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Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant

Summary Report for 2003-2004 School Year

August 2004

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1998, The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has funded school districts across the state to provide services to expelled students and students at-risk of expulsion, under the Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant of Amendment 23. These funds are used to support the development, implementation, and continuation of programs. CDE's Prevention Initiatives team manages the $6.2 million grant program and awards funding to programs that offer best practices to re-claim out of school youth. Strong emphasis is placed on research-validated programs and strategies. Additionally, programs are required to show significant district support for program sustainability after grant funding is completed. During the 2003-2004 school year, grants were awarded to 55 programs.

Since the beginning of these grants, The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) provided funds to the National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) to continue their multi-year evaluation of these grants. The evaluation gathered demographic information and student level outcomes. The work with the Colorado Department of Education \ Prevention Initiatives team continues to be essential in the evaluation of these programs. The evaluation process aims to aggregate data gathered from all sites receiving funding in order to garner support and funding for these programs at the state legislative level.

PROJECT OVERVIEW FOR THE 2003-2004 SCHOOL YEAR

This report is the result of data compiled by sites during the 2003-2004 school year, and come from NCSE's ongoing evaluation of these programs. Grantees demonstrating student success, while gaining community support, and impacting family functioning continue to be priorities for funding. Additionally, programs proposing to use research based practices that have been proven effective with at-risk students received funding as well. CDE and NCSE worked to clarify and streamline the application process such that grantees provide more concise information about their programs, populations served, and outcome measures than in previous years of funding.

During the 2003-2004 school year, the evaluation of the Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant continued it's focus on reporting of data about three main areas of student outcomes. These include academic gains, attendance improvement, and disciplinary actions issued to the students in these programs. These three indicators are supported in the literature as evidence of programs that work (Aron & Zweig, 2003). In addition to the outcomes stated above, programs reported a myriad of qualitative outcomes that are critical to the success of these students, and have important implications for family functioning.

This year, programs around the state continue to use proven strategies to intervene with students, as well as trying new approaches in an effort to collect data about the effectiveness of those strategies. A growing trend this year and in the years to come, spearheaded by CDE is the move toward Positive Behavior Support (PBS) for districts across the state. The PBS model holds promise for all students, and aims to reduce the

number of office referrals as well as disciplinary problems that result in expulsions. Additionally, several programs used the CASASTART model, which is a wrap around service model aimed at dealing with at risk and expelled youth who struggle with substance related issues, but is also used for all at-risk students in an effort to avert substance abuse and other behavioral concerns. CASASTART is a nationally recognized proven program.

Many programs implemented by the grantees are housed in facilities located apart from the traditional school setting, offer smaller teacher to student ratios, and more flexible curriculum and class structure, while still meeting district and state standards. This format is also supported in the literature (Lange & Sletton, 2002) as an effective program structure for these students, as marginalized students do not 'does well' in the typical school setting.

Program staffs in each site were asked to complete a med and end of year report reflecting their activities, students served and outcomes achieved. This reporting form can be found in Appendix A. Critical to the evaluation this year was the finalization of the on-line data reporting system, which allows all sites to report data in a more efficient manner. Program staff prepared their data before entering it into the system. Phone and email technical assistance were provided by NCSE. Approximately 80% of sites make at least one phone call to NCSE to ask questions about how to count their students, to clarify the definition of outcomes or for help with the online data system. Data will continue to be posted on the CDE website for all sites to access. The password-protected system is located at www.earss.civicore.com.

EXPELLED AND AT RISK STUDENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This past year CDE provided funds for 55 expulsion/at-risk programs. Of these 55 programs, 53 programs responded to the reporting requirements. Two programs ended their funding and choose not to enter their data into the online system. The 53 programs reporting served 8770 students in the school year.

