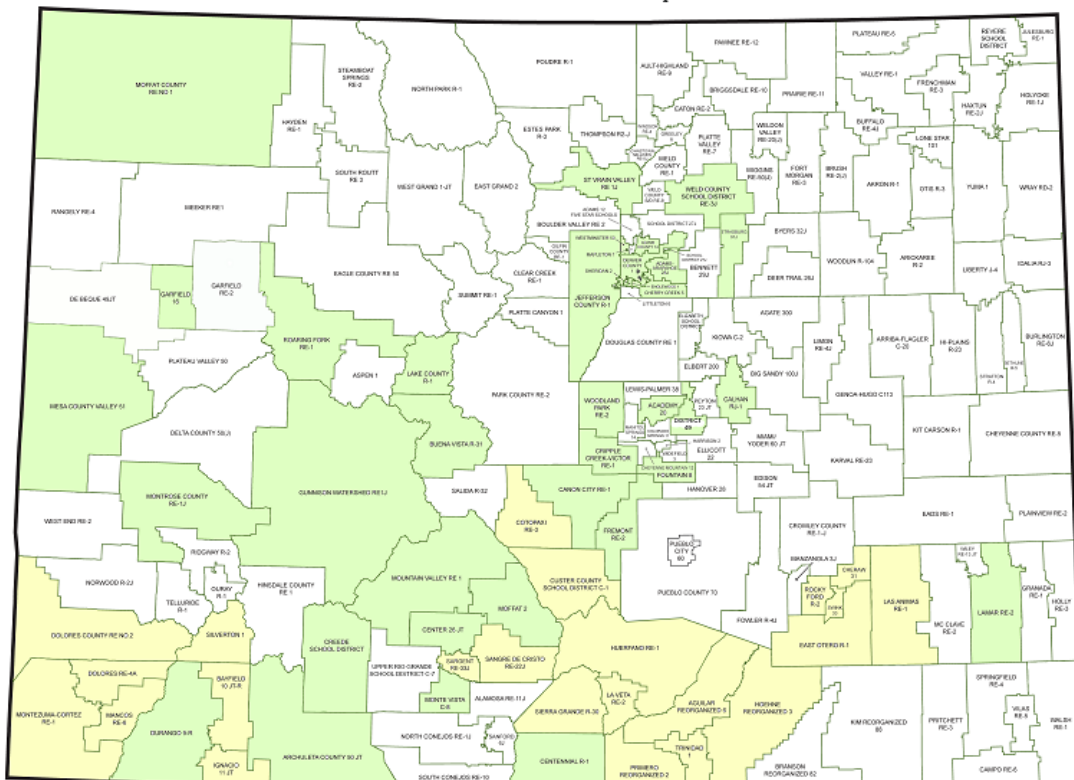# Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant Program Evaluation Report

Grant Period: July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019
Submission Date: January 2020

Colorado School District Map

Green: Grants to school districts. Yellow: Districts served by grants to *Boards of Cooperative Education Services*

Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant Program Evaluation Report

Submitted to:
Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
Colorado Senate Education Committee

This report was prepared in accordance with section 22-33-205, C.R.S., by the following staff from the Colorado Department of Education's Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement Unit:

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January 2020

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Executive Summary

The Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) grant program is authorized by section 22-33-205, C.R.S. The grant program provides educational and support services to expelled students, students at-risk of being expelled, and truant students. This includes students who are at risk of being declared habitually disruptive and/or habitually truant. Funds are annually appropriated to the Colorado Department of Education for the purpose of making grants available to eligible applicants.

The program's approach maintains that more students will stay in school, maintain regular attendance, and make progress toward graduation if school staff provide supports and services to expelled and at-risk students, offer alternatives to suspension and expulsion, and create effective attendance and discipline systems in schools. In 2018-2019, $9,098,788 was distributed to 60 grantees.

Over 8,000 Students Served

- Fifty-nine grantees served students at risk for expulsion. Of the more than 4,000 students served for being at risk for expulsion, the most common reasons for being at risk for expulsion were disobedient/defiant behavior (41.7 percent of students served) or detrimental behavior (24.3 percent of students served).

- Forty-nine grantees reported serving truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy. More than 3,000 students were included in this category.

- Thirty-seven grantees served expelled students. Of the more than 200 expelled students who were served, the most common reasons for being expelled were marijuana violations (21.1 percent of students served) or detrimental behavior (19.7 percent of students served).

Of the students served, 59.3 percent were male and most were Hispanic (51.4 percent) or White (38.8 percent). The majority of students were in ninth to twelfth grade (61.2 percent of students), followed by sixth through eighth grade (30.1 percent of students), and kindergarten through fifth grade (8.7 percent of students).

Over 5,000 parents and guardians received supports and services to assist in their children's learning and positive development.

EARSS Program Met Legislative Intent

Evaluation results verify that the legislative intent of the EARSS program to prevent expulsions, suspensions, and truancy is being met. Grantees reported that 99.6 percent of at-risk students served were not subsequently expelled while being served by the EARSS program, 85.6 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an out-of-school suspension, 87.3 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an in-school suspension, and 95.1 percent of truant students served did not have a truancy petition filed in court.

Four Out of Five Students Experienced Positive Outcomes

Grantees reported that 86.0 percent of at-risk students and 70.8 percent of expelled students experienced positive outcomes such as school completion and continuation of education within the same school district. Of all students served, 96 percent remained in school. This is consistent with trends for the grant program in the last two years. Future evaluations will focus on comparing outcomes of students receiving EARSS services and those not receiving services.

More Time is an Important Component of Success

Overall, 78.0 percent of grantees reported either making