

School Success Task Force (SSTF)

Meeting of August 8, 2012

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Illinois State Board of Education
100 N First Street, 3rd Floor (V-Tel)
Springfield, Illinois**

**Illinois State Board of Education
James R Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, 14th Floor (V-Tel)
Chicago, Illinois**

I. Welcome and Introductory remarks

Representative William Davis, Co-Chair, introduced himself and welcomed individuals to the School Success Task Force (SSTF)

Members present (Total Members – 18; No Quorum)

Christine Boyd, Illinois Department of Corrections

Dr. Seymour Bryson, Illinois African American Family Commission

Maria Capoccia, Member

Ava Carpenter-McPike, Member

Representative William Davis, Co-Chair

Kye Gaffey, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (Left after presentation)

Twin Green, Member (Call Disconnected)

Leslie Juby, Member

Jennifer Loudon, Chicago Public Schools (Call Disconnected)

Dr. Arthur Sutton, Illinois Board of Higher Education

Sue Taylor, Illinois State Board of Education

General Public present:

Michael Byrd, Illinois African American Family Commission

Aquantis Williams, Illinois African American Family Commission

Pat DalSanto, Regional Superintendent, Kane County Regional Office of Education

Valerie Macys, Maryland Public Schools

Illinois State Board of Education present:

Cynthia Riseman, Illinois State Board of Education

**II. Presentation – Alternative Program in Illinois
(Kane County Regional Office of Education, Superintendent Pat DalSanto)**

Regional Office of Education Superintendent Pat DalSanto gave a presentation on the Regional Safe School Program (RSSP). Superintendent DalSanto explained that RSSPs were designed as an alternative program for children who have been suspended or expelled. She further stated that there are five local programs in Kane County that cover nine school districts. Ms. DalSanto indicated that their RSSP programs include:

- alternative to suspension
- alternative to expulsion
- evening and day programs

She also indicated that during the past 16 years, the Kane County RSSP has served over 5,000 students with a 88% success rate. The success rate is based on students being returned to their home schools or students who have graduated.

Superintendent DalSanto said that the program had originally served about 1,100 students and now serves around 300 students per year in 6 – 12 grades. The cuts in funding have caused the program to decrease the number of students served by about 50. However, even though the number of students served has decreased, expulsion rates have not decreased.

Ms. DalSanto indicated that RSSP has proven to be a successful program but the cuts in state funds have threatened the program.

Superintendent DalSanto listed the following as components of the program:

- Students are referred by their districts
- Requires parental involvement to be successful
- Assist students in job location and encourages community service
- Utilizes a computer based curriculum that is tailor-made for students' needs
- Strong positive relationships and interaction occurs between staff and students
- RSSP staff works with students' home schools to provide a smooth transition back to the home school
- The RSSP utilizes the Character Counts program which encourages good citizenship
 - Begins in Pre-K
 - Positive approach to what students are doing right rather than wrong

Superintendent DalSanto stated that the most influential component needed to improve the issues with truancy, drop-outs, suspensions, and expulsions within schools is to forge relationships with students and to provide smaller education settings within larger schools. This would allow students the opportunity to foster relationships with adults who care and to understand that there are individuals who care if they are in school.

According to Ms. DalSanto, all Regional Offices of Education (ROE) have some type of RSSP program. All ROEs have rules and regulations for these programs. Information from the RSSP programs must be reported to the Illinois State Board of Education. The information reported includes the student success rate, the outcomes, and the reason the student continues in the RSSP program.

III. Approval of Minutes from previous meetings

Quorum not present – Minutes could not be approved

Meeting minutes from March 6, 2012, April 30, 2012 and June 19, 2012 meetings still require Task Force approval.

IV. Best Practices Sub-Committee Report

Quorum not present – Sub-committee Reported out but no action could be taken

Best Practices Sub-Committee has met twice. They have requested certain information from ISBE. Included in the requests are the districts with the most and the least amount of expulsions and

suspensions. The Sub-Committee also stated that they are researching various factors to see if they have an impact on suspensions and expulsions. These factors have included data on free and reduced lunches and the possible impact of poverty on truancy, drop-outs, suspensions, and expulsions. The committee reviewed the data from 20 districts with the lowest suspension/expulsion rates and noted that these districts did not have a high rate of free and reduced lunches.

The committee also inquired about how school districts create policies. They learned that there are several ways that districts can write their policies. These include:

- Policies written by district superintendents or building principals
- Utilization of available templates (this includes legislative updates which can automatically be sent to schools that subscribe to the policy programs and include the exact wording on how certain policies should be written in order to meet legislative request. These also include the dates the new policies should begin.

The Best Practices Sub-committee made the following suggestions to the SSTF:

- Accountability for the reporting of district data
- Guidelines/suggestions for use of district collected data
- Streamline the data. (Where did the students go once they were suspended and expelled?)
- Required district policies that are outcome driven. (Possibly, ISBE created templates for districts that can't afford to subscribe to programs that create policies.)
- Education that is fully funded!

V. Public Hearing Discussion

Quorum not present – the following discussion ensued as a possibility for the SSTF

A statement that the probation department had not spoken at the public hearings was mentioned.

However, it was pointed out that Ava Carpenter-McPike, a member of the SSTF is a probation officer. Ms. Carpenter-McPike stated that there are several factors that lead to probation. She stated that among these factors are home problems and issues. Ms. Carpenter-McPike indicated that many parents of students on probation are uneducated. She also indicated that there are a number of students who are required to stay home and babysit while their parents work. Since there have been significant cuts to truancy funding, there is a decrease in the ability to check on these particular students to see why they are not in school.

Ms. Carpenter-McPike further indicated that there are students who commit crimes intentionally so they may be placed in juvenile detention centers. She also indicated specific information relative to schools within the Springfield district including information on a 12-point system, internally developed policies, students who are sometimes sent home for an absence rather than a suspension, and the number of students (including each student's race and gender) currently housed in the juvenile facility in Springfield.

VI. Set Future Meeting Dates

The next hearing is Monday, August 13, 2012 at Math and Science Academy in Aurora, IL.

Suggested locations for additional hearings would be Peoria, East St. Louis, and Cicero, Illinois.

Future meeting set for October 11, 2012 – 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

VII. Task Force Recommendations (Discussion on Recommendations)

Task force did not have quorum.

VIII. Other Business

Task force did not have quorum.

IX. Public Comment

Task force did not have quorum.

X. Adjournment

Task force did not have quorum.