Throughout the school year, programs continued to address students at the elementary and secondary levels. Students served were described as having difficulties in one or more of the following areas:

- Academic failure such as failure to gain graduation credits, or failure in one or more subject area
- Attendance concerns and chronic truancy
- Behavioral problems including both school based behavioral concerns as well as behaviors in the community which have resulted in expulsion and/or involvement with juvenile justice systems
- Social/emotional difficulties stemming from family dysfunction, psychological concerns, and/or other social stressors, which greatly impact school function.

Expulsion and at-risk programs continue to provide academic services and strategies aimed at retaining potential dropouts. Program services continue to include individualized learning plans; computer based learning programs; alternate class

schedules with evening course options; after school programs for extended learning; tutorial programs; one to one assistance with difficult subject areas; opportunities to complete high school credits or earn a GED; work study programs to gain vocational skills transferable to the "real world"; transition plans to help reintegrate the student back into the regular classroom setting; extended time on homework assignments; small group instruction, and small class size to facilitate a higher degree of work completion and engagement with teachers and staff. Again this year program reports indicate that the small class size, the ability to provide one-one assistance and time spent developing relationships with students, are critical to the success of both the program and the students.
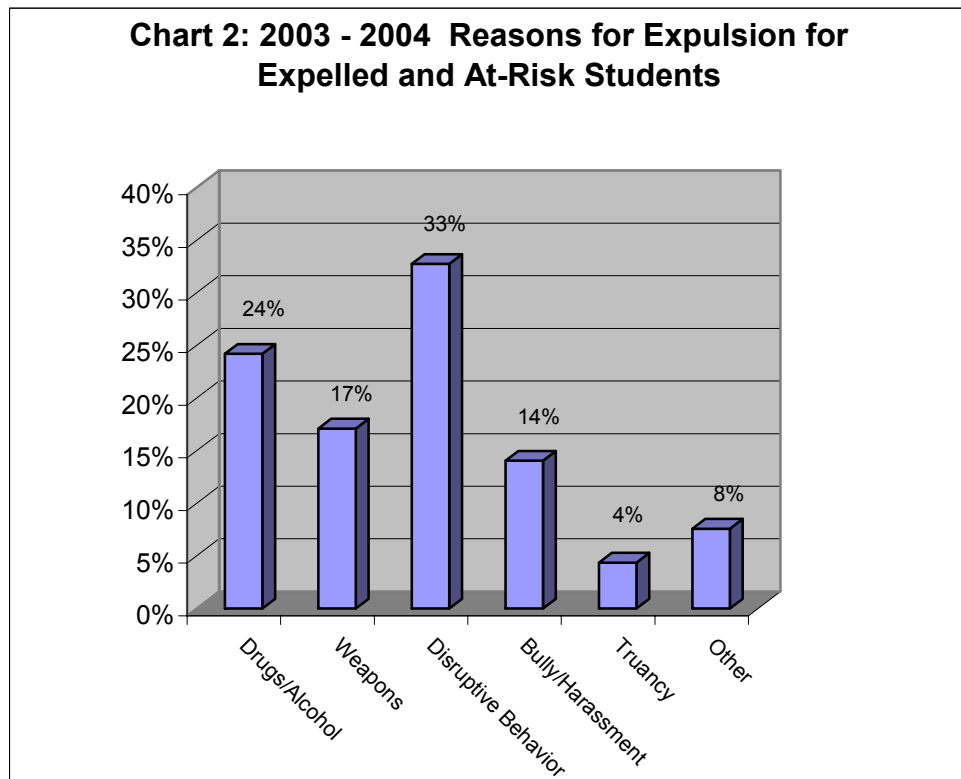
Expelled vs. At-Risk Student Data
During the 2003-2004 school year of the 8779 students served, 93% (8159) were considered to be "at-risk" of expulsion while 7% (620) were those actually expelled. The relatively small percentage of expelled students is a reduction from previous years where expulsion rates for students were in the teens. This shows that programs are in fact attempting to retain and "catch" students before an expulsion process has begun. The identification of at-risk behaviors and "red flags" has resulted in programs showing a decrease in actual expelled students. This process has implications for better student outcomes as at-risk students retained in school (as opposed to getting expelled or dropping out) show better outcomes in later life measures of success (Thurlow, et.al, 2002). Chart 1 shows the percentage of expelled vs. at-risk students reported for the 2003-2004 school year for the 53 programs that submitted end of year reports.

