as the end of the course nears, including a schedule and accommodation recommendations. Please make arrangements for your child to stay with you during this weekend.

Spending Money

Spending money for the program will be added to your invoice. We have carefully evaluated the amount of spending money appropriate for the semester and ask you not to send more money unless it's with staff's knowledge and for a designated purpose. SOAR will not be responsible for any money sent over the recommended amount. Students maintain a weekly budget of personal spending money and must allocate their funds appropriately to purchase needed and wanted items. Student will track spending through receipts and through a budget reconciliation process. This process helps teach financial accountability. Unspent money will be returned during at the end of the semester.

Tipping

This practice is NOT permitted at SOAR. Please share your appreciation in person or by note to those persons you wish to thank. Some parents choose to contribute to SOAR's scholarship fund to express extra thanks.

Participant Discontinuation of the Program

There are occasional instances when SOAR students may need to leave or may be asked to leave from a SOAR course. These instances include, but are not limited to:

- Illness or injury.
- The student's profile & behavior upon arrival are inconsistent with information presented in application materials.
- The student requires an inordinate amount of one-on-one attention from SOAR staff.
- The student displays continual aggressive behavior toward other students, self, or staff.
- The student displays inappropriate sexual behavior.
- The student uses illegal drugs, alcohol or tobacco products.

The Academy at SOAR reserves the right to remove students from the program due to these and other issues deemed appropriate to maintain the safety of students and staff and the integrity of the program. The Academy at SOAR recognizes that families may need to remove students from the program due to family emergencies, etc. While we will make all attempts to facilitate a speedy removal of the student from the field (normally 4-6 hours), families should be aware evacuations may take as long as 24 hours during expeditions. The Academy at SOAR does not reimburse families for student removal.

Transportation Policies and Procedures

To keep families abreast of SOAR's continued commitment to the safety of students during transport, we have posted our transportation policies at www.soarnc.org under the "General Info" page under the "FAQs" tab. If you have any questions regarding protocols, feel free to contact us.

TRAVEL TO CAMP

Parents are **strongly** encouraged to bring their child to the Semester Program. If you are unable to accompany him or her, please contact SOAR to coordinate travel arrangements.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO BALSAM BASE, NORTH CAROLINA

NOTE: Due to limited parking, we discourage families from driving motor homes, boats, or long trailers to Balsam Base Camp. ***Please use caution and maintain a speed of 15mph or less on the gravel portion of Rosemount Road.***

From Points North & East/Asheville (approximately one hour):
Take I-40 West. Take Exit 27 (Highway 19/23/74).
Following Route 23/74 you **pass**: Waynesville, Hazelwood, W. Waynesville (approx. 5 miles to Blue Ridge Parkway), Rest Area on left, Blue Ridge Parkway entrance on right.
Directly after the Blue Ridge Parkway overpass, turn right onto Rosemount Road around mile marker 94. Look for a green SOAR sign. Follow Rosemount Road approximately 2 miles (the first mile is paved, the second mile is gravel). The gravel section begins with a sharp right turn at Rosemount Cottages. At every fork in the gravel road, go right. The road dead-ends at SOAR's Balsam Base.

From Points West (approximately 2 hours from Knoxville):
Take I-40 East. Take Exit #27 (Routes 19/23/74) to Waynesville.
Following Route 23/74 you **pass**: Waynesville, Hazelwood, W. Waynesville (approx. 5 miles to Blue Ridge Parkway), Rest Area on left, Blue Ridge Parkway entrance on right.
Directly after the Blue Ridge Parkway overpass, you turn right onto Rosemount Road around mile marker 94. Look for a green SOAR sign. Follow Rosemount Road approximately 2 miles (the first mile is paved, the second mile is gravel). The gravel section begins with a sharp right turn at Rosemount Cottages. At every fork in the gravel road, go right. The road dead-ends at SOAR's Balsam Base.

