Illinois Regional Safe Schools Program

RSSP

FY 04 EVALUATION REPORT

Illinois State Board of Education
Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division

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State Board of Education

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FOREWORD

This report highlights the data reported by regional offices of education of their Regional Safe Schools Program in FY 04. This report also provides trend data of number of expulsions and suspensions in Illinois public schools.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Act 89-383 which was enacted in 1995, creates the Illinois Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) to provide alternative education programs for disruptive students in grades six through twelve. Following are the major findings of the FY 04 evaluation:

◈ There were 47 RSSP programs with 95 sites operating in the state of Illinois in FY 04. These programs enrolled a total of 4,202 students which is 395 students more from FY 03 enrollment.

◈ RSSP enrolled more expulsion students (47%) than suspension students (39%). The service population of RSSP shifted through the years. The program is increasingly serving more expulsion-eligible students. In particular, Chicago Public School District has the highest enrollment (approximately 13% of total enrollment), and also has the highest number of expulsion (13%) and expelled/re-admitted students (52%) enrolled across programs in the state.

◈ The offenses committed by a majority of students at their home schools and the reasons for their subsequent transfer to RSSP include involvement in drugs, assaulting staff or students, and issuing threats.

◈ The enrollment of students with disabilities in RSSP in FY 04 remained at the same level from that in FY 03 (13%).

◈ Students in RSSP are predominantly male (over 72%).

◈ About 50% of students are white, 35% are black, and 13% are Hispanics. White enrollment has decreased by 3% while that of blacks and Hispanics increased by 2% and 1% respectively in FY 04 compared to FY 03.

◈ The program enrolled 6th through 12th grade students. The lowest enrollment is in 6th grade (5%), and the highest enrollment was in 9th grade (22%).

◈ Academic instruction is the primary service provided by the program. However, services that respond to the students' social and/or emotional needs, such as behavior modification training, life skills training, and counseling are found to contribute significantly to students' educational success.

◈ 76% of RSSP's high school students earned academic credits toward high school graduation. Moreover, 62% of 12th grade students graduated from high school.

◈ About 30% of high school students completed deficient credits and were subsequently returned to their home school to complete their high school education.

◈ The program received $17,138,000 from the state in 2004. This does not include the general state aid that programs may receive in addition to the state grant.

I. BACKGROUND

The Safe Schools Law

Public Act 89-383, enacted in 1995, provides Illinois with a system of alternative education programs for disruptive students in grades six through twelve. This act known as the **Safe Schools Law** indicates that "*Disruptive students typically derive little benefit from traditional school programs and may benefit substantially by being transferred from their current school into an alternative public school program, where their particular needs may be more appropriately and individually addressed and where they may benefit from the opportunity for a fresh start in a new educational environment*" (Section 13A-1e, PA 89-383). The law describes *disruptive students* as those who are subject to suspension or expulsion based on the disciplinary policies of the school district. With the enactment of the law, these students are now given the option, although voluntary on the part of the school district, to transfer to the **Regional Safe Schools Program** (a program established in 1996 to implement the Safe Schools Law), in lieu of suspension or expulsion. The proponents of the law strongly believed that "*administrative transfers may prove more productive for dealing with disruptive students than out-of-school suspension or expulsion*" (105 ILCS5/13A-1(i)).

The Regional Safe Schools Program

The Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) which was established to serve the educational needs of disruptive students, received an appropriation of $15 million in 1997. The law provides that at least one RSSP program may be located within each of the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) and this program's location must be "*far away from any other school buildings or school grounds*" (105 ILCS5/13A-3(d)). The regional superintendent, except for Chicago Public School District, oversees the program. The oversight functions include, but are not limited to, determining the locations of the programs; implementing the programs' curriculum; hearing cases of parent objections for returning their children to the regular school program; establishing a budget; and disbursing RSSP funds.

Funding for RSSP

The entities eligible to apply for funding to plan and implement Regional Safe School Programs are: the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) [except in Cook County], the Chicago Board of Education, and the three Intermediate Service Centers (ISC) in Suburban Cook County. The RSSP state funds are distributed to these entities using a formula that is driven by the entity's best three months' average daily attendance (ADA) and percent of low-income students. In addition to the state funds, RSSP programs are entitled to receive general State Aid as calculated in subsection (K) of Section 18-8.05 of the School Code.

This program has grown from servicing 1,325 students in 1997 to 4,202 students in FY 04. Funding for the program has also increased from $15,000,000 in 1997 to $17,138,000 in FY 04. Annually, RSSP funded 47 RSSP programs representing 44 ROEs (two ROEs formed a consortium), three ISCs, and the Chicago Board of Education. The monies received by the program in the succeeding years with the number of students enrolled in the program during those years, are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1. State RSSP Grants with the Number of Students Enrolled in the Program and Cost Per Student: FY 97 through FY 04

Fiscal Year	State Grant to Programs	Number Enrolled	Cost/Student*
FY 97	$15,000,000	1,325	$11,321
FY 98	$15,000,000	4,631	$3,239
FY 99	$15,352,000	4,801	$3,198
FY 00	$15,352,000	4,015	$3,824
FY 01	$16,791,627	4,016	$4,181
FY 02	$17,806,626	4,010	$4,441
FY 03	$16,160,900	3,807	$4,245
FY 04	$17,007,899	4,202	$4,048

*Does not include state aid.

As indicated, the initial implementation in FY 97 of the RSSP only enrolled 1,325 students. The $15 million was used for both program planning and implementation. It was also about this time that buildings and facilities were identified to house the program as well as the recruitment of staff. Obviously, FY 98 and FY 99 remain the time when student eligibility for program services was not clearly mapped out, which explains higher enrollments in the program during this two-year period. Guidelines were then established for the program providing directions in terms of eligible students that should be enrolled in the program, clarifying "full-time" students, the services that needed to be provided, qualifications of staff, and the program curriculum, among others. The decrease of enrollment in FY 00 from FY 99 is not a reflection of a lack of need for the program but rather the service clientele was not clearly defined at that time. A "real" drop in enrollment occurred in 2003, with only 3,807 enrolled from 4,010 in 2002. About this time, funding for the program also dropped by approximately $1.65 million. The decrease in enrollment may have been triggered by the decrease in funding. Ideally, if the program has to pay a cost per student at the same level as FY 02, which is $4,441 per student, then the program could only support 3,639 students from the money in FY 03. In this case, RSSP served 168 students more – beyond its funding capacity. **It should be noted, however, that in addition to the state grant, RSSP programs are also entitled to receive general State Aid. So the cost per student would be higher when State Aid is factored in.**

The formula used in calculating RSSP funds received by each program resulted in a wide range of distribution of funds. In FY 98, monies received by each program ranged from a low of $80,870 to a high of $3,000,000. In FY 04, the lowest and the highest amount received by a program were approximately $74,000 and $3.5 million, respectively. Some programs enrolled more students than others which translates to a cost per student from a low of $1,125 to a high of $11,492.