Chart 1: 2003-2004 Expelled vs. At-Risk Students
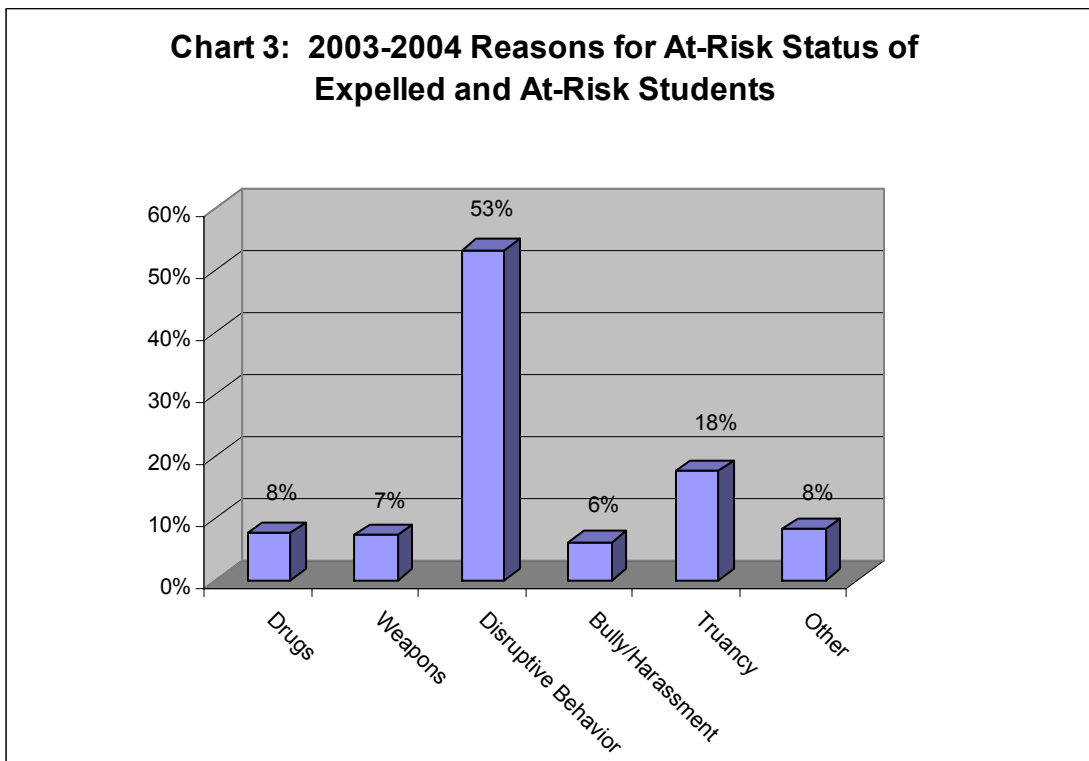