From Points South/Atlanta (approximately 3 hours):
Proceed north on I-85 to I-985. Continue north past Gainesville to the Clarksville area. I-985 merges with Highway 441. Stay on 441 through Clayton and Dillard. Just south of Franklin, NC, take the 441 bypass, which directs you around the Franklin area. Continue on 441 through Dillsboro to NC Highway 23/74. Proceed East towards Waynesville on 23/74 about 9 miles to Balsam.
Just before crossing under the Blue Ridge Parkway, turn left onto Rosemount Road around mile marker 94. Follow Rosemount Road approximately 2 miles (the first mile is paved, the second mile is gravel). The gravel section begins with a sharp right turn at Rosemount Cottages. At every fork in the road, go right. The road dead-ends at SOAR's Balsam Base.

The Academy at SOAR ACADEMIC SUPPLY LIST
ALL COURSES

Required School Supplies:

It is not necessary to send these ahead of time. Students may bring school supplies to base on registration day.

- Flash Drive—at least 512MB
- Pencil Box or Pouch
- Pens/Pencils*
- 3 ring notebook
- Dividers (5 or 8)
- Calculator**
- Scissors (student size)
- Ruler

* Please send enough for the whole semester (3-4 packs). Students tend to misplace the pens/pencils they are sent with quickly and have to use weekly spending money for replacements. Additional pens/pencils will be kept in a safe place until they are needed.

** A basic function calculator is fine for all math at or below Algebra I. A graphing calculator is needed for higher level courses. We recommend the TI-83

Optional School Supplies:

- Markers and Colored Pencils

- Project Materials
  - Clay, colored paper, paint, yarn, etc.

- Laptop:
  - Mac OSX or higher **or** Windows XP
  - Computers should be loaded with Microsoft Office - Please ensure that it is a full version and not a trial. Trials often expire during the semester and create complications.
  - Please remove all games, as these can pose a distraction for students

The Academy at SOAR GEAR LIST
APPALACHIAN, YELLOWSTONE, & SOUTHWEST

PERSONAL CLOTHING:

one expedition-weight polypropylene long underwear top and bottom
one lightweight polypropylene long underwear top and bottom
two pair of thick wool or pile or fleece pants
two thick wool or pile fleece sweaters
eight pair thick wool or polypropylene socks
four pair polypropylene sock liners
one set Gortex (or similar waterproof material) pants and jacket storm gear
one thick wool, pile or fleece hat
two pair wool or pile or fleece gloves
two pair of polypropylene glove liners
one waterproof shell mitten structure
two belts
one sun/rain hat (a baseball cap is fine if your rain jacket has a hood)
two pair quick dry shorts
one bathing suit
three sets of day to day clothes
one set of work clothes (i.e. jeans, T-shirts, flannels, sweatshirts, etc.)
six pair underwear
one balaclava (facial hat)

FOOTWEAR:

one pair waterproof leather or Gore Tex hiking boot with flexible unshanked sole
one pair water shoes or Croc-type sandals (non-velcro), no sandals
one pair running shoes

PERSONAL GEAR:

one internal frame backpack (5,500 - 6,000 cubic inch **minimum** capacity)
one zero degree or below Packable sleeping bag (It should also be synthetic with hollofill or quallofill material. Down and feather bags are **not** acceptable)
one waterproof / breathable bivy sack **(Yellowstone and Southwest Semesters only)**
one compression stuff sack for sleeping bag (make sure it fits the Sleeping bag)
one sleeping pad (Ridge Rest or Therma Rest Standard pads are highly recommended)
one bowl, one cup, one fork, one spoon (made of plastic or metal)
three one quart large mouth water bottles (Nalgene is best)
one laundry bag
spinning fishing rod
sunglasses
backpack rain cover
sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
whistle with lanyard to wear around neck
small headlamp with a L.E. D. bulb
parachute cord or small diameter nylon cord - 50 Feet
one day pack with waist belt

PERSONAL HYGIENE NEEDS:

biodegradable soap
deodorant
two toothbrushes
toothpaste
two wash cloths
two bath towels
razors and shaving supplies, if needed