II. EVALUATION PURPOSES, PROCEDURES, AND LIMITATIONS

P U R P O S E S

The main purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent by which the Regional Safe Schools Program met the provisions of the Safe Schools Law. Provisions related to the

administrative transfer, the students enrolled in the program, and the program's curriculum and services will be examined. Specifically, this report:

a) Describes the students who were administratively transferred to the program.
b) Describes the program's curriculum and services provided in light of what the law specifies.
c) Describes the outcomes achieved by these students.
d) Describes the relationship of services provided to student outcomes.
e) Presents five years of data, 1999 through 2003, describing enrollment trends and shift of services. The student outcomes across the five-year period are also compared.

In addition, this report presents statewide statistics on expulsions and suspensions and provides recommendations for program improvements.

P R O C E D U R E S

The FY 04 evaluation has three sources of data: 1) the FY 04 End-of-Year Report which reports statewide statistics on suspensions and expulsions, and 2) the FY 04 RSSP Student Reporting Application. The data elements, particularly the reasons for administrative transfer, service, and outcome categories were developed by staff who managed the program. Before FY 03, the data collection was coordinated by ISBE's division of New Learning Opportunities (NLO). NLO also managed the program at the state level. Starting in FY 03, the RSSP student and program data are reported electronically by programs to the ISBE-Division of Data Analysis and Progress Reporting (DAPR). DAPR now has the responsibility of evaluating the program. Management of the program now resides with the Division of Accountability in ISBE.

The data collection systems experienced several changes. From 1998 through 2001, individual student information was reported using an excel spreadsheet. Since excel is not a database application, the data variables required for reporting on an individual student is limited to 32 columns – to the extent that it could fit on legal size paper. This posed validity and reliability problems. So in 2002, a reporting application was developed that includes data-editing features and expanded number of data items. Further, in 2003, more data items were added to the system related to Special Education students enrolled in the program.

L I M I T A T I O N S

1) The data is self-reported by programs, and a process to validate some data entries is not available. The editing features available in the reporting system only checks for the validity of student grades - in relation to age, outcome, service, and student outcomes - in relation to services received. For example, the new reporting system releases an error message when a student who is in an elementary grade is reported to have graduated from high school.
2) The system is collecting more information than necessary. There are service and outcome categories that are not essential in determining the effectiveness of the program.
3) There is perplexity in the definition of terms. Some service categories could be collapsed into one category.
4) All the outcomes are in categorical scale – there is no numerical data to validate outcomes such as "improved attendance," "improved behavior," or "received academic credit."

Given these limitations, the readers are cautioned in interpreting the data presented in this report.

III. F I N D I N G S

IIIA. PROGRAMS AND SITES

There were 47 RSSP programs (one of the programs is a consortium of two ROEs) with 95 sites operating in the state of Illinois in FY 04. Chicago Public School District 299 served the most number of students (13%), followed by Will county (9.2%), and North Cook (6.2%). The programs that served over 100 students are shown in Table 2. The types of students served by programs vary – some served more expulsion-eligible students than suspension-eligible students or vice versa. For instance, Chicago Public School District 299 served the most number of expulsion students, the highest in the state. In fact, Chicago's RSSP students were all expulsion-eligible or expelled and re-admitted students. Other programs which served over 80% of expulsion-eligible students were North Cook (83.5%), Kane county (89.5%), South Cook-ISC (85.2%), Peoria (86.4%) and Lake county (88.3%). In contrast, the regional educational offices of Champaign/Ford, La Salle/Marshall/Putnam/Woodford, and Grundy/Kendall served more suspension-eligible students. **Appendix A** shows the number of students served by each program in FY 04.

Table 2. <u>RSSP Programs That Served More Than 100 Students in FY 04</u>

RSSP Program	Student Eligibility Status						ROE Totals	
	Admitted		Expulsion-Eligible		Eligible			
	No.	Within Pct	No.	Within Pct	No.	Within Pct	No.	Pct of Total
CITY OF CHICAGO	296	*54.2*	250	*45.8*		*0.0*	546	*13.0*
WILL	23	*6.0*	160	*41.5*	203	*52.6*	386	*9.2*
NORTH COOK	6	*2.3*	218	*83.5*	37	*14.2*	261	*6.2*
PEORIA	1	*0.5*	172	*86.4*	26	*13.1*	199	*4.7*
GRUNDY/KENDALL	5	*3.1*	52	*32.1*	105	*64.8*	162	*3.9*
LA SALLE/MARSHALL/PUTNAM/WOODFORD	15	*9.8*	39	*25.5*	99	*64.7*	153	*3.6*
CHAMPAIGN/FORD	2	*1.3*	24	*16.1*	123	*82.6*	149	*3.5*
SOUTH COOK		*0.0*	121	*85.2*	21	*14.8*	142	*3.4*
DE WITT/LIVINGSTON/MCLEAN		*0.0*	54	*40.6*	79	*59.4*	133	*3.2*
KANE		*0.0*	119	*89.5*	14	*10.5*	133	*3.2*
DU PAGE		*0.0*	95	*77.9*	27	*22.1*	122	*2.9*
LAKE		*0.0*	91	*88.3*	12	*11.7*	103	*2.5*

Concentration of Enrollments in RSSP

There were 4,202 students enrolled in or administratively transferred to RSSP in FY 04. This is 395 students more than the FY 03 enrollment. Students enrolled in the program are either eligible for suspension or expulsion or had been expelled and re-admitted. Similar to FY 02 and FY 03, RSSP served more expulsion-eligible students (47%) than suspension-eligible (39%) in FY 04. The number of expulsion-eligible students served by these programs continue to increase. In contrast, the number of suspension-eligible served declined.

