

NORTHSHORE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM'S  
**SOAR/EMBARK TRANSITION PROGRAM**  
**AT**  
**SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2025-2026**



121 Loring Avenue  
Salem, MA 01970  
978-740-5913

THE TRANSITION PROGRAMS AT SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY: SOAR/EMBARK  
STUDENT HANDBOOK SEPTEMBER 2025-JUNE 2026

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## INTRODUCTION

The SOAR and EMBARK Transition Program, located on the campus of Salem State University, is committed to supporting neurodiverse young adults to build meaningful, independent lives after high school. Designed for students ages 18–22, these programs support individuals with executive functioning challenges, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and related needs as they take the next steps toward adulthood. Our students often have a range of neurodevelopmental differences, including ASD, ADHD, and dyslexia.

We understand that many students in this age group have incredible strengths—whether creative, intellectual, or personal—but may still need support with social interactions, decision-making, and everyday responsibilities. That’s why SOAR/EMBARK focuses not just on academics and job training, but also on building confidence, communication skills, and a sense of personal responsibility in all areas of life.

Our Salem State University setting provides a myriad of opportunities to grow in a supportive, inclusive environment—whether it’s learning to take the bus independently, managing a budget, practicing interview skills, or forming friendships that build self-esteem.

Program experiences may include:

- Navigating public transportation and community spaces
- Building organizational and time management skills
- Practicing money management and budgeting
- Exploring jobs through paid internships
- Strengthening study habits and learning strategies
- Developing meaningful social connections and self-advocacy

At SOAR/EMBARK, we meet students where they are—and help them move forward. We are here to support that journey with compassion, structure, and a deep belief in every student’s potential.

## **Eligibility Requirements for Admission to the SOAR/EMBARK Program**

To be considered for admission, applicants must:

- Be between the ages of 18 and 22 with a documented disability
- Have completed four years of high school
- Demonstrate the motivation and behavioral readiness to explore work opportunities in a variety of settings
- Complete at least one visit to the SOAR/EMBARK Program
- Participate in a personal interview with Program staff

## **Referrals**

All referral information should be sent to:

Ellen Heald  
Program Director/Principal  
Enterprise Center  
121 Loring Avenue, Suite 270  
Salem MA 01970  
eheald@nsedu.org

## ATTENDANCE

Consistent attendance is mandatory for a student's successful integration and success at SOAR/EMBARK. If attendance is a concern, students and their parents will be required to meet with program staff to develop a remedial attendance improvement plan. Students must bring a doctor's note for any illness treated under the physician's care. **In the event of a sudden illness/ or an emergency, the student is expected to contact Program staff as soon as possible.** Appointments (medical, dental, therapies, etc.) should be scheduled outside of school hours whenever possible.

**Absence line:** 978-740-5913, option 1

## PUNCTUALITY

Students are expected to arrive at The Program on time and be prepared for class or work. If a student has excessive tardiness/absences a corrective plan will be developed with the assistance of the program staff, the student, and their parent/guardian.

## DRESS CODE

Program students are expected to practice good conduct, use respectful manners, and dress appropriately for both work and school. Students are expected to maintain their personal hygiene (regular bathing, brushing teeth, use of personal hygiene products, etc.) Students are required to wear clean, Program and worksite-appropriate clothing.

## PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

Pick up and drop off should be in lot E, via the loading dock. **Student drivers** need permission from the program director and will need to complete the necessary forms in order to receive a (mandatory) parking pass.

## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

No student will be allowed to come to school with any type of orthopedic equipment without the proper documentation from the student's physician. Physician approvals must be written and kept in student records. The physician's note must include the diagnosis of the medical problem and an indication of how long the orthopedic equipment is to be used.

## **SMOKING**

Smoking is prohibited in the Program and on the Salem State University campus.

## **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

The use, possession, distribution, and sale of drugs and or alcoholic beverages are prohibited in The Program, Salem State University campus and all worksites.