****No colognes, hairsprays, or mousses - they smell like food to animals

OPTIONAL ITEMS

Camera
Eye Glasses (Bring an extra pair if your wear prescription glasses)
Watch
Compact Binoculars
Field Guides
one pair Sorrel type winter boot– **(Yellowstone and Southwest Semesters only)** rubber bottom with leather upper and removable liners. Zero degree comfort rating or lower.
Snow goggles **(Yellowstone and Southwest Semesters only)**
Camp Chair (A Crazy Creek type chair or conversion kit for the rest pad is ideal)
IPODS, PSP and laptops (These items will be handed in at the begin of the program, and used according to protocols)

ITEMS NOT TO BRING

1. Do not bring expensive jewelry
2. Do not bring any excessive clothes or items not listed
3. Do not bring a lighter or matches
4. Absolutely no tobacco, alcohol or illegal substances
5. Do not bring a knife.
6. Cell phone

RECOMMENDATIONS

Read the boot insert provided before purchasing a new pair of boots, and insure you have time to break them in before arriving. You may want to shop at a reputable outdoor store for the sleeping bag, backpack, and raingear, as these items are essential for success on the course. Please avoid bringing any items with you that are especially valuable or fragile.

Students should bring belongings in either their backpack and one duffel style bag, or a backpack and one suitcase style bag.

The Academy at SOAR GEAR LIST
SOUTHEAST COSTAL ONLY

PERSONAL CLOTHING:

One lightweight polypropylene long underwear top and bottom
One fleece sweater
Eight pair socks, insure at least 3 pair are synthetic hiking socks
One set Gortex (or similar waterproof & breathable material) pants and jacket storm gear
Eight t-shirts
One wool, pile or fleece hat
One pair wool or pile or fleece gloves
Two belts
One sun/rain hat (a baseball cap is fine if your rain jacket has a hood)
Five pair quick dry shorts
Four bathing suits
Five sets of normal school clothes (suitable for cold temperatures)
One set of work clothes (i.e. jeans, T-shirts, flannels, sweatshirts, etc.)
Eight pair underwear

FOOTWEAR:

One pair of Neoprene water shoes or booties
One pair of Teva type sandals, preferably with buckles
One pair of hiking boots with flexible sole
One pair of athletic shoes

PERSONAL GEAR:

One zippered soft shell duffle bag (6,000 cubic inch capacity)
one zero degree or below Packable sleeping bag (It should also be synthetic with hollofill or quallofill material. Down and feather bags are **not** acceptable)
One compression stuff sack for sleeping bag (make sure it fits the Sleeping bag)
One sleeping pad (Ridge Rest or Therma Rest Standard pads are highly recommended)
One bowl, one cup, one fork, one spoon (made of plastic or metal)
Three one-quart large mouth water bottles (Nalgene is best)
One laundry bag
Spinning fishing rod
Sunglasses
Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
Whistle with lanyard to wear around neck
Small headlamp with a L.E. D. bulb
parachute cord or small diameter nylon cord - 50 Feet
One day pack with waist belt

The Academy at SOAR GEAR LIST
SOUTHEAST COSTAL ONLY (cont.)

PERSONAL HYGIENE NEEDS:

Biodegradable soap
Deodorant
Body talc and or medicated gold bond powder
Two toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Two washcloths
Two bath towels
Razors and shaving supplies, if needed

****No colognes, hairsprays, or mousses - they smell like food to animals

OPTIONAL ITEMS

One internal frame backpack (5,500 - 6,000 cubic inch **minimum** capacity)
Backpack rain cover
One set of mask, fins, and snorkel
Camera
Eye Glasses (Bring an extra pair if your wear prescription glasses)
Watch
Compact Binoculars
Field Guides
One hammock
Camp Chair (A Crazy Creek type chair or conversion kit for the rest pad is ideal)

ITEMS NOT TO BRING

1. Do not bring expensive jewelry
2. Do not bring any excessive clothes or items not listed
3. Do not bring a lighter or matches
4. Absolutely no tobacco, alcohol or illegal substances
5. Do not bring a knife.
6. Cell phone

RECOMMENDATIONS

Read the gear guide provided before purchasing new equipment. You may want to shop at a reputable outdoor store for the sleeping bag, backpack, and raingear, as these items are essential for success on the course. Please avoid bringing any items with you that are especially valuable or fragile.