As shown in Table 3, except for Peoria and Lake counties, programs located in central Illinois or in the southern and northern counties, tend to serve more suspension-eligible students. In contrast, Chicago and the suburbs, including North Cook, Kane, and DuPage counties tend to serve higher numbers of expulsion-eligible or expelled and re-admitted students. In other words, these programs tend to serve students who have committed severe offenses such as bringing weapons to school, assaulting and/or threatening individuals, involvement in drugs, or committing theft and/or arson. For details see Appendix B.

Table 3. Enrollment in RSSP by Location and Student Eligibility Status, FY 04

Location	Student Eligibility Status						Total	
	Expelled and Re-Admitted		Expulsion-Eligible		Suspension-Eligible			
	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
East Central	74	12.6	123	20.9	392	66.6	589	14.0
Northern	85	12.8	176	26.5	403	60.7	664	15.8
Southern	10	2.2	219	47.9	228	49.9	457	10.9
Suburbs	32	2.6	874	70.5	333	26.9	1,239	29.5
Urban	296	54.2	250	45.8		0.0	546	13.0
West Central	66	14.3	172	37.4	222	48.3	460	10.9
Northern		0.0	2	4.2	46	95.8	48	1.1
West Central	1	0.5	172	86.4	26	13.1	199	4.7
	564	13.4	1,988	47.3	1,650	39.3	4,202	100.0

IIIB. STUDENTS ENROLLED IN RSSP IN FY 04

A.   Student Demographics

A1. Students' Administrative Transfer or Enrollment in the Program

Students who are subject to expulsion or suspension or who have been expelled and re-admitted to the regular school program, <u>may be</u> administratively transferred to RSSP. This implies that the transfer of these students from the regular school programs is not mandated but encouraged. The decision to offer RSSP as an option depends largely on the boards of local school districts. However, should a student be transferred to RSSP, the law requires that at the earliest time following the transfer of the student, appropriate personnel from the sending school district and the RSSP shall meet to develop an alternative education plan (AEP) for that student. The student's parent or guardian <u>shall be</u> invited to this meeting and the student <u>may be</u> invited to attend. The key to managing the progress obtained by a student while enrolled in the RSSP is its AEP. With regards to students who have disabilities, the individualized education plan of that student shall continue to apply.

A2. Reasons for Suspension or Expulsion and Transfer to RSSP

Table 4 shows the reasons for the students' suspension or expulsion which ultimately led to their transfer to RSSP. What the data reveals is that the reasons for these students' suspension or expulsion significantly varied – from extreme cases, such as possession of weapons or drugs or drugs to minor cases as insubordination and disrespect. The most common reasons for the students'eligibility for expulsion or suspension were gross misconduct or behavior (26.5%) or involvement in drugs (21.1%). Assaults and threats are also other offenses committed by over 10% of students. Data elsewhere indicated that expelled students are five times more likely to take drugs and twice as likely to commit assaults than students who are suspended.

Table 4.   Reason(s) for the Administrative Transfer of Students to RSSP, FY 04

Reason(s) for Administrative Transfer	Count*	Pct of Total Enrolled
Gross misconduct and/or behavior, fighting	1,114	26.5
Drugs	885	21.1
Assault	630	15.0
Threats	585	13.9
Weapons	367	8.7
Theft, arson, or unwarranted pulling of a fire alarm	337	8.0
Computer hacking	326	7.8
Chronic Insubordination/Defiance	273	6.5

*Multiple Responses

A3. Student Eligibility and Ethnicity

In FY 04, school districts transferred more students who have severe disciplinary or behavioral problems to RSSP – which explains an increase in the number of expulsion-eligible students enrolled in these programs. Table 5 shows the ethnicity of these students with their eligibility status. Within an ethnic group, whites have the least proportion of students enrolled as expulsion-eligible. In contrast, minority groups, particularly Hispanics and blacks have higher expulsion-eligible participation.

Table 5.   Number and Percent of Students Enrolled in RSSP by Student Eligibility Status and Student Ethnicity, FY 04

Student Ethnicity	Student Eligibility Status						Total	
	Expelled and Re-Admitted		Expulsion-Eligible		Suspension-Eligible			
	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
Native Am		0.0	3	60.0	2	40.0	5	0.1
Asian	4	16.0	14	56.0	7	28.0	25	0.6
Black	324	22.2	721	49.4	414	28.4	1,459	34.7
Hispanic	49	8.7	367	65.2	147	26.1	563	13.4
White	187	8.9	856	40.6	1,065	50.5	2,108	50.2
Total	564	13.4	1,988	47.3	1,650	39.3	4,202	100.0

A4. Grade Level and Educational Status

The majority of students (58%) enrolled in RSSP in FY 04 were in grades 8, 9, and 10 (Table 6). The combined enrollments of 6th and 7th graders constitute 17.4% of the total enrollment; whereas the combined enrollments of 11th and 12th graders constitute 24.5% of the total enrollment.

Since its implementation, RSSP has enrolled students who have disabilities or special education students. Special education students normally constitute 10% of the RSSP enrollment, but in FY 03, the percent of special education students transferred to RSSP rose to approximately 13% and stayed at the same level in FY 04. Consistent with the provisions accorded to students with disabilities, the Safe Schools Law requires that the individualized education plan

(IEP) of these students (for whom an IEP was developed under Article 14 of the School Code), shall continue to apply following their transfer to RSSP. Data elsewhere showed that of the 544 students enrolled in RSSP with disabilities, 72% have learning disabilities, and 26% have emotional-behavior disorders.

Table 6. Number of Students Enrolled in RSSP by Grade Level and Student Educational Status, FY 04

| | Educational Status | | | | Total Grade | |
| | Regular Education | | Special Education | | | |
Grade Level	Number	Col Pct	Number	Col Pct	Number	Col Pct
6th	195	5.3	22	4.0	217	5.2
7th	465	12.7	51	9.4	516	12.3
8th	677	18.5	79	14.5	756	18.0
9th	773	21.1	140	25.7	913	21.7
10th	664	18.2	107	19.7	771	18.3
11th	449	12.3	80	14.7	529	12.6
12th	435	11.9	65	11.9	500	11.9
Total	3,658	87.1	544	12.9	4,202	100.0

B. Services Received by Students

RSSP provides an array of services, foremost of which is the provision of academic instruction and the development of alternative education plans for each of the students enrolled in the program.