Expelled
7%
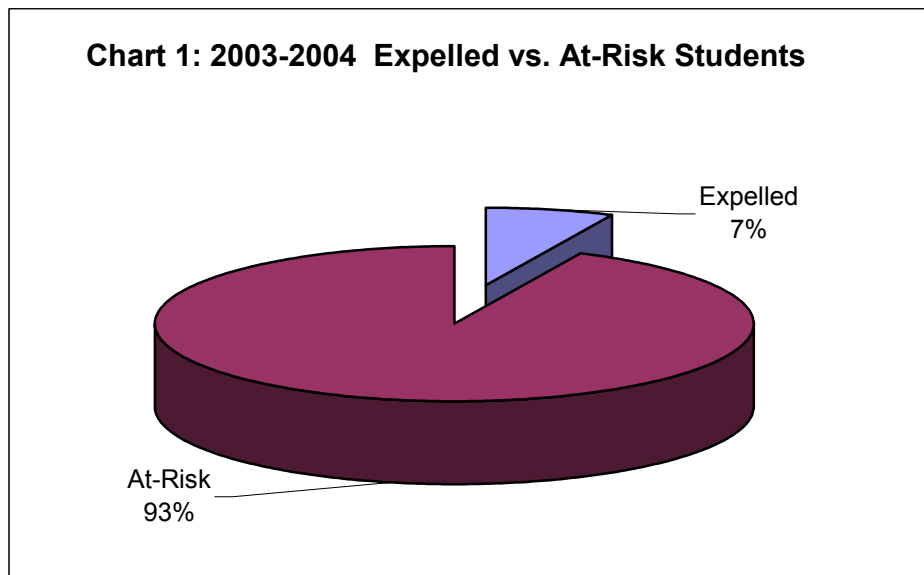
At-Risk
93%

Reasons for Expulsion

Reasons for expulsion clearly have behavioral components at the core. However, the mental health needs of expelled and at-risk students have a direct impact on their behavior. Services targeted at addressing both simultaneously tend to have a greater impact, and are a significant component of these programs. Programs offered evidence based interventions as well as hands on learning experiences to address these needs. Some interventions included: Service Learning projects; Adventure Based Counseling; Aggression Replacement Training; individual and group counseling; drug/alcohol groups and counseling; Restorative Justice; life skills training; mentoring programs; character education; and anger management groups. Program staffs report that guiding students to address their own behavioral and social/emotional needs helps to prepare the student for future situations as they return to their home school.   Graph 2 highlights the reasons given for the expulsion of the 620 students served by the programs during the 2003-2004 school year.

Chart 2: 2003 - 2004 Reasons for Expulsion for Expelled and At-Risk Students

| Reason	Percentage
Drugs/Alcohol	24%
Weapons	17%
Disruptive Behavior	33%
Bully/Harassment	14%
Truancy	4%
Other	8%

Reasons for At-Risk Status
Students considered to be at-risk often fit the profile of expelled students in that they have similar disciplinary histories, similar academic struggles, similar attendance patterns, and similar familial concerns. As such, serving them in these same types of programs makes sense as they too benefit from the small size and more individualized nature of the setting. Given that this year the majority of students served were categorized as at-risk, it appears that the intervention strategies served as protective factors against expulsion for these students. Additionally this year, each site is required to report their districts policy of identifying students as at-risk as part of their application process for grant monies. Graph 3 shows the reasons given for at-risk status of students served during the 2003-2004 school year.

Chart 3: 2003-2004 Reasons for At-Risk Status of Expelled and At-Risk Students

Category	Percentage
Drugs	8%
Weapons	7%
Disruptive Behavior	53%
Bully/Harassment	6%
Truancy	18%
Other	8%

Gender of Students

Similar to past years, the number of boys exceeds the number of girls served in the programs. 63% (5521) of students served were boys, while 37% (3258) were girls. The gender breakdown for funded sites is reported in Chart 4 below for the 2003-2004 school year.