Students should bring belongings in either their backpack and one duffel style bag, or a backpack and one suitcase style bag.

The Academy at SOAR GEAR GUIDE

Did you ever receive a gear list from a wilderness program and panic? So much stuff! Likely questions arise. Where do I begin? The outdoor gear industry is like anything else - you get what you pay for. Do you need to purchase expensive gear from a specialty store? Not necessarily. Start by asking yourself these questions:

- How much am I willing to spend?
- Will this equipment ever be used again?
- How comfortable do I want my child to be?

With all of this in mind, let's talk gear! Here are a few tips in looking for the most critical items:

SLEEPING BAG

Weather can be unpredictable, with temperature varying greatly.

What to look for in a sleeping bag:

- The comfort rating is measured in degrees F. Remember the temperature rating is relative. If you are cold or warm natured, remember to compensate accordingly.
- Weight is important - look for a bag that is as light as possible. A 0 - 5 F degree bag should weigh no more than 5 to 7 lbs.
- Compressibility refers to the size of the stuff sack the sleeping bag can be stuffed. The smaller, the better. Be careful, manufactures know you will be evaluating compressibility so they sell very small stuff sacks with their bags. Make sure your child can get the bag back into the sack without difficulty.
- The most efficient sleeping bag design is the mummy bag with a hood or draw string .
- The fill or insulation in a bag will determine the warmth to weight ratio. There are two types of fill: synthetic and down. We require synthetic fill such as Dacron II because it will maintain some insulating value even when wet and will dry much faster than down.

SLEEPING PAD

A sleeping pad is an important part of camping equipment. In addition to comfort, the pad is an essential item providing insulation from the cold ground.

Important information about sleeping pads includes:

- There are two different mattress styles - closed foam and self inflating open foam
- The closed foam mat price ranges $9 to $25
- The self inflating mattresses are more expensive, starting at $40
- Closed foam mats are better for icy/snowy conditions

INSECT REPELLANT

A non-aerosol repellant is required (cream or liquid). Aerosol sprays can damage the waterproof characteristics of fabrics including jackets and tents.

RAIN GEAR

Effective rain gear consists of a separate top and bottom made of plastic coated fabric. There are two types of jackets that are adequate: waterproof-nonbreatheable and waterproof-breathable. Breathable materials allow sweat to evaporate through the jacket. Non-breathable will not. Due to the physical nature of the course, we strongly recommend breathable fabrics to ensure comfort. You may also choose to purchase a Soft Shell jacket that combines a fleece and waterproof Layer. These technical fabrics are great in a variety of conditions, but can eventually become saturated in a downpour. The easiest way to ensure comfort is to utilize a number of layers. We recommend a combination of underlayer, fleece and a waterproof outerlayer for maximum effectiveness in cold, wet conditions.

WATERBOTTLES

Water bottles, also known as canteens, should hold at least 1 qt and **not leak**. The army surplus canteen is a 50/50 gamble as about half of them leak. The old western style round canteens typically leak and are hard to pack. The best option is a plastic "Nalgene" bottle. Please insure you pack two water bottles.

NYLON CORD (50')

This cord is used in the camping setting for clotheslines, lashing gear, etc. It is a small diameter cord and is sometimes referred to as "parachute" cord. Please bring at least 50 feet.

DAYPACK

A daypack is a small backpack used to carry essential gear for day excursions. A school-type book bag will suffice if it has padded shoulder straps and is well constructed. The daypack must be large enough to carry the "five essentials" and then have a little room left over for lunch items. The five essentials include: rain gear, water bottles, flashlight, whistle, and extra warm clothing. Some daypacks have a waist belt. This is a nice feature as it redistributes some of the weight of the pack from the shoulders to the torso.