B1. *What the Law Says About the School Program Curriculum*

105 ILCS 5/13A-5 requires that any student administratively transferred to RSSP must have an alternative education plan or (AEP). Moreover, students enrolled in RSSP must also receive academic instruction. The law also requires RSSP, through the supervision of the regional superintendent, to implement a multi-disciplinary curriculum, which may include work-based learning and community service work, where students could earn academic credit or credits. So apart from providing instruction on basic subject areas, programs are supposed to offer courses that would prepare students for vocational and occupational training, as well as opportunities to service communities. The reason for an emphasis of service learning in the RSSP's curriculum is borne from research which indicated that "effective" service-learning programs impact the students' school performance, civic, and educational attitudes positively (*National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America, Brandeis University, July 1999).* Further, service-learning not only improves the student but the community as well.

RSSP, like any other alternative or optional education program, is required to run a minimum of five clock hours to constitute a full-day of student attendance for purposes of calculating general State Aid. This five clock hours include the time the student spends in work-based learning and/or community service.

Given what the law requires, a list of services related to career development, work-based learning, and community service are included in the reporting of program data in addition to academic related services.

B2. Services Offered and Received by Students

The following services were received by students enrolled in RSSP in FY 04 (See Table 8). The definitions of each of these services are found in Appendix C.

Alternative Education Plan (AEP) and Academic Instruction

Except for two students, all students enrolled in RSSP have AEPs. The students that did not have AEPs entered and exited from the program the same day. The data also show that four students did not receive academic instruction. These four students were in the program less than a week. While these students may not have received academic instruction, an AEP was written for each one of them.

Table 7. RSSP Services Received by Student Eligibility Status, FY 04

Services Received	Student Eligibility Status						Total	
	Expelled and Re-Admitted		Expulsion-Eligible		Suspension-Eligible			
	Number	Within Pct	Number	Within Pct	Number	Within Pct	Number	Within Pct
Academic Services								
Academic Instruction	564	100.0	1,984	99.8	1,650	100.0	4,198	99.9
Community College Course	0	0.0	9	0.6	18	1.9	27	1.0
Alternative Education Plan (AEP)	564	100.0	1,986	99.9	1,650	100.0	4,200	100.0
Mentoring	132	23.4	670	33.7	448	27.2	1,250	29.7
Tutoring	265	47.0	908	45.7	656	39.8	1,829	43.5
Social/Emotional Related Services								
Behavior Modification Training	215	38.1	1,213	61.0	1,148	69.6	2,576	61.3
Individual/Group Counseling	508	90.1	1,586	79.8	1,103	66.8	3,197	76.1
Life Skills Training	250	44.3	1,436	72.2	1,150	69.7	2,836	67.5
Work/Career Related Services								
Cooperative	14	4.6	75	5.1	56	6.1	145	5.3
Entrepreneurship	0	0.0	38	2.6	10	1.1	48	1.8
Field Trips	449	79.6	1,067	53.7	786	47.6	2,302	54.8
Job Shadowing	99	17.6	89	4.5	115	7.0	303	7.2
Paid Work Experience	10	3.3	101	6.8	118	12.8	229	8.4
School-Based Business	17	5.6	19	1.3	17	1.8	53	2.0
Speakers	352	62.4	1,056	53.1	766	46.4	2,174	51.7
Unpaid Work Experience	37	12.1	138	9.3	97	10.5	272	10.0
Career Assessment	215	38.1	750	37.7	486	29.5	1,451	34.5
Career Counseling	133	23.6	596	30.0	520	31.5	1,249	29.7
Career Fairs	127	22.5	155	7.8	100	6.1	382	9.1
Career Portfolio	83	14.7	194	9.8	286	17.3	563	13.4
Community Service								
Court-Mandated	29	5.1	87	4.4	73	4.4	189	4.5
Other Volunteerism	69	12.2	110	5.5	124	7.5	303	7.2
RSSP Service Learning	313	55.5	931	46.8	619	37.5	1,863	44.3

Social/Emotional Related Services

While the law is not specific about services related to the social and emotional well being of students enrolled in RSSP, the data show that services related to this construct, such as behavior modification training, counseling, and life skills training, are services that were received by a majority of students with about 61%, 76%, and 68% of students receiving such services, respectively. These numbers however reflect decreases from previous years where 70%, 82% and 77% received similar services, respectively. Specifically, there is more demand for these types of services among expelled/re-admitted students or expulsion-eligible students.

Career-Related Services

More than half of the students went on field trips. Over half of the students also benefited from "speakers." Career assessment or career counseling was provided to less than 35% of students. Moreover, only 8% and 10% of high school students had paid or unpaid work experiences.

<u>Community Service</u>

Similar to FY 03, about 44% of students participated in RSSP-sponsored service learning activities. There were 7% of students who personally volunteered to provide community service and 5% participated because it was mandated by the court system.

C. Student Outcomes

The outcomes of RSSP students in FY 04 are shown in Table 9.

Table 8. <u>Outcomes of Students Enrolled in RSSP, FY 04</u>

CURRICULAR OUTCOMES	Number	Valid Pct*
High School Credit Received	2,067	76.2
Improved Behavior	2,774	66.0
High School Graduation	312	62.4
Improved Attendance	2,560	60.9
Advanced in Grade	760	51.0
Returned to Home School	1,409	33.5
Employment (Curriculum-Related)	192	7.1
GED Test Completed	37	1.4

OTHER OUTCOMES	Number	Valid Pct
Dropped out of the Program	323	7.7
Dropped from RSSP/Sent Back for Expulsion	189	4.5
Dropped from RSSP/Sent Back for Reassignment	158	3.8
Transferred to Department of Corrections	82	2.0
Transferred to Residential Treatment Program	47	1.1
Transferred to Special Education	39	0.9
Transferred to TAOEP	27	0.6
Removed from the Program for Home Schooling	23	0.5
Transferred to Other Local District Program	22	0.5
Transferred to Other RSSP Program	22	0.5

*Percentages were computed based on appropriate grades or ages of students.

As in years past, the highest outcome in RSSP comes from high school students attempting to earn credits toward completion of their high school education (76.2%). Relatively, RSSP also has a high graduation rate (62.0%). Moreover, 66% of the students improved their behavior and 61% improved their school attendance.

Ideally, the students' AEPs are designed to reflect an outcome related to the students' referrals. In cases of students who are non-disruptive, "improved behavior" would not be an appropriate outcome. This may explain why, despite the premise that RSSP was established to make the regular schools "safe," the percent of students "improving behavior" is less than what is expected.