Graph 4: Gender of Expelled and At-Risk Students
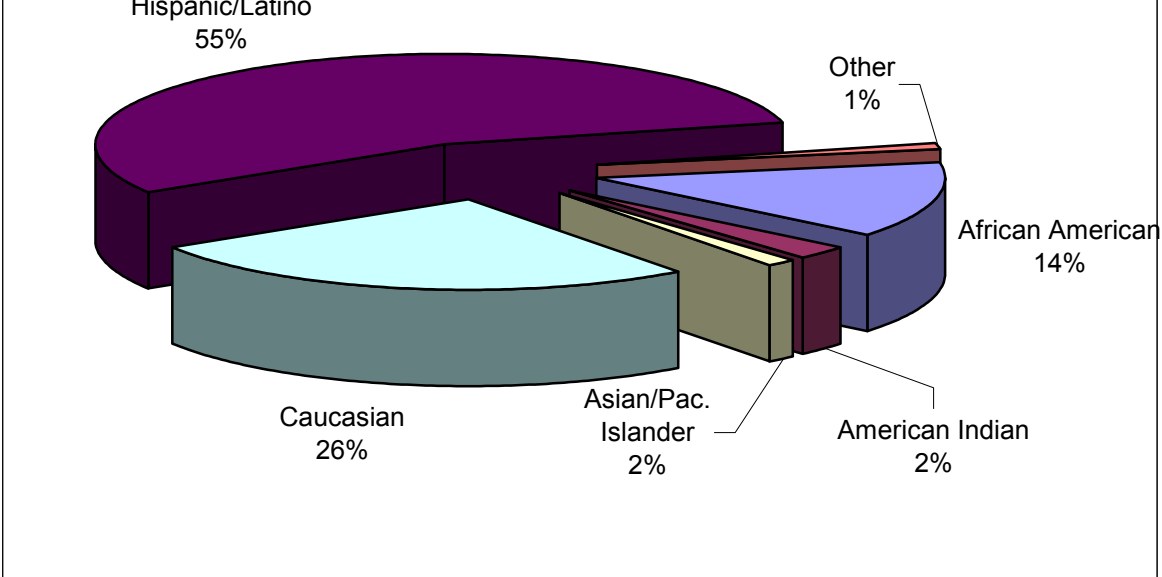
Female 37%

Male 63%
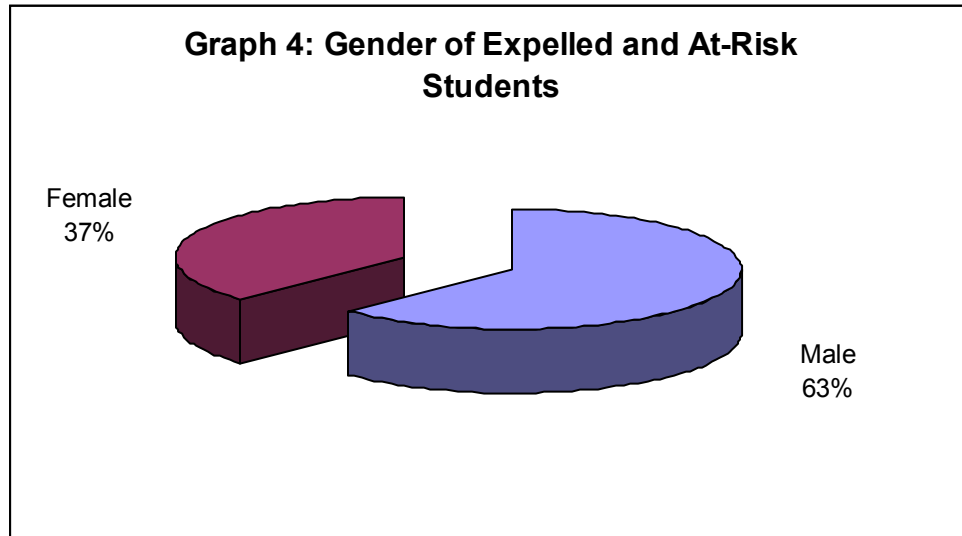
Ethnicity of Students

Over the past several years, DCJ, CDE, and CFFC have paid particular attention to the ethnic breakdown of students served in expelled and at-risk programs. This information has raised important concerns about the question of whether or not students of color are overrepresented in school expulsion as is the case in juvenile justice and adult penal systems. It is possible that the overrepresentation of minority students in these programs may serve as a precursor to their representation in justice system. Efforts to minimize or at least understand the reasons behind the overrepresentation of students of color in this data continue at the state level.

Currently in the state of Colorado, Latino students make up 25% of the population, and 55% of the students served in these programs. Additionally, African American students make up 5.8% of the student population and 14% of the students in these programs. Therefore, African American and Latino students served in these programs are overrepresented than in the student population of Colorado. The following chart shows the ethnic breakdown for students served in the expelled and at-risk student programs this past school year.

