



Illinois State Board of Education

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Jesse H. Ruiz
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Governor

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education (Interim)

TO: The Honorable Emil Jones, Jr., Senate President
The Honorable Frank C. Watson, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Tom Cross, House Republican Leader

FROM: Jesse H. Ruiz, Chairman
Illinois Re-enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School Task Force

DATE: January 12, 2007

RE: *Interim Report* – Illinois Re-enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School Task Force

In fulfillment of House Joint Resolution (HJR) 87, the Illinois Re-enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School Task Force submits the attached *Interim Report*.

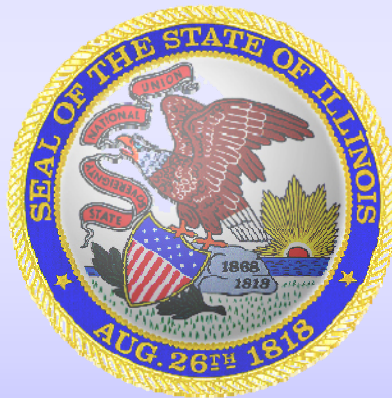
The Task Force has just begun its work, completing an initial examination of the issue. This *Interim Report* reflects the initial research upon which the next phase of work will build.

Over the next year the Task Force will look at specific criteria to create successful programs and determine what funding would be required to support these programs. The Task Force will continue gathering data to determine its final recommendations that will be submitted to you in January, 2008.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 312-569-1135.

cc: The Honorable Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Mark Mahoney, Clerk of the House
Linda Hawker, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center

Illinois Task Force
on
Re-enrolling Students Who
Dropped Out of School



Interim Report
January 12, 2007

Illinois Task Force on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School
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Call to Action

HJR 87(Giles/Lightford) created the *Task Force on Re-enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School* to examine policies, programs and other issues impacting students who left school before earning a high school diploma.

The duties of the Task Force include:

1. Conducting a series of public hearings throughout the state to discuss the impact of students who have left school without a high school diploma on various regions of the state,
2. Completing a review of data regarding students who have left school without a high school diploma that allows for a comparison of Illinois data both nationally and with other states in the region and across the country,
3. Completing a review of various financing and funding mechanisms used by other states, counties, cities, foundations and other financial funding sources,
4. Conducting other work as needed to carry out the duties and charge of this Task Force,
5. And producing an interim report and final report with recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on ways and means to address the challenge of re-enrolling students who have left school without a high school diploma.

The Illinois State Board of Education facilitates the Task Force which herein submits an Interim Report of its findings to Governor Rod R. Blagojevich and the Illinois General Assembly. The Task Force will submit its final report due by January 10, 2008. Upon filing that report, the Task Force will be dissolved.

Membership

The Task Force members include:

- Jesse H. Ruiz, Illinois State Board of Education (Task Force Chairman)
- Jack Wuest, Alternative Schools Network
- Sheila Venson, Youth Connection Charter School
- Bradley Cox, Illinois Association of School Administrators
- Elaine Parker, John A. Logan College
- Michael Bartlett, Illinois Association of School Boards
- Mary McDonald, Illinois Education Association
- Ronald Ragsdale, Illinois Federation of Teachers
- Bill Leavy, Greater Westtown Community Development Corporation
- Arne Duncan, Chicago Public Schools
- Alderman Pat O'Connor, Chicago City Council Education Committee
- Senator Carol Ronen
- Senator Kimberly A. Lightford
- Representative Linda Chapa la Via
- Representative Monique Davis
- Senator Dan Cronin
- Senator Todd Sieben
- Representative Jerry Mitchell

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- Representative Suzanne Bassi
- Ginger Ostro, Office of Governor Blagojevich
- Sally Veach, Illinois State Board of Education, Accountability Division
- Karrie Rueter, Illinois Department of Human Services
- Cynthia Moreno, Illinois Department of Child and Family Services
- Therese McMahon, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Development
- Jeff May, Illinois Community College Board
- Pat Dal Santo, Illinois Coalition for Educating At Risk Youth
- Joe Williams, Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools

Statewide Outreach and Recommendations

The Task Force held public hearings in Carterville, Edwardsville, Forest Park, Springfield and Aurora during which witnesses testified. In addition, members of the Task Force participated in a Summit on Re-enrolling Out of School Students in Chicago, with keynote speech by Illinois Senate President Emil Jones.