D. Relationship of Services with Student Outcomes

Several stages of statistical analysis were conducted to determine which services significantly contributed to the students' educational success. Students' educational success is operationally defined as that which includes students who received high school credit(s), were promoted to the next grade, graduated from elementary school, graduated from high school, completed the GED test, improved behavior, improved attendance, returned to home school, or employed as part of the curriculum. An aggregate score is computed for each student on these "success" variables. The next step was to compute scores for various services. The services are grouped into four: academic, behavioral, career, and community service. The academic group includes academic instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and community college course enrollment. The behavioral group includes behavior modification training, life skills training, and individual and/or group counseling. The career group includes career assessment, career portfolio, career counseling, job shadowing, paid and unpaid work experience, and enrollment in a cooperative. With service scores computed for each of these service groups, a regression analysis was performed with students' educational success as the dependent variable and the four service groups as the independent variables.

The regression analysis showed that <u>all</u> service groups significantly contributed to the students' educational success. But some service groups have greater impact than others. For instance, the career service group contributed the most to students' educational success with standardized regression coefficient (beta)[1] of 0.234. This is followed by the behavioral service group with beta= 0.118, and then by the community service group with beta=.094. Academic instruction ranked fourth with beta=.05.

These results are similar to what were obtained last year.

Overall, **84%** of RSSP students achieved at least one successful outcome, 10% did not, and 6% have outcomes that could not be classified as successful or unsuccessful.

E. Length of Stay in the Program

Table 9. <u>Length of Stay of Students in RSSP by Eligibility Status, FY 04</u>

| Length in the Program | Student Eligibility Status | | | | | | Total | |
| | Expelled and Re-Admitted | | Expulsion-Eligible | | Suspension-Eligible | | | |
	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
Less than one year	375	95.2	1277	92.5	1043	87.6	2,695	90.9
One year and greater	19	4.8	103	7.5	148	12.4	270	9.1
Total Exited	394	69.9	1,380	69.4	1,191	72.2	2,965	70.6
Have not Exited	170	30.1	608	30.6	459	27.8	1,237	29.4
Total Served	564	13.4	1,988	47.3	1,650	39.3	4,202	100.0

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[1] Standardized regression coefficient or beta is a test statistic that explains the contribution of an independent variable (in this case any of the four service groups) to the variation of the dependent variable (in this case the student educational success).

Students in RSSP generally stay in the program less than a year (91%). Over 70% of students exited compared to only 29% who were carried over to the next year. (See Table 9.)

Relationship of Length of Stay in the Program and Student Success

A regression analysis conducted elsewhere indicated that student's length of stay in the program explains only 1.3% (R square=.013, p=.000) of the student's success. While the test-statistic is statistically significant, its practical significance is nil. This statistical finding could be explained by Table 10 below. Over 80% of students achieved positive outcomes regardless of how long they stay in the program. Students who stayed longer, however, tend to have a slightly higher successful outcome rate than those who stayed less time. For instance, students who were in the program longer than one year have a successful outcome rate of approximately 86% compared to 81% of students who were in the program less than one year.

Table 10. Length of Stay in RSSP by Outcome Classification, FY 04

Length in the Program	Outcome Classification						
	Unsucccessful Outcomes		Succcessful Outcomes		Unclassified Outcomes		
	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	Total
Less than one year	375	13.9	2,176	80.7	144	5.3	2,695
One year and greater	29	10.7	231	85.6	10	3.7	270
Have not exited	18	1.5	1,098	88.8	121	9.8	1,237
Total Served	422	10.0	3505	83.4	275	6.5	4,202

IV. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION DATA IN THE STATE

The following charts (Chart 1 and Chart 2) show the status of student expulsions and multiple suspensions in Illinois public schools. The most current state data available about student expulsions is in 2003. The 2004 data is still being collected.

Between 1994 through 2003, the number of expulsions was highest in 1999 with 2,779 students, and dramatically took a big dip in 2000 with 2,058 students, 700 students less (Chart 1). However, the expulsion numbers climbed again in the succeeding two years with an increase of approximately 500 students in 2003 from 2000. The data also show that high school students are twice as likely to be expelled than elementary students.

Chart 1. Number of Students Expelled in Illinois Public Schools: FY 93 through FY 03
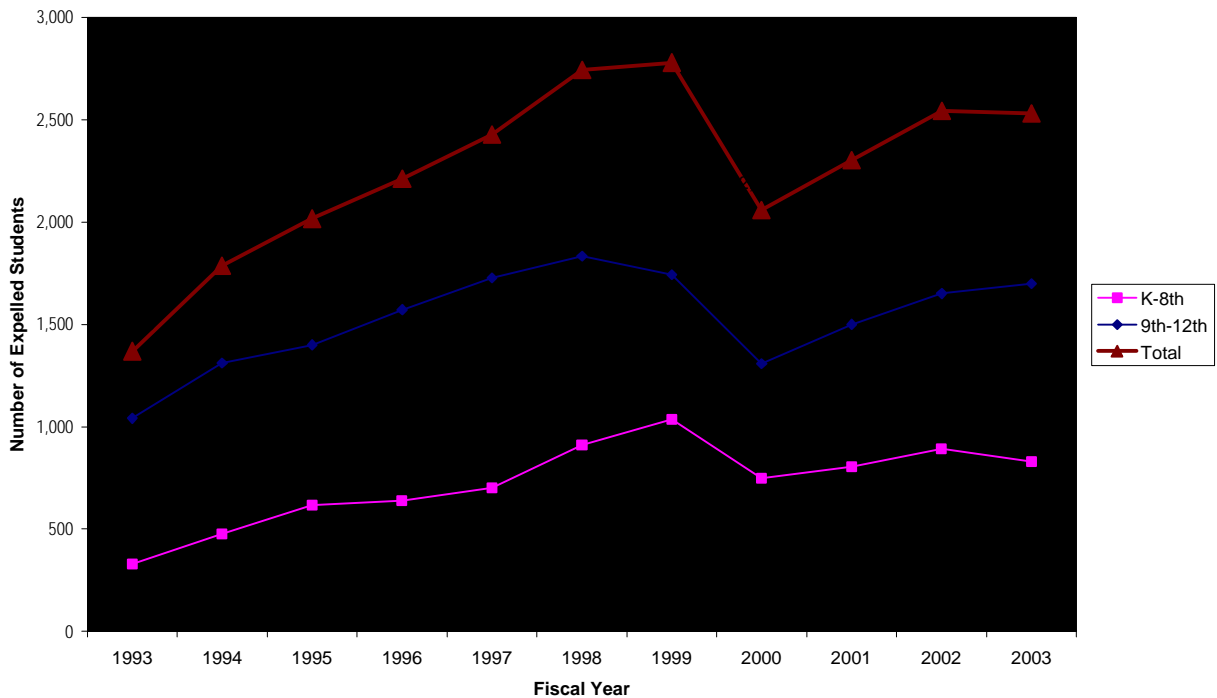
Compared to expulsions, the number of students with multiple suspensions peaked in 1998 with approximately 60,000 students and then decreased significantly about 10,000 students in 1999 (Chart 2). It has been the case for several years that more high school students received multiple suspensions than elementary students; but in 2003, the distribution of multiple suspensions shifted with elementary suspensions greater than high school suspensions. Overall, the number of multiple suspensions in the state increased by over 5,000 students in 2003 from 2002.

