



SOAR IN 4

ONE FAMILY. ONE NEIGHBORHOOD AT A TIME.

Empowering Families for School Success.





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THE LITERACY CHALLENGE

Third-grade reading proficiency is a pivotal academic benchmark that determines a child's future success.

In Florida, **46% of students lack this proficiency**, and despite recent progress, roughly **half of Manatee County students perform below grade level**.

Addressing this early is vital, as students who fall behind are four times more likely to leave high school without graduating.

Mission

To foster a foundation for lifelong learning by engaging families and aligning community resources to advance early literacy.

Vision

A community where every child is prepared for school and supported by confident, skilled families.

Systemic Alignment

Success is driven by a robust public-private partnership between the School District of Manatee County, local government, foundations, and philanthropic leaders.

All Soar in 4 programs are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, ensuring children develop the skills and competencies necessary for school readiness and long-term success.





THE FOUNDATION OF SUCCESS

Literacy success does not begin in the classroom—it begins at birth. **Family engagement is the primary driver of success**, influencing vocabulary growth and school readiness through daily interactions and early experiences.

The Truth About Reading

From day one, children are building the foundation for reading:

- Hearing words, stories, and songs
- Developing vocabulary and listening skills
- Learning language through everyday interactions

Families Matter Most

When families are engaged early:

- Children build stronger vocabulary and language skills
- They achieve more in reading and across all subjects
- They start school ready to succeed, not catch up

That's why every Soar in 4 program is designed to strengthen the partnership between children and the adults who matter most.



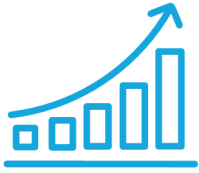
“ The impact of the Soar initiatives in Manatee County reflects a powerful truth: when a community comes together around its youngest learners, we create lasting change. Through the support of our voters, who recognized the importance of early learning by wholeheartedly approving the referendum, we have made a clear and collective commitment to invest in the future of our children. This is not just an investment in our school system—it is an investment in the strength, vitality, and long-term success of our entire community.

Early literacy is a shared responsibility, and through the Soar programs, we are demonstrating what is possible when we work together to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive.”



Dr. Laurie Breslin, SDMC Superintendent





Academic Growth

Participation in the Soar Lab is making a measurable difference for young learners.

Manatee County VPK students who attend a Soar Lab field trip gained an **additional 1.6 months of academic growth** compared to their peers. That's meaningful progress in a short amount of time—and it adds up!

All programming is aligned with Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS), ensuring that every activity is developmentally appropriate and geared toward school readiness.



Strong Return on Investment

The Soar Lab is not only effective—it's efficient!

7,588 children and an additional **1,101 students** were served during open Lab hours in the first six months.

In the 2025–26 school year, the Soar Lab welcomed **112 school district operated Pre-K classrooms**, engaging **1,101 students** and **316 parents**, and other caring adults through field trip experiences that supported school readiness and early learning.

This is high-impact work that maximizes every dollar to benefit more children and families!

\$59 in value returned for every **\$1** invested!



Quality Across Every Classroom

In the 2025–26 school year, **every SDMC VPK student experienced the Soar Lab. All VPK classrooms earned a CLASS rating of “Meets Expectations” or higher.**

The Soar Lab field trip serves as both a professional learning opportunity for teachers and an enriching experience for children. Teachers have opportunities to observe, practice, and engage with strategies for scaffolding children's learning, while students engage in new and intentional learning experiences. This results in higher-quality early learning experiences across the district!



Rising Literacy Outcomes

VPK Early Literacy test results show a **12% increase from 2024–25 to 2025–26**. Students are not just participating—they are improving!



Growing to Meet the Need

Over the last five years, Manatee County's kindergarten readiness rates have improved by **more than 3%**.