LARGE BACKPACK AND DUFFEL BAG

Please pack all of your gear and clothing in a duffel bag and large backpack. You will store your gear in a duffel bag while in the cabins at Balsam Base. Duffel bags with zippers that run the length of the bag are easier to use than the old style army duffel bags. Backpacks should be comfortable and approximately 4500 – 7000 cubic inches with a sturdy hip pad and a good suspension system. Prices range from $50 - $350. Fit is the most important factor in purchasing a backpack. We recommend an internal frame pack, with plenty space for all of the gear. It is also important to purchase Rain Cover for your backpack that is compatible with the size and shape of your backpack. This will help prevent soaking wet gear.

EATING GEAR

Eating gear should be sturdy but does not need to be fancy. A plastic bowl or a metal sierra cup, spoon, fork, and butter knife are sufficient. They do not need a full blown "mess kit" or "cook set".

WOOL/SYNTHETIC CLOTHING

Wool or synthetic (also known as fleece or polyester) clothing is an important component of a successful outdoor experience. Wool and/or synthetic clothing will keep you warm under the most unfavorable conditions, even when the clothing is wet. Cotton will not! Please **do not** substitute cotton clothing for wool or synthetic clothing items indicated on the Gear Lists. Cotton is an ideal material for jeans and T-shirts as long as you have the wool or synthetic clothing available for cool or rainy weather.

BOOTS

Boot selection and preparation are important. Ensure the boots are comfortable and able to accommodate a pair of trekking socks for a crisp mountain morning. Reputable makers of lightweight hiking boots include: Lowe, Hitech, Danner, Vasque, Merrell. It is critical that you break in any boot before the start of your course. Failure to do so will result in blisters and sore feet. The final step in preparation is waterproofing, if your boots are not already waterproof. Leather/nylon boots can be sprayed with a silicone base spray like Scotch Guard or painted with a liquid silicone treatment such as Aquaseal.

SOCKS

Quality socks are important in preventing blisters. Cotton socks will increase the foot moisture and discomfort. Please purchase wool or synthetic wool socks, such as Smartwool or Thorlo Backpacking socks. Although these are more expensive, they are more durable and worth the cost. Just be sure to put your child's name on the socks! You may also consider purchasing a liner sock, which can be worn in combination with the backpacking socks. This will further decrease friction between the foot and the boot, and can extend the time in which socks the wools socks can be worn prior to washing.

WATER SHOES

Water shoes will be worn in all water based activities such as swimming. A Velcro-strap "teva" type is common as is the slip-on water shoe. However some Velcro shoes may get sand stuck in the straps which can create blisters. Keen and Chaco are two brands of popular watershoes that provide a structured foot bed and are longer lasting that the inexpensive watershoes.

SORREL-TYPE BOOT *(Only required for Yellowstone and Southwest)*

These boots have a rubber sole with a leather upper. The liners are removable so they can be dried. These shoes will keep feet warm well below 0 degrees. Prices range from $80 - $150.

FLASHLIGHT

New technology has created a flashlight / headlamp that uses L.E.D. bulbs and will burn significantly less batteries. Brands include, Petzel and Princeton Tech. You can order them at gear stores or Campmor. Prices range from $30 - $50. Headlamps are strongly recommended.

MASK, FINS, SNORKEL

A good set of mask, fins and snorkel will be important. The mask should be high grade silicone and fit comfortably on your face. Test fit by holding the mask to the face and applying a mild amount of suction through the nose- the mask should stay in place. Be sure to wash the mask with toothpaste to remove the protective barrier applied for shipping. This barrier makes it difficult to defog the mask in the water. The snorkel should have a purge valve and integrated snorkel keeper. A set can cost between $50 and $100. Many people enjoy a neoprene mask strap versus the silicone that usually comes with the mask. There are two types of fins, slip-ons and fins with straps, which require the additional use of neoprene booty. We recommend the latter. The fins that require straps are more durable and allow the snorkeler to enter the water with foot protection (the booties), then put the fins on. Prices range from $50 - $150. These items can be purchased during the course at discount shops in the Florida Keys.