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Chart 2. Number of Students with Multiple Suspensions in Illinois Public Schools: FY 96 through FY 03
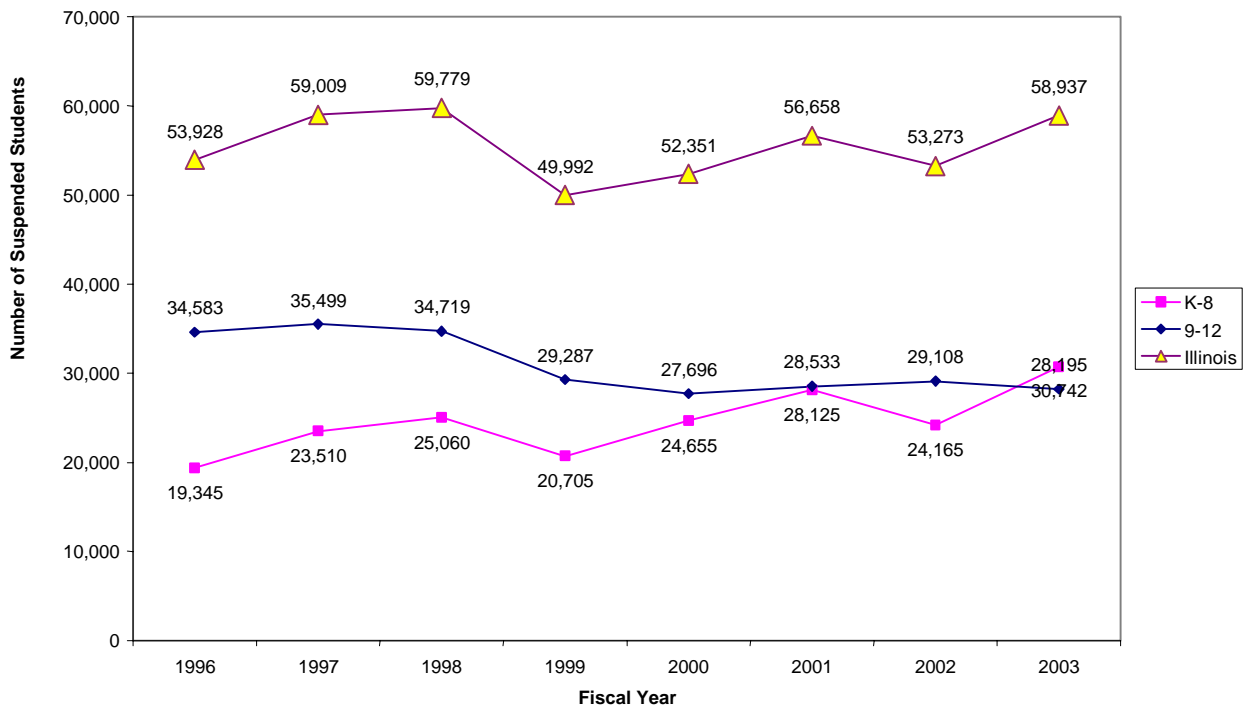
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data in FY 04 show that the Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) in Illinois is increasingly serving students who have severe disciplinary issues – the most challenging students in the state. Specifically, these are students who brought weapons to school, assaulted personnel and other students, were involved with drugs, or exhibited repetitive defiant and disruptive behavior.

The data show that RSSP has met the challenge of educating these students. First, the number of students who earned academic credits increased. In FY 04, there were 2,067 students who earned academic credits which is 200 students more from students who earned academic credits in FY 03. This outcome is important because earning high school academic credits raises the probability of a student graduating from high school. Second, the high school graduation rate in RSSP stays at over 60%. It was 66% in FY 03 and 62% in FY 04. This rate of achievement is equal or close to the required high school graduation target under adequate yearly progress (AYP) of 66%. This is a significant success of the program. RSSP is the last place or last chance for these highly at-risk students to get high school diplomas, and without RSSP these students would have not graduated.

More importantly, RSSP's presence provides an opportunity for students who would have been expelled or suspended from school to continue their education in a setting that contributes to the attainment of such educational goals. RSSP, like any other alternative education program has lower student/teacher ratios which allows more attention to individual student needs, be it academic, emotional, or physical. Students enrolled in RSSP have access to an array of services, which may not be possible with regular education programs. While it may appear from the data that RSSP has not fully instituted some requirements of the law, for instance, only less

than 30% participated in career-related activities or 44% participated in RSSP-sponsored service learning, RSSP focused its priorities on services or activities that are most needed by students – that of meeting their social and emotional needs. Moreover, without RSSP, more students would have been expelled or suspended. The numbers in the following tables explain this contention. The term "recouped" refers to recovered students from being expelled or suspended. Table 11 shows that RSSP has increasingly recovered students from expulsion starting with 28% in 1998 to 41% in 2002.

Table 11. Recouped Expulsion Rates: FY 98 through FY 03

Fiscal Year	Expulsion-Eligible Students Served by RSSP	Number of Students Expelled from Illinois Public Schools	Number of Students that Could Have Been Expelled from Illinois Public Schools	Recouped Rate
1998	1,059	2,744	3,803	28.0
1999	1,248	2,779	4,027	31.0
2000	1,355	2,058	3,413	40.0
2001	1,450	2,304	3,754	39.0
2002	1,754	2,543	4,297	41.0
2003	1,685	2,530	4,215	40.0

Table 12. Recouped Suspension Rates: FY 98 through FY 03

Fiscal Year	Suspension-Eligible Students Served by RSSP	Number of Students with Multiple Suspensions in Illinois Public Schools	Number of Students that Would Have Been Under Multiple Suspensions in Illinois Public Schools	Recouped Rate
1998	3,517	59,779	63,296	6.0
1999	3,496	49,992	53,488	7.0
2000	2,660	52,351	55,011	5.0
2001	2,414	56,658	59,072	4.0
2002	1,847	53,273	55,120	3.0
2003	1,623	58,937	60,560	2.7

Similarly, multiple suspensions would be higher without RSSP. For example, multiple suspensions in 1998 would have been 63,296 if RSSP had not enrolled the 3,517 students in the program (Table 12).