THE following penalties will result from any infractions of this policy:

- 1) If at school or work, the police will be notified & take possession of the substance.
- 2) Within 48 hours, a meeting will be held with the student, his/her parents or guardian, school district personnel, and The Program staff to determine appropriate next steps as determined by The Program Director (and/or their designee) up to and including suspension or expulsion from the SOAR/EMBARK Program.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Program students are expected to behave in a socially mature manner. In the event the student does not behave in a socially acceptable manner, the following will take place:

First offense            Program staff will meet with the student to discuss the issue and develop an action plan to support more appropriate behavior.

Second offense:        Program staff will notify parents about the student's behavior. Parents/Guardians will be informed of the previous offense.

Third offense:         The student's support team, including a member of the SOAR/EMBARK Program, will convene to discuss current and potentially changing program options.

## **HARASSMENT**

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In keeping with federal and state laws regarding harassment, SOAR/EMBARK promotes a school and work environment that is pleasant, healthy, comfortable, and free from intimidation, hostility, or other offenses that might interfere with school or work performance. Harassment of any sort: verbal, physical, visual, or via social media will not be tolerated.

### **What is harassment?**

Harassment can take many forms. This may include direct contact targeted at an individual or group. It may be, but is not limited to, words, signs, pranks, intimidation, physical contact, or violence. This can occur both directly in the physical spaces of the program and through a variety of social media. Harassment is not necessarily sexual in nature and can take the form of any sort of prejudicial, racial or ethnic targeting. Sexual harassment may include unwelcome sexual advances, the dissemination of sexually explicit photos or dialogue over the internet, requests for sexual favors, or any other verbal or physical contact considered sexual.

Any form of harassment may create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive classroom and/or working environment and will not be tolerated.

### **Responsibility & Reporting**

Any potential incidents of harassment must be immediately reported to any staff member. Appropriate investigation and disciplinary action will be taken. All reports will be promptly investigated with due regard for the privacy of everyone involved. Any student found to have harassed and or targeted a fellow student, co-worker, or staff will be subject to severe disciplinary action and possible termination from SOAR/EMBARK. Every effort will be made to appropriately remedy the situation. No adverse school placement or employment will be taken for any individual making a good faith report of alleged harassment.

The Programs and businesses accept no liability for harassment of one individual by another. The individual who makes unwelcome advances, threatens, or in any way harasses another individual is personally liable for such actions and their consequences. SOAR/EMBARK and any business with whom the Program is affiliated will not provide legal, financial, or any other assistance to any individual accused of harassment if a legal complaint is filed.

## **HAZING**

Hazing is any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. All Program staff share a responsibility to keep the classroom and work environment free from hazing. Any student who becomes aware of an incident of hazing, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to a Program staff member with whom he/she feels comfortable. When school staff become aware that hazing might exist, they are obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action.

Any potential hazing incidents must be immediately reported to a staff member. All reports will be promptly investigated with due regard for the privacy of everyone involved. Any student found to have hazed and or targeted a fellow student, co-worker, or staff will be subject to severe disciplinary action and possible termination from SOAR/EMBARK. No adverse school placement or employment will be taken for any individual making a good faith report of alleged hazing.

SOAR/EMBARK accepts no liability for hazing of one individual by another. The individual who makes unwelcome advances, threatens, or in any way engages in activity that indicates that they hazed another individual is personally liable for such actions and their consequences. SOAR/EMBARK will not provide legal, financial, or any other assistance to any individual accused of hazing if a legal complaint is filed.

## BULLYING

"Bullying", the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; and/or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

"Perpetrator", a student or a member of a school staff, including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

**Bullying may include** conduct such as physical intimidation or assault, including an individual taking against his/her will: oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name-calling; stalking, threatening looks, gestures, or actions, cruel rumors; false accusations; and social isolation.