Defining the Problem and Its Effects¹

- In each of the last nine years students have dropped out of Illinois schools at a pace ranging from 37,375 in 1997 to 27,380 in 2005.²
- Over 27,000 16 to 19 year-old students dropped out of school in 2005 – there were over 75,000 16 to 19 year-old students in Illinois who had dropped out of school and there were over 175,000 20 to 24 year-old students in Illinois who had dropped out of school.³
- In the 2004-2005 school year, one of every six Black high school students, one every of seven Hispanic high school students, and one of every 20 White high school students in Illinois has dropped out of school.⁴
- The unemployment rate for high school dropouts nationally was 29.8 percent in 2002—almost 13 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for recent high school graduates who were not enrolled in college (United States Department of Labor, 2003).
- High school graduates, on the average, earn \$9,245 more per year than high school dropouts. (Employment Policy Foundation, 2002).
- In today's workplace, only 40 percent of adults who dropped out of high school are employed, compared to 60 percent of adults who completed high school and 80 percent for those with a bachelor's degree (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).

¹ National Dropout Prevention Center Quick Facts, http://www.dropoutprevention.org/stats/quick_facts/econ_impact.htm

² Illinois State Board of Education – 2004-2005 Number of High School Dropouts by Grade, Gender and Race/Ethnicity: http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/eoy_dropouts04-05.pdf

³ Illinois State Board of Education – End of Year Reports: http://www.isbe.net/research/htmls/eoy_report.htm

⁴ Illinois State Board of Education – 2004-2005 Number of High School Dropouts by Grade, Gender and Race/Ethnicity: http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/eoy_dropouts04-05.pdf

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- A total of 75 percent of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts (Harlow, 2003), with only 59 percent of America's federal prison inmates completing high school (Harlow, 2003).
- High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).
- A one percent increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 per each male high school graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).
- A one-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11 percent (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).
- The cost to taxpayers of adult illiteracy is \$224 billion per year (National Reading Panel, 1999).
- Over 20,000 Dropout Students (ages 16 to 19) Re-Enroll in Programs Each Year. The good news is that these dropout students keep trying to earn a high school diploma or GED, re-enrolling in over 170 programs across the state. The bad news is that only 5,500 of these re-enrolled students earned a GED or high school diploma because many of these programs are too short (12 weeks or less), operate only 12 hours or less per week, are not comprehensive, and are significantly under funded – average of less than \$1500 is spent per student.
- In 2004-05 the compulsory education age in Illinois rose to 17 years old (PA 93-0858)⁵. The number of high school dropouts fell 16 percent from 32,445 in 2003-04 to 27,380 in 2004-05. This may be a result of stronger education programming, but it may be due to the fact that 16 year-olds who leave school cannot be listed as dropouts and are instead listed as chronic truants. The number of chronic truants in Illinois rose 28 percent from 43,972 in 2003-04 to 55,534 in 2004-05. The previous nine-year average of chronic truants in the state had been 43,000.

Illinois Programs Serving Re-Enrolled and Students At Risk of Dropping Out

- The Illinois State Board of Education's Truants Alternative Optional Education Program (TAOEP), since 1986, has supported successful programs that re-enroll and graduate out of school youth. In 2005 TAOEP programs served 70,875 students, 2,099 of which were re-enrolled dropouts.⁶
- Illinois Community Colleges served 14,212 students age 16 to 19 and 16,126 students age 20 to 24 through adult basic education, adult secondary education, high school credit and vocational programs in 2004 and awarded 4,899 General Education Development (GED) certificates and 227 alternative high school diplomas in 2004.⁷
- In 2005 the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) served over 3,000 out of school youth, 16 to 21 years-old, through the Workforce Investment Act Program in various programs across the State.⁸

⁵ Public Act 93-0858: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=093-0858>

⁶ Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program 2005 Statistical Report, <http://www.isbe.net/accountability/html/taoep.htm>

⁷ Illinois Community College Board Data and Characteristics, <http://www.iccb.org/pdf/reports/databook2005.pdf>

⁸ Illinois Report on Workforce Development, p. 45: <http://www2.illinoisbiz.biz/StatutoryMandatedReports/05082006-2006ERIRReportGA.pdf>