Recommendations

The regression analysis shows that career-related services, specifically, career portfolios, career counseling, and/or career assessments, contributed significantly to the students' educational success. In fact, among all services, these services, as one construct, have the highest correlation to the students' educational success. In addition, service learning sponsored by RSSP also correlate significantly to the students' educational success. Given these results, it is recommended that programs need to pursue the possibility of increasing the availability of

such services to students. In FY 04, less than 50% of the students received the aforementioned services.

Corollary to this recommendation is the streamlining of services. Some services need to be combined or eliminated, particularly those received by less than 10% of the students, like "speakers," "field trips," "registered apprenticeship," or the "other" categories under "career focus," "career development," etc.

Lastly, some student outcomes need to be validated. As indicated earlier, one of the limitations of this evaluation is the manner by which some outcomes are reported. All the outcomes are in categorical scale (which means that programs only need to check boxes), and there is no hard data to validate, for instance, "improved attendance," "improved behavior," or "high school academic credits received." One outcome in particular which needs to be explored in depth is "improved behavior." Programs significantly vary in reporting this construct and, in all cases the assessment is subjective – if they are measured at all. It is recommended, therefore, that outcomes related to behavior, attendance, or credits earned need to be supported with numerical data.

Appendix A

Number of Students Enrolled in Each RSSP Program by Student Eligibility Status, FY 04

RSSP Program	Student Eligibility Status						Total	
	Expelled and Re-Admitted		Expulsion-Eligible		Suspension-Eligible		Total	
	No.	Within Pct	No.	Within Pct	No.	Within Pct	No.	Pct of Total
ADAMS-PIKE		0.0	2	2.2	91	97.8	93	2.2
ALXNDR-JOHNSON-MASSAC-PULSKI-UNION	1	3.1	13	40.6	18	56.3	32	0.8
BOND- EFFINGHAM- FAYETTE		0.0	12	30.8	27	69.2	39	0.9
BOONE- WINNEBAGO	38	43.7	9	10.3	40	46.0	87	2.1
BROWN-CASS-MORGAN-SCOTT		0.0	1	11.1	8	88.9	9	0.2
BUREAU- HENRY- STARK		0.0	2	4.2	46	95.8	48	1.1
CALHOUN-GREENE-JERSEY-MACOUPIN		0.0	30	61.2	19	38.8	49	1.2
CARROLL- JO DAVIESS- STEPHENSON	4	6.8	5	8.5	50	84.7	59	1.4
CHAMPAIGN- FORD	2	1.3	24	16.1	123	82.6	149	3.5
CHRISTIAN- MONTGOMERY		0.0	28	71.8	11	28.2	39	0.9
CITY OF CHICAGO	296	54.2	250	45.8		0.0	546	13.0
CLAY-CWFORD-JSPER-LWRNCE-RHLAND	3	4.8	41	66.1	18	29.0	62	1.5
CLINTON-MARION-WASHINGTON	3	9.4	8	25.0	21	65.6	32	0.8
CLK-CLS-CMBN-DGLAS-EDGR-MLTR-SHLB	11	12.6	20	23.0	56	64.4	87	2.1
DE KALB	2	3.4	20	34.5	36	62.1	58	1.4
DE WITT-LIVINGSTON-MCLEAN		0.0	54	40.6	79	59.4	133	3.2
DU PAGE		0.0	95	77.9	27	22.1	122	2.9
EDWD-GLTN-HDIN-POP-SLNE-WBH-WN-WH	1	2.4	11	26.8	29	70.7	41	1.0
FRANKLIN-WILLIAMSON	2	6.9	6	20.7	21	72.4	29	0.7
FULTON-SCHUYLER	6	26.1	1	4.3	16	69.6	23	0.5
GRUNDY-KENDALL	5	3.1	52	32.1	105	64.8	162	3.9
HAMILTON-JEFFERSON		0.0	12	60.0	8	40.0	20	0.5
HANCOCK-MC DONOUGH		0.0	25	71.4	10	28.6	35	0.8
HENDERSON-MERCER-WARREN	3	20.0	10	66.7	2	13.3	15	0.4
IROQUOIS-KANKAKEE		0.0	9	9.9	82	90.1	91	2.2
JACKSON-PERRY		0.0	6	28.6	15	71.4	21	0.5
KANE		0.0	119	89.5	14	10.5	133	3.2
KNOX	9	16.4	1	1.8	45	81.8	55	1.3
LA SALLE- MARSHALL-PUTNAM-WOODFORD	15	9.8	39	25.5	99	64.7	153	3.6
LAKE		0.0	91	88.3	12	11.7	103	2.5
LEE-OGLE	2	6.9	22	75.9	5	17.2	29	0.7
LOGAN-MASON-MENARD	2	4.1	5	10.2	42	85.7	49	1.2
MACON-PIATT	37	68.5	10	18.5	7	13.0	54	1.3
MADISON		0.0	75	90.4	8	9.6	83	2.0
MC HENRY	12	33.3	3	8.3	21	58.3	36	0.9
MONROE-RANDOLPH		0.0	3	10.3	26	89.7	29	0.7
NORTH COOK	6	2.3	218	83.5	37	14.2	261	6.2
PEORIA	1	0.5	172	86.4	26	13.1	199	4.7
ROCK ISLAND	7	11.3	11	17.7	44	71.0	62	1.5
SANGAMON	17	20.0	58	68.2	10	11.8	85	2.0
SOUTH COOK		0.0	121	85.2	21	14.8	142	3.4
ST CLAIR		0.0	32	46.4	37	53.6	69	1.6
TAZEWELL	38	60.3	12	19.0	13	20.6	63	1.5
VERMILION	15	75.0	5	25.0		0.0	20	0.5
WEST COOK	3	3.3	70	76.1	19	20.7	92	2.2
WHITESIDE		0.0	15	83.3	3	16.7	18	0.4
WILL	23	6.0	160	41.5	203	52.6	386	9.2
Eligibility Totals	564	13.4	1988	47.3	1650	39.3	4,202	100.0