**CYBER-BULLYING** is bullying through the use of technology or electronic communication. This may include, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signal, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to electronic mail, internet communications, instant messaging or fax communications. Cyber-bullying may include a) creating of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity

of another person. b) knowingly impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated above in the definition of bullying. c) the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated above in the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying may include conduct such as sending derogatory, harassing, or threatening email messages, instant messages or text messages; creating websites that ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate others; and posting on websites or disseminating embarrassing or inappropriate picture(s) or images of others.

SOAR/EMBARK is committed to maintaining an environment free from both bullying or cyber-bullying. Acts of bullying and cyber-bullying on school grounds or at any school sponsored activity, function or program or through the use of technology or any other electronic device(s) that create a hostile environment at school for the individual, infringes on the rights of the individual at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process for the student, or their family will be subject to investigation of the bullying incident. Any student who becomes aware of an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to his/her teacher or immediate supervisor or any Program staff and/or work personnel with whom he/she feels comfortable. When school staff and/or management become aware that bullying or cyber-bullying might exist, they are obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action. Any student found to have bullied or been cyber-bullied a targeted a fellow student, co-worker, or staff will be subject to severe disciplinary action and possible termination from any of either The Program or worksite. Every effort will be made to appropriately remedy the situation. No adverse school placement or employment will be taken for any individual making a good faith report of alleged bullying or cyber-bullying.

SOAR/EMBARK and any affiliated businesses accept no liability for the bullying or cyber-bullying of one individual by another. The individual who makes unwelcome advances, threatens, or in any way engages in activity that indicates that they bullied or cyber-bullied another individual is personally liable for such actions and their consequences. The Program's and any business with whom The Programs are affiliated will not provide legal, financial, or any other assistance to any individual accused of hazing if a legal complaint is filed.

### **POLICY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION (Title IX)**

#### **Grievance Procedures for complaints alleging discrimination or harassment**

Northshore Education Consortium does not discriminate on the basis race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, limited English speaking ability, sexual orientation or homelessness. This applies to student admission, access to services or treatment, and employment in all NEC services and programs.

Any concerns, complaints, or grievances related to discrimination or harassment should be brought to the attention of your School Principal, Program Director, the NEC Executive Director, or NEC Compliance Coordinator for Title IX, Title II, and Section 504 Nancy Macedo

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at nmacedo@nsedu; 112 Sohier Road Beverly, MA 01915; 978-232-9755 ext. 1255. Grievances will be addressed in a prompt and equitable

## **SUSPENSION**

Program students will be suspended for the following:

- 1) Gross insubordination.
- 2) Any behavior that threatens another student, staff, community members, themselves, or the physical plant of the school.
- 3) Harassment/Bullying in person or through any type of social media.

A re-entry meeting with the student, parent and school administration will be required after a suspension to determine the student's continuation in the program.

## SCHOOL CANCELLATION

***The SOAR/EMBARK Program follows Salem State University closure. If, however, SOAR/EMBARK decides to close school (even if SSU is open) you will be notified.***

If SOAR/EMBARK is open, but some towns are closed, **those towns may choose not to transport students. This is the town's decision.** Parents can choose to bring their child in if we are open.

All employees are expected to do their best to get to school if we are open.

Communication regarding school closures will take place via:

- a. Automated email, text and voicemail alerts. Please make sure we have correct information on file.
- b. An alert on our website home page, and
- c. Posting on WBZ

## TRANSPORTATION

A significant goal of The Program is to teach students how to use public transportation. Program students will each be educated on how to use public transportation to get to and from The Program (if public transportation is available in their community), the worksite, and to travel within the North Shore.

## SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ACCESS:

With the student's acceptance into SOAR/EMBARK, each student will secure an SSU "Clipper Card". The "Clipper Card" allows Program students to use the following facilities on the campus of Salem State University:

- SSU Bookstore
- SSU Fitness Center
- SSU Student Center
- SSU Library
- SSU Cafeterias and surrounding restaurants
- SSU Shuttle bus

## **Progress Reports**

Students will receive quarterly progress reports.