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- The Alternative Schools Network in Chicago has operated various programs since 1975 that re-enroll and graduate out of school youth.
- The Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS) in Chicago, operating since 1997, has 2800 openings for re-enrolled students in 24 small school sites across Chicago. Last year over 900 re-enrolled students graduated through this program through YCCS.
- Illinois Regional Offices of Education served 4,202 suspended or expelled students through the Regional Safe Schools Program in 2004.⁹
- There are over 180 programs serving students who had dropped out of school through the Illinois Community Colleges, DCEO, TAOEP and other local programs.
- There are many individual programs serving students who dropped out. Most of the programs are severely under-funded. The cumulative funding for these programs is less than \$60 million (or less than \$2,200 per student):
 - TAOEP = \$18 million for 43 programs serving 2,400 re-enrolled students¹⁰
 - Workforce Investment Act (WIA) = \$14 million for 70 programs serving 3,500 re-enrolled students
 - Illinois Community College Board = \$18 million for 105 programs serving 16,946 re-enrolled students (English as a Second Language, Adult Basic and Secondary Education, High School Credit, Career and Technical Education)

Prevention Programs

A number of programs and initiatives already in place in Illinois are geared toward dropout prevention. Successful programs include:

- **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)**
<http://www.avidonline.org/info/?tabid=4&id=510>
- **Career and Technical Education** - <http://www.isbe.net/career/html/cte.htm>
- **High school reform efforts** - http://www.isbe.net/high_school/default.htm
- **Jobs for Illinois Graduates** <http://www.jilginc.org/>
- **Parent Leadership Council** (formed by Executive Order of Governor Blagojevich)
- **Preschool for All** (note National Center for Dropout Prevention recommended strategy below).
- **Regional Safe Schools** http://www.isbe.net/accountability/html/regional_safe_schools.htm
- **Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program**
<http://www.isbe.net/accountability/html/taoep.htm>

⁹ Illinois Regional Safe Schools Program FY04 Evaluation Report,
http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/04rssp_evaluation_report.pdf

¹⁰ Illinois State Board of Education FY 2007 Budget: http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY07/FY07_final_budget.pdf

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The National Center for Dropout Prevention has identified effective strategies for dropout prevention¹¹:

- Systemic Renewal
- School-Community Collaboration
- Safe Learning Environments
- Family Engagement
- Early Childhood Education
- Early Literacy Development
- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service-Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- After-School Opportunities
- Professional Development
- Active Learning
- Educational Technology
- Individualized Instruction
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)

¹¹ National Center for Dropout Prevention, <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/effstrat.htm>

Initial Recommendations

The Task Force has just begun its work, completing an initial examination of the issue. This *Interim Report* reflects the initial research upon which the next phase of work will build.

Over the next year the Task Force will look at specific criteria to create successful programs and determine what funding would be required to support these programs. The Task Force will continue gathering data to determine its final recommendations that will be submitted to you in January, 2008.

Re-Enrollment Programs

Many students who have dropped out want to complete their secondary education in a setting structured for success, recognizing that people learn in different ways. This suggests that Illinois needs more than one approach to meet the widely varied needs of Illinois dropouts, their learning styles and their life situations.

Categories of state-funded programming could include:

- 1) Full-time programs – comprehensive, year-round programs
- 2) Part-time programs – combining work and study scheduled at various times flexible to the needs of the students
- 3) Online programs/courses – students take courses and prepare external, supervised tests that measure student mastery of skills for a specific course. Students could take courses online and earn credits or students could prepare to take externally supervised tests for specific courses for credit.
- 4) Dual Enrollment - Students attend high school classes in combination with community college classes or students attend community college classes while simultaneously earning high school credit.
- 5) GED Preparation – Students who want to earn a GED enroll in programs offering GED preparation classes at least 12 hours per week.

Develop programs focused on the unique needs of the following age groups:

- **Age 19 and Below with Limited High School Credits** – Full-time, year-round programs, five days per week with significant personal attention and support, and course work that includes time-based and competency-based courses in order to accelerate their earning credits towards completing their high school diploma. Offer after school programs and summer programs that combine education and work.
- **Age 16 and Over Needing Six or Fewer High School Credits** - Programs combining work, project-based learning, internships and regular school classes combined with competency-based classes should be an option. Offer the option of online courses with external tests given to measure their mastery of skills. Offer evening high school programs that allow students to work in the daytime.
- **Age 20 to 24 with Significantly Behind in Educational Skills** - Programs that engage students in work and education that combine paid work experience with 1-2 days of educational programming

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per week. Provide a variety of options to earn credits through classes as well as online course work that can be validated in terms of their mastery of skills, through external supervised testing.