Empowered Families = Stronger Readers

Family engagement is at the heart of this success. **100% of caring adults who visited the Soar Lab reported learning a new skill** to support their child's learning at home. When families feel confident, children benefit and learning continues beyond the classroom!



Proven Program Effectiveness

A rigorous independent evaluation conducted by Results 1st confirmed the program's effectiveness.



The Bottom Line

The Soar in 4 programs and the Soar Lab are delivering **proven, measurable results** in boosting student growth, strengthening classrooms, and activating families across Manatee County.

WHO WE SERVE

Strategic Family Support

Soar in 4 provides no-cost programming and materials to families from birth through 3rd grade—the most critical window for brain development. By empowering parents as a child's first teacher, the program builds a sustainable foundation for reading success.



PROGRAMS & HISTORY

Comprehensive Literacy System

Since its 2015 launch, Soar in 4 has evolved from a single-site summer initiative into a comprehensive, community-wide movement. Our multi-faceted approach includes:

- Monthly museum-based learning opportunities
- Outdoor literacy trails
- Twice-monthly programming delivered at county library branches designed to reach families in their own neighborhoods
- The Soar Lab provides daily community access, extended hours, and availability during holiday breaks and throughout the summer





Our Programs

Each Soar in 4 program plays a different role, but together they create a comprehensive literacy system.

Program	Primary Role
Big Soar at the Bishop Museum of Science and Nature	Provides families with free museum admission and take-home, hands-on learning materials, along with ideas and guidance for extending learning at home.
Soar StoryBook Trails in County Park Locations	An outdoor literacy experience that makes learning active and accessible.
The Soar Lab	Sparks curiosity through play and discovery as children actively engage with hands-on exhibits, learning by touching, exploring, experimenting, and imagining.
Soar StoryTime Connecting Families to Neighborhood Libraries	A playful early literacy experience where families enjoy stories, sing, dance, and movement – building language, literacy, and social skills along the way.

Together, these programs:

- Reach families where they are, in neighborhoods, parks, and libraries
- Reinforce that learning happens everywhere creating brain-building moments beyond the classroom
- Empower parents to play an active role in building their child's literacy