## **LINKAGES**

Program staff makes appropriate linkages with adult service agencies (i.e. Department of Mental Health, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Disability Services, etc.). If an individual transitional plan has not been formulated, Staff will coordinate a meeting with the Lead Education Agency and the lead adult service agency.

SOAR/EMBARK works closely with several community partners to support each student's exploration of their next steps toward greater independence. SOAR/EMBARK works closely with the Department of Mental Health, Department of Disability Services, MassHire, The Social Security Office and a variety of community partners.

## **CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION**

**Integrated Learning Approach:** SOAR/EMBARK classes are designed to build a strong foundation of knowledge that students may apply across different areas of life. Lessons are connected so that skills learned in one class support learning in others. Instruction is focused on helping students apply what they've learned in school, at work, and in the community.

## **COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

All students participate in community activities, which promote independence, the application of knowledge, and appropriate social interactions. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a socially mature manner in all settings.

## **INTERNSHIP/EMPLOYMENT**

### **PERSONALIZED CAREER EXPLORATION & COMMUNITY-BASED TRIPS**

At SOAR/EMBARK, we take the time to understand each student's interests, goals, and current skill levels. This allows us to tailor their experiences and ensure they are exposed to a wide range of workplace environments and potential career paths. We

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partner with local, state and nationwide employers to offer paid, supervised internships in order for our students to gain real-life vocational experience. Ongoing monitoring and support help students build confidence as they explore options that align with their individual strengths and future aspirations. Additionally, students regularly participate in community-based field trips. In all community-based opportunities, students will travel by public transportation, walking, school vans, The Ride or staff cars. Students should dress appropriately for the weather and maintain expected behavior in all settings.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are responsible for the following:

### ATTENDANCE/CLOTHING:

- Maintaining good attendance.
- Arriving on time.
- Maintaining proper hygiene.
- Wearing school AND worksite appropriate clothing.

### CLASSROOM/WORKSITE:

- NO CELL PHONE USAGE during class or internships. Using electronic devices of any kind (Phone, tablets, headphones, etc.) will only be allowed during break time or lunch. Use of electronics during other times may only be used with the permission of SOAR/EMBARK staff.
- Having writing utensils and any other supplies necessary for class.
- Passing in any assignments on the day they are due.
- Increase knowledge and usage of technology for keeping appointments, travel routes, homework, calendars etc.

### BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL:

- Come to the program with a positive attitude each day.
- Treat your classmates, Program staff, employers and members of the community with respect and dignity.
- Respect the physical boundaries of others. (No hugs, etc., without asking the other person's permission first)
- Appropriate language in all settings.

THE TRANSITION PROGRAMS AT  
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY  
STAFF DIRECTORY  
September 2025- June 2026

Name	Role	Phone	E Mail
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THE TRANSITION PROGRAMS AT SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY: SOAR/EMBARK  
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Ellen Heald	Director	978-476-2866	eheald@nsedu.org
Michelle Liming	Admin Assistant	978-740-5913	mliming@nsedu.org
Daniel Petronzio	Social Worker	508-843-7771	dpetronzio@nsedu.org
Ally Dugan	Soar Teacher	781-820-3144	adugan@nsedu.org
Michael Giannetti	Soar Teacher	781-740-5913	mgiannetti@nsedu.org
Chris Mastone	Soar Teacher	978-852-7593	cmastone@nsedu.org
Dan Fraser	Embark Teacher	978-740-5913	dfraser@nsedu.org
Chris McAlpine	Embark Teacher	978-740-5913	cmcalpine@nsedu.org
Melissa Nobles	Transition Coordinator	978-210-8886	mnobles@nsedu.org
April Pierson	Speech & Language	978-740-5913	apierson@nsedu.org

**Student Handbook Signature Page**

I have read and understand all the information provided to me in the Northshore Education Consortium SOAR/Embark Program Handbook for the 2025-2026 school year.

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**Student Name (PRINT)** **Date**

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**Student Signature** **Date**

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**Parent Signature** **Date**

**\*This signature page must be returned to school.**