Chart 5: 2003-2004
Ethnicity of Expelled and At-Risk Students

Hispanic/Latino
55%

Other
1%

African American
14%

Caucasian
26%

Asian/Pac.
Islander
2%

American Indian
2%

Special Education Status of Students

During the 2002-2003 school year, a total of 1257 students or 14% of the total students served by the program had active IEP's. Unlike previous years, the special education data was disaggregated into disability categories. The purpose of this detailed data collection was to determine whether students identified with Significant Identifiable Emotional Disabilities (SIED) made up a large percentage of students identified as having IEP's. The results of the data reported this year suggests that this is not the case. 36% of the students who were identified as having SIED. Whereas, the largest category was students identified with Perceptual/Communicative Disabilities (PC), at 41%. The chart below depicts this ratio.

Chart 6: 2003-2004 Categories of Expelled and At-Risk Students who Qualified for Special Education

The chart shows percentages for each category:
- SLIC: 4%
- SIED: 36%
- Percep/Comm. Dis.: 41%
- Hearing Dis.: 1%
- Vision Dis.: 0%
- Speech/Lang. Dis.: 4%
- Physical Dis.: 7%
- Multiple Dis.: 6%
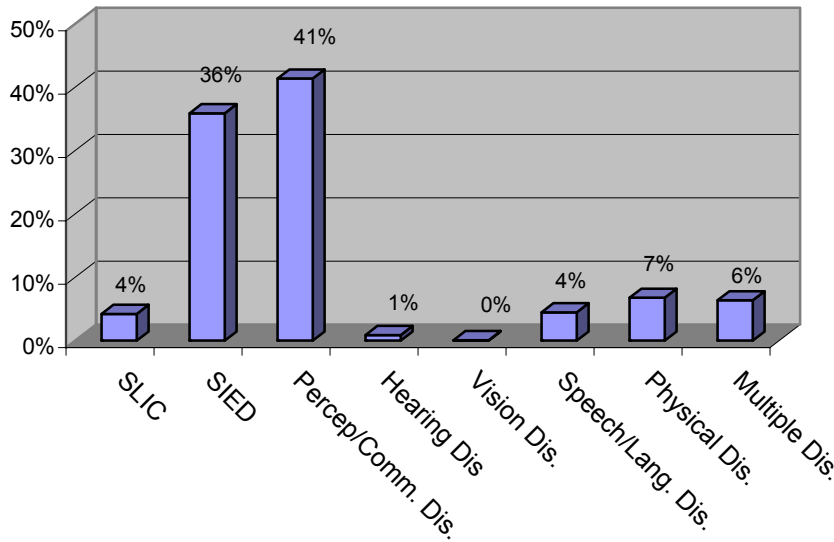
Outcomes

CDE collects data on three primary outcomes; improvement in one failing grade, improved attendance and decreased disciplinary referrals. Programs report the number of students served who demonstrate improvement. These data are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Student Outcomes for Expelled and At-Risk Student Services

Area of Focus	Total # of Students	Number of Students showing gains	Percent of Change
Academic	8779	2369	**27 % Increase**
Attendance	8779	2436	**27 % Increase**
Discipline	8779	2834	**29 % Decrease**

Source: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children

It should be noted that in addition to reporting on these three outcomes, programs reported other outcomes qualitatively. Program staff reported significant outcomes in multiple areas of the students' and families' lives. These included:
- Decrease in juvenile justice involvement
- Decrease in juvenile justice recidivism
- Improved family cohesion
- Continuation to the next grade level

- GPA improvement – for example, one program reported that students had an average GPA of .80 upon entrance to the program, which increased a to 3.25 GPA at the end of the third quarter marking period
- Number of credit hours earned toward graduation
- A decrease in drug/alcohol involvement to name a few.

As can be seen from the data above, expelled and at-risk programs continue to show improvements in social emotional functioning as they provide opportunities for students to reach academic goals.

In addition to the above stated components yielding positive results for students, programs almost unanimously report that individual attention and relationships with staff are the cornerstone for the success of the students and programs. Relationships with program staff facilitate the re-engagement in school and are a catalyst in the re-claiming of these youth.