- **Age 20 to 24 with High Educational and Social Skills Needing Six or Fewer Credits** - Options can include non-traditional scheduling (evenings and weekends) through community college programs (dual enrollment), evening high schools, and online courses.

Based on a broad range of research, successful approaches have included the following characteristics:

- small programs (50 to 150 students) at a separate school site with a distinct identity;
- specific performance-based goals and outcomes measures of enrollment, attendance, skills, credits, graduations, transition to college, training and employment;
- strong, experienced leadership and teaching staff with ongoing professional development;
- voluntary enrollment;
- positive peer culture with family atmosphere of cooperative support with respect and responsibility as key values for students, faculty, staff, parents and community members;
- high standards for student learning, integrating work experience and education, including school year, after-school and summer school programs that link internships, work and learning;
- comprehensive programs providing extensive support services;
- small teams of students supported by full-time paid mentors who work to retain and graduate students;
- comprehensive technology learning center with Internet access and broad based curriculum focusing on academic and career subject areas; and
- learning opportunities that incorporate action into study.

Performance Outcomes for Programs Re-Enrolling Out of School Students

The requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act must be reconciled with the need to develop performance standards/outcomes that encourage programs to re-enroll students that are low skilled and high risk.

Illinois law now encourages school districts to re-enroll dropout students by not counting a re-enrolled dropout student who drops out against that district's dropout rate performance measure, and by the development of performance standards for programs serving re-enrolled students.¹²

1. **Enrollment** – Programs would report monthly and yearly enrollment levels, measuring student continuity.
2. **Attendance** – Programs would report individual student and total student monthly and yearly attendance.

¹² Public Act 93-0803: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=093-0803>

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3. **Skills Gains** – The skill gains of each re-enrolled student would be measured. There would be individual re-enrolled student skill gain measurements, individual program and total skill gain measurements for the entire project.
4. **Credit Gains** – The credit gains of each re-enrolled student would be measured. There would be individual re-enrolled student credit gain measurements, individual program and total credit gain measurement for the entire project.
5. **Promotions** – Individual re-enrolled student promotions would be measured i.e. how many freshmen became sophomores, sophomores became juniors, and juniors became seniors? What are the rates for individual programs and total project?
6. **Graduation** – What is the graduation rate and actual numbers of students who graduate in each individual program and the total project? A reasonable percentage range based upon the difficulty and high risk status of the students that are re-enrolled.
7. **Transition** – Measure the transition of students to post-secondary education (community college, four-year colleges, graduate school), employment, career and technical education, military service.

Data Collection

- Track and report students who have re-enrolled (including students through their fifth and sixth years of high school) through ISBE Student Information System. This will require funding to support reprogramming of local school district data programs.
- Track high school dropouts enrolled in GED programs at Illinois Community Colleges through a statewide higher education student data system.
- Implement the National Governors' Association recommendations on reporting for calculating graduation rate until ISBE SIS is fully implemented.
- Issue an annual Illinois report on dropouts, re-enrolled students and their outcomes (high school diploma, GED)
- Make changes to ISBE data collection and reporting, counting all re-enrolled students who graduate in the total number of graduated students from that particular school/district.
- Indiana has fully implemented an individual student information system that tracks individual students with an individual ID number. School districts in Indiana saw their high school graduation rates fall by 10 percent -15 percent. Indianapolis high schools graduation rate dropped from 90 percent to 48 percent. Illinois is implementing a similar system and Districts may see their graduation rates fall when this system is fully implemented. This could lead to frustration and reaction at the local school district level in the same way it occurred in Chicago in 1985 when a new reporting system showed a dropout rate of 48 percent and a graduation rate of 52 percent.¹³

¹³ *Indy Star* article, November 10, 2006:

<http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061110/LOCAL/611100452/1006/LOCAL>

Developing and Financing a Statewide System

A comprehensive range of effective programs to re-enroll Illinois dropouts will be the most effective strategy. The Task Force has outlined the components of this program and multiple strategies are needed to create a truly comprehensive system. Financing this system will require improved coordination of various existing programs and recognition of the important role that community colleges, high schools, community-based program and others play in re-enrolling students. The task force recommends the following framework for developing a financing strategy.

