



Illinois State Board of Education

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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: The Honorable Charles Jefferson, Co-Chairman
Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force
The Honorable David Winters, Co-Chairman
Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force

DATE: December 28, 2006

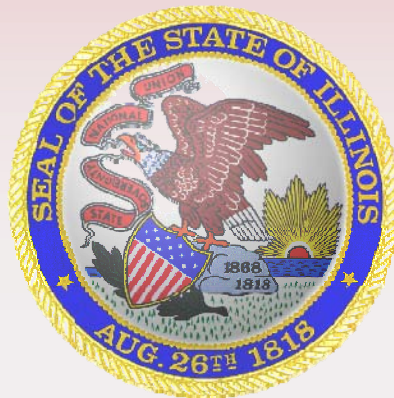
RE: House Resolution 905 – Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force

As required by House Resolution (HR) 905, the following report includes the findings of the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force and its recommendation for a best model for the distribution of Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program grant funds to ensure that limited resources reach the students most in need. Per HR 905, with the submission of this report, the Task Force is dissolved.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Sally Veach, Accountability Division, Illinois State Board of Education at 217-782-2948.

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

Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Programs (TAOEP) Task Force



*Report to Governor Rod R. Blagojevich and the
Illinois General Assembly*

December 28, 2006

Call to Action

House Resolution 905 (HR 905) established the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education (TAOEP) Task Force for the purpose of recommending a best model for the distribution of Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program grant funds to ensure that limited resources reach the students most in need. HR 905 requires the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force to file a report of its findings with the Clerk of the House no later than January 1, 2007.

TAOEP uses State funds for competitive grants that fund supplemental services and/or alternative education programming for truants, chronic truants, retrieved dropouts and potential dropouts from kindergarten through age 21. This broad programming designed to serve potentially hundreds of thousands Illinois students has a FY 2007 funding amount of \$18,078,100 of which 26.8 percent goes to Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in a block grant.

The major focus of the Task Force is to recommend the best way to equitably distribute funds to areas where the needs are greatest. The Task Force addresses the equity of distribution not the issue of adequacy of funds. After studying many aspects of the program and related issues, the Task Force is recommending a funding formula based on distributing funds by region using current Regional Offices of Education (ROE) geographic areas.

Membership

Name	Appointed by
Co-Chairperson The Honorable Charles Jefferson Member, Illinois House of Representatives	The Honorable Michael Madigan Speaker, Illinois House of Representatives
Co-Chairperson The Honorable David Winters Member, Illinois House of Representatives	The Honorable Tom Cross Minority Leader, Illinois House of Representatives
Randy Frese Member of the Public	The Honorable Tom Cross Minority Leader, Illinois House of Representatives
Jack Wuest Representing an optional education (alternative) program	Illinois State Board of Education
Bobbi Mattingly Representing a truancy intervention (supplemental) program	Illinois State Board of Education
Sally Veach Illinois State Board of Education employee working with Truants' Alternative and	Illinois State Board of Education

Optional Education Program	
Jane Quinlan Representing Regional Offices of Education	Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents
Thomas H. Mulligan Representing school districts	Illinois Association of School Administrators
Jeffrey May Representing community colleges	Illinois Community College Board
Harold Sweeney Representing a coalition that advocates for at-risk youth	Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth

Recommendation

The TAOEP Task Force recommends a funding formula providing a \$30,000 base for each of the education regions with fifty percent of the funds distributed based on chronic truancy and dropout rates as reported to Illinois State Board of Education and fifty percent of the funds distributed based on Department of Human Services poverty count. The Task Force recommends using a three year average of the DHS poverty count and a three year average of chronic truancy and dropouts rates beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. For FY 2008 the Task Force recommends using chronic truancy and dropout numbers from FY 2005 and FY 2006 for a two year average.

The Task Force has concerns with the reliability of current chronic truancy and dropout figures due to inconsistent reporting and underreporting. However, the members are confident that with the adoption of the proposed formula for distribution of Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program funds and the full implementation of the statewide Student Information System (SIS) being implemented by Illinois State Board of Education, that more accurate truancy and dropout data will be available.

The Task Force recommends a phase-in to the new formula to ease anticipated shifts in funding levels for geographic regions throughout the state. The Task Force recommends that the formula be implemented at 25 percent change each of the next four years with full implementation of the formula in the fifth year.

Projected Effects and Related Recommendations

At the FY 2007 funding level of \$18 million it is estimated one-half of the regions would lose funding and one-half would gain funding. Using this estimate, overall, \$1.5 million moves from five downstate areas to the suburban/collar county area. The Task Force estimates that an additional \$3 million (\$21 million budget line for TAOEP) could benefit both regions losing

funds and those regions gaining funds under the proposed formula. A portion of these additional funds could be awarded to regions experiencing a decrease in funding under the new formula. Awarding FY 2007 levels of TAOEP funding would maintain current levels of programming to meet students' needs in those regions. The additional \$3 million in funding would negate the need for phasing in the formula over four years and allow the regions being awarded an increase in funding to receive the additional dollars in the first year of implementation. Additional funding (26.8% of new money) would be awarded to Chicago Public Schools.

Section 205.35 a) of the 23 Illinois Administrative Code requires a community planning group for each Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program. The need for area planning is considered to be essential for ensuring that these limited funds reach the students in the most need in each geographic area. It is recommended that the required community planning group be better defined in the Request for Proposal to ensure programs in an area work together and not overlap services offered. The best program model was not identified by the Task Force. The best program for an area can be identified locally with the input of the community planning group

The Task Force further recommends standardizing needs statements in the Needs Section of the Request for Proposal. Applicants will be asked to include specific statistical data that will help Request for Proposal evaluators better compare needs of applicants. The Task Force also recommends standardizing outcomes and linking successful outcomes to applicants continued funding.

The Task Force recommends to the House of Representatives that the Task Force reconvene after one year to review the delivery model as recommended in this report.

Minority Report

Task Force Member Bobbi Mattingly requested that the record reflect her concerns that the formula would better meet the mission of the Task Force if it were based solely on the DHS poverty count instead of the combination of chronic truancy and dropout rates and poverty count. She cited research pointing to a strong link between poverty and at-risk students. Her concerns are also based on the fact chronic truancy and dropout rates are self reported by school districts and are open to interpretation on reporting, making the DHS poverty count a more reliable source of data.

Other Task Force Members have concerns that the base amount of \$30,000 will not provide enough money to ensure a level of funding that would allow services to be provided to some areas of the state with low population density but students with exceptional needs.

In addition, some members do not agree with the recommendation that the first \$3 million of additional funds be awarded to regions experiencing a decrease of funding. A Task Force minority recommends any new funds be entered into and allocated according to the formula recommended by the Task Force.