APPENDIX B

Reasons for Administrative Transfer by Selected Student Ethnic Groups, FY 04

Reason(s) for Administrative Transfer	Student Ethnicity					
	Black		Hispanic		White	
	No.	Pct	No.	Pct	No.	Pct
Assault	301	20.6	76	13.5	241	11.4
Computer hacking	85	5.8	33	5.9	199	9.4
Drugs	224	15.4	129	22.9	514	24.4
Harassment	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.2
Pranks	30	2.1	16	2.8	61	2.9
Theft, arson or unwarranted pulling of a fire alarm	66	4.5	22	3.9	247	11.7
Threats	178	12.2	62	11.0	339	16.1
Weapons	166	11.4	66	11.7	132	6.3
Ethnicity Unduplicated Total	1,459		563		2,108	

APPENDIX C

Definitions of Services

Individual Optional Education Plan (IOEP) – Each student must have an IOEP that has been prepared specifically for him or her. The initial IOEP is developed upon enrollment into RSSP. It should include, at a minimum, academic, career, and personal goals, and steps to achieve each goal. It should include the anticipated length of stay in RSSP and transition back to the sending school, graduation, or GED, if appropriate, employment, or other transitions. The IOEP should be reviewed and amended at regular intervals and, as needed. The IOEP should be developed with input from the student, parent, or guardian, and the RSSP counselor, or teacher, and a representative from the sending school.

Academic Instruction – Provision of direct academic instructional services, or computer-assisted instructional services, or a combination of both. All students must receive academic instruction.

Tutoring – Additional instructional services, usually provided on a one-to-one basis, to supplement regular instruction.

Mentoring – Coaching and/or guiding students with their career/educational goals. A mentor can be a peer, an older student, staff members, or a community member who may be employed in the career field in which the student is interested. Mentors should receive mentoring training.

Behavior Modification Training – Any of various behavior management/conflict resolution training systems that help students improve their behavior, manage stress, control anger, and make better choices.

Life Skills Training – This training may include decision-making (critical thinking, problem solving, and communication), social skills, cultural awareness, financial management, etc.

Individual/Group Counseling – RSSP programs may provide individual and/or group counseling that may relate to social, emotional, or health problems. Please note that clicking on this rubric indicates that the student received individual counseling, or group counseling, or both. There is no separate rubric for individual counseling and group counseling.

Community College Course - The student took a course at a community college as part of his/her RSSP academic program as developed in the IOEP.

Career Assessment and Awareness - An identification and exploration of careers through activities to help students focus on career choices. It usually involves use of a standardized assessment instrument to provide direction toward career decision-making. It may also include such activities as job shadowing, text research, informational interviews, video programs, computer software programs, and Internet searches.

Career Portfolio – A collection that captures important documents and accomplishments in the students' progress toward success. Such documents should reflect the students' achievements, present an overview of their personal experiences, identify transferable skills, and outline areas of learning. The items contained in the career portfolio may include, but are not limited to, employment history, job applications, a resume, a brief biography, transcripts, letters of recommendation, certificates, awards, and recognitions.

Career Counseling - Activities to assist students in making informed educational and occupational choices. Aspects of career counseling may include career awareness, planning, decision-making, and job placement. Knowledge of local, state, and national occupational, educational, and labor market needs, trends, and opportunities, aid students to develop career options that may surmount gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language, or socioeconomic impediments to career options and encouraging careers in non-traditional employment.

Career Fairs - Events at which employers and/or post-secondary institutions meet with students and explain available career opportunities. Initial job interviews or appointments for job interviews may be arranged at career fairs.

Other Career Focus – Any other career focus related activities not specifically defined above.

Field Trips - A work-site experience (1-3 hours) during which a group of students, escorted by school staff, tours a business. This activity is appropriate for any grade level as the format and information presented can be tailored to student age/grade levels.

Job Shadowing - A work-site experience during which students observe employers in their specific career paths. This experience is appropriate for a single student or a small group of students.

Speakers – This activity involves members of the community who meet with the students and provide them with first hand information about the career paths they (the speakers) have chosen.

Paid Work Experience (Not Coop) - Paid work experience that is not a part of a cooperative education program, may include a workplace learning experience for which a student is paid but receives no high school credit, or any employment in which a student is involved in after school hours.

Cooperative Education - A cooperative education program combines the efforts and resources of the employment community and the local education agency for the purpose of providing students with learning experiences that lead to the development of entry or intermediate level job skills.

Unpaid Work Experience - A work experience at the employer's site in which students gain technical skills through an unpaid work experience that is closely integrated with school-based activities. This experience must meet six guidelines established for trainees or student trainees.

School-Based Business – This is an enterprise or business that is located within the educational environment, is planned and managed by the students, and is developed to promote the spirit of entrepreneurism.

Registered Apprenticeship – The student participates in a program that is authorized by the registered apprenticeship agency and approved by the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training.

Entrepreneurship - Entrepreneurship training is a process through which students may obtain skills, knowledge, constructive attitudes, and experiences toward self-employment.

Other Career Development Activities – Any other career development activities that are not specifically identified above.

RSSP-Sponsored – This indicates participation in a community service project that was developed as part of the RSSP program.

Court-Mandated Participation – This indicates student participation in a community service project that was mandated as part of a court services program in which the student is involved.

RSSP Service Learning – This indicates student participation in a Service Learning project developed as part of the RSSP program.

Other Volunteerism – This indicates any other student participation in any other community service program not otherwise identified above.

Referral to Social Services - The RSSP program may refer the student for services that are provided by government agencies, public or private social service agencies, or community-based organizations.

Parenting Classes for Students - The RSSP may provide parenting classes for students who are pregnant, or the parents of children, or may refer students for such services provided outside of RSSP.

Parenting Classes for Parents (of RSSP students) – The RSSP may provide parenting classes for parents of RSSP students as part of parental involvement in the RSSP program, or as needed in individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Such classes may be provided directly by RSSP or by referral to another agency.

Other Services – Any other services provided to the student that have not been described elsewhere. Other services may include drug/alcohol or other substance abuse counseling or testing that may be provided directly by the RSSP program, or within the context of the RSSP program, or may be handled by referral to an outside agency.