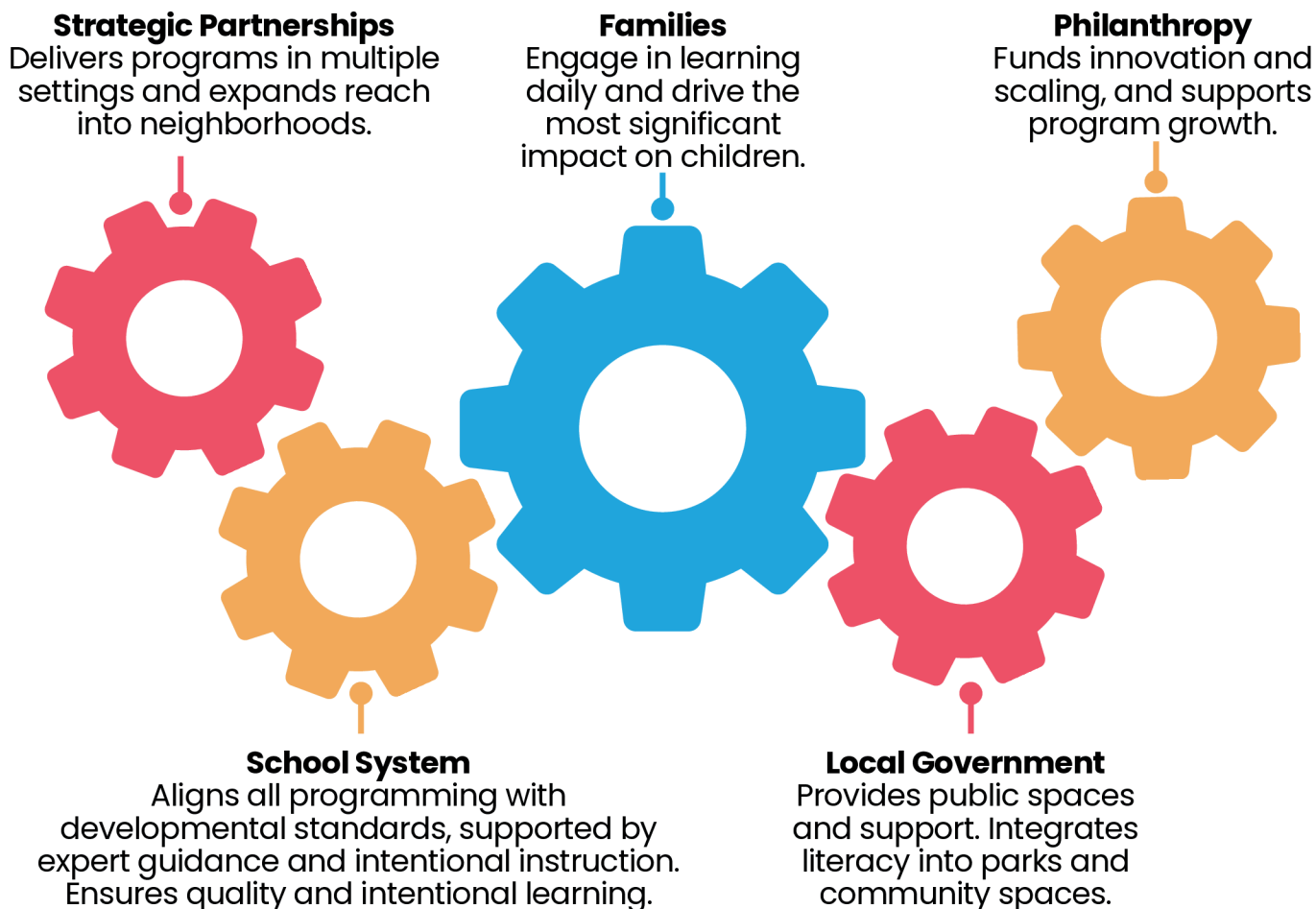
This unified approach helps children start school ready and on track to read proficiently by 3rd grade!



Soar in 4's collective approach reflects a shared understanding that improving early literacy outcomes is not the work of any one system. It requires our entire community working together.

AN INTERCONNECTED SUCCESS MODEL

Soar in 4 operates through the synergy of five key "gears". Together, these elements drive superior school readiness outcomes. We invite stakeholders to sustain this progress through strategic investment and community participation.



JOIN OUR STORY

The success of Soar in 4 has always been powered by our community and there is a place for everyone in this work. Early literacy is not just an educational priority—it is a shared responsibility that begins at birth and grows through the collective efforts of families, educators, and community partners. **Now, we invite you to be part of the solution.**

PARTNER WITH US

Help shape the future of early learning in our community! Strategic investments from individuals, foundations, and businesses help Soar in 4 give young children the strong foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond - strengthening families today and helping build a thriving community for the future.

To learn more about partnership and investment opportunities, contact Steve Roskamp at 941-400-7488 or steve@roskampfl.com.

SCHEDULE A TOUR

We invite our current and prospective community partners to schedule a time to bring their teams through the Soar Lab for a tour. To do so, please RSVP to Steve Roskamp at 941-400-7488 or steve@roskampfl.com, or Angela Knappek at 941-751-6550 ext. 38202 or knapeka@manateeschools.net.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

Every gift - whether one-time or monthly - helps provide hands-on learning experiences, family resources, and early literacy opportunities that strengthen children, families, and our community.

Scan the QR code or visit soarin4.org/donate to make your gift.



SEE WHO SUPPORTS THE SOAR IN 4 MOVEMENT

The Soar in 4 movement unites nonprofits, businesses, government agencies, foundations, philanthropists and families together to make our impactful work possible.



CONNECT WITH US

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