PROGRAM TYPOLOGY

During the 2003-2004 school year, program data was reviewed in an effort to identify types or categories of program interventions. This program typing is helpful in knowing the kinds of programs offered around the state as well the students and services associated with these programs. Program typing can be helpful in future selection of programs that apply for and receive funding, as it provides a way to screen programs. Additionally, this typology provides a means for the Prevention Initiatives Team to make suggestions to new or start-up programs about the kinds of activities and services they should offer to their students in order to promote greater success, sooner rather than later.

According to Aron & Zweig (2003), many alternative programs attempt to target groups of students especially those who are at-risk. The authors posit that "The targeting is generally what makes such programs "alternative" and the circumstances or needs of the targeted group are what drive the curriculum or approach" (p. 24). In the state of Colorado, funded programs make every effort to meet the needs of the students they serve, and as such often select curriculum and program services that have been shown to be successful with this population. Services provided by programs and identified by them as the most effective strategies, fit with the services/interventions the literature describes as most effective.

The information used from the literature suggests that the programs currently receiving funding, potentially fit several categories, while some fit none of the identified categories. A synopsis of the information gathered from the literature is reported below.

Type I alternatives are referred to as "Popular Innovations". This type is typically seen as a school/program of choice such as a magnet or charter school, with students and families having some choice about whether or not they

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will attend the program. These schools/programs tend to be very popular. These programs reflect organizational and administrative styles that are a departure from the traditional setting. They tend to reflect programmatic themes or emphasis pertaining to content or instructional strategy, or both. These programs are known to have more pronounced and more long lasting successes for students.

Type II alternatives are referred to as "Last-Chance Programs". These are usually programs that students are sentenced to as a last chance before expulsion. These include in-school suspension programs, cool-out rooms, and longer-term placements for the chronically disruptive. They do not involve a choice on the part of the student and have been likened to "soft jails". These programs typically focus on behavior modification, and tend not to modify academic tasks for the students. Unfortunately research has shown that this is the least effective program type. "Analyses showed that such programs made no difference in dropout or referral rates, corporal punishment, suspension, or expulsion" (Raywid, 1994, p. 28).

Type III alternatives are referred to as "Remedial Focus" programs. These are typically used for students who are in need of some remediation or rehabilitation in academics, behaviors or both. It is assumed that after rehabilitation, the student will be ready to return to the regular classroom or school setting. These programs focus on remedial work and on improving social and emotional growth. The literature notes that in these programs, student behavior, attendance, and academic functioning tend to improve because the environment is seen as supportive.
(All information taken from Raywid, 1994).

From the data that programs report, it is clear that while some fit the models described above, most of the programs receiving funding have taken aspects of all three types of programs and developed extensions of the individual models or perhaps a forth type not described in the literature. In fact at present, "many experts see the distinctions between some of these types beginning to blur as more alternative education programs are using a mix of strategies and/or addressing multiple objectives" (Aron, 2003, p.12). Further, programs can by typed based on the characteristics of the programs, for example those focusing on functional level (Aaron & Zwieg, 2003). The very nature of the majority of these programs precludes them being categorized as anything other than a Type II program, given that most of the students in attendance were placed there or highly recommended based on their prior behavior. However, many are really combination/eclectic type programs because they modify the academic tasks, and provide some type of treatment or character education component to their programs, more typically seen in a Type III program. With this approach taken into consideration, a program that initially set out to serve one targeted group of students may well end up serving students with a variety of needs.

The table below represents a categorization of the programs funded in 2003-2004 into the various types. It should be noted that "Model Specific" programs are those based on a specific model of intervention such as Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and CASASTART. These same programs might also offer therapeutic or character education components not specifically outlined in the model specific curriculum, hence rendering them a more "Eclectic" status.