- For students who have earned a limited number of high school credits and are 16 – 19 years old:
 - If a full-year, full-time program is needed, one model is to expand the current Regional Safe Schools funding model. Under this existing program run by Regional Offices of Education, students who are suspended or expelled are served in an alternative school setting. This program is funded both through a grant and ROEs also receive General State Aid at the full foundation level. Extending this model to the high need 16-19 year-old population could be considered. It is the most comprehensive, and hence, expensive option, with estimated costs of \$9,000 - \$12,000 per student per year. It may require statutory change to implement.
 - The Truant Alternative Optional Educational Program is a State Board of Education competitive grant program to provide supplemental services and/or alternative education programming for truants, chronic truants, re-enrolled drop-outs, and potential dropouts. A portion of the current \$18 m in funding is used to support services for re-enrolled youth. Restructuring and/or expanding this program could be considered to provide grants as part of the full-time, full-year program discussed above.
 - The Illinois Community College Board currently operates the Early School Leaver Program at a number of community colleges. This small program allows students to complete their high school diploma or GED and provides career and employment support services. While this program is small, consideration should be given to expanding it.
 - Adult education services are currently provided through the Illinois Community College Board to anyone over age 16 that has not received a high school diploma. Consideration should be given to determining how the adult education program can best serve the 16 – 19 year-old re-enrolled population.
- For students who have earned a limited number of high school credits and are 20 -24 years old:
 - Programs that combine education with employment support are the primary model. Details on the existing range of programs and options for expansion will be further developed as the Task Force continues its work.
- For students who have six or fewer high school credits needed to earn their diploma, different models and strategies should be considered. Strategies are similar for those who are 16 – 19 and those who are 20 - 24:
 - Part-time, evening programs are an efficient and effective way to meet these students needs. The Task Force estimates that a program designed to serve 520 students for their remaining 6 credits would cost about \$900 per student spread over the course of 1 to 1 ½ years. Consideration should be given to expanding part-time programs.

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- On-line programs can provide stand alone options or can be combined with part-time programs to serve these students. Cost estimates range from \$1,200 - \$1,500 per student to earn their remaining 6 credits. Combining part-time evening instruction with on-line coursework appears to be a cost-effective approach to reaching these students.
- Dual credit programs with community colleges offer yet another option. Under the existing Illinois models, high schools partner with local community colleges that allow students to earn high school and community college credit for enrolling in courses offered at the high school. The high school continues to count the student as part of their enrollment (ADA) for General State Aid purposes, while the community college is reimbursed for their costs through a state grant program (currently funded at \$2.8 M).
- A similar dual credit program in Portland, Oregon could be considered as well. Under this model, coursework is offered at the community college (rather than the high school) and students earn credit toward their high school diploma in the first year and can take coursework toward their associate's degree in their second year. This provides a strong linkage to higher education, not just high school completion. In Oregon, this program is funded through the K-12 system. Funding strategies for Illinois for both the high school and the community college system need further exploration.
- For some students, their special needs also must be taken into consideration. Specially-designed programs will be needed for DCFS wards and youth transitioning from Department of Juvenile Justice or Department of Corrections custody.
 - DCFS currently provides several programs to support high-risk students, such as Project STRIVE, which provides case managers in schools to reach students before they drop-out. DCFS also offers the Youth Skills Development Training Program through community providers to help students who have dropped-out re-enroll. Further exploration of these and other models should be considered.
 - As the new Department of Juvenile Justice is implemented and re-invigorates its focus on educational services, consideration should be given to targeted programs for youth returning to the community.
 - Similarly, as the Department of Corrections refashions its educational system separate from the youth School District 428, reaching those age 20 -24 who do not have a high school diploma should be a special area of focus.
 - The Task Force should continue to explore the obligations to serve and implications for programming for re-enrolled youth who were receiving special education services before they dropped out. Similarly, the Task Force should continue to explore needs and capacity to serve re-enrolled bilingual students.

The Task Force further recommends that the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly advocate for changes at the Federal level, including:

- Increased Federal funding for dropout prevention
- Increased Federal funding for programs for re-enrolled students
- Increased Federal funding to expand the Workforce Investment Act, Youth Conservation Corps, Youth Build and Job Corps

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- Reinstatement of the Federal Summer Youth Employment Program
- Changes with the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to allow funding for re-enrolling students who dropped out of school