Table 2: Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant						
Program Taxonomy						
County	Program Name	Type I	Type II	Type III	Eclectic	Model Specific
Adams	Prairie Creeks Charter			X	X	
Adams	Strasburg PBS				X	X
Adams 14	CASASTART				X	X
Adams 14	PBS				X	X
Adams 14	Truancy Reduction Project				X	
Adams 12	PBS				X	X
Adams /Arapahoe	Suspension Program		X	X	X	
Alamosa	SOENA		X		X	
Arapahoe	STEP Program	NR				
Arapahoe	Project Redirection			X	X	
Boulder	Boulder PREP	X			X	
Boulder	Boulder PREP 2	X			X	
Boulder	Expelled & At-Risk Student Services				X	
Boulder	Expelled & At-Risk Student Services		X			
Chaffee	In-School Suspension Program		X		X	
Conejos	Teen Outreach Program			X	X	
Conejos	Expelled Student & At-Risk Grant			X		

	Table 2: Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant Program Taxonomy					
County	Program Name	Type I	Type II	Type III	Eclectic	Model Specific
Crowley	In-School Suspension Program	NR				
Denver	Middle School Truancy Program		X			
Denver	Escuela Expelled & At-Risk Program		X		X	
Denver	PREP Center		X		X	X
Denver	Columbine Refocus Middle School		X		X	X
Denver	Truancy & Suspension Prevention				X	
Denver	Lake/Cheltenham CASASTART				X	X
Denver	Montbello Expelled & At-Risk Program		X			X
Denver	Smith/Smiley CASASTART				X	X
Denver	ECCOS Program			X		
Eagle	Expelled & At-Risk Student Services				X	
El Paso	Harrison PBS			X		X
El Paso	Regalo		X	X		
Fremont	Peakview Academy		X	X		
Grand	Grand Alternative School		X	X		
Huerfano	In-School Suspension Program		X			
Kit Carson	PBS/Expelled Services				X	X

County	Program Name	Type I	Type II	Type III	Eclectic	Model Specific
	Table 2: Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant Program Taxonomy					
La Plata	Expelled & At-Risk Student Services		X	X		
Lake	At-Risk Student Services			X		
Montezuma	Services for Expelled & At-Risk Students		X			
Morgan	Expelled & At-Risk Student Services			X		
Otero	Tiger Learning Center	X		X		X
Pueblo	Futures Academy		X		X	X
Pueblo	Project Respect				X	
Pueblo	Youth & Family Academy			X		X
Rio Blanco	At-Risk of Suspension & Expulsion		X	X		
Rio Grande	CBA Program		X	X		
Routt	At-Risk of Suspension of Expulsion			X		
Routt	Cyber School			X	X	
Saguache	ISS and OSS Programs		X			
San Miguel	At-Risk of Suspension & Expulsion		X			
Teller	In-School Suspension Program		X			
Washington	A+ Program			X		
Weld	Suspension & Expulsion Prevention		X			
Weld	PASS Program			X		

Table 2: Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant Program Taxonomy						
County	Program Name	Type I	Type II	Type III	Eclectic	Model Specific
Weld	Teen choices & challenges		X	X		
Yuma	PBS & Project Respect				X	X

Source: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children

Summary

During the 2003-2004 school year, the Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant recipients provided services to 8779 students in the state of Colorado. Attempts to reclaim disenfranchised youth, and subvert youth identified as at risk from succumbing to outside pressures and getting expelled, remain at the core of these programs. Evidence based interventions recognized nationally such as Positive Behavior Support and CASASTART are gaining more momentum in the efforts to help these students. Program interventions and types are in line with what the literature describes as the most effective methods to serve these youth that will garner the best outcomes. Most programs continue to use eclectic approaches in their efforts to address the many needs of the students they serve. These approaches include a high priority focus on academic and attendance gains, but also have components that address family and social/emotional issues. As the Colorado Department of Education continues to provide funding opportunities for programs, the evaluation completed by CFFC in conjunction with DCJ remains critical in reporting the outcomes so that districts around the state continue to serve expelled and at-risk students in a manner that promotes school engagement, and better life chances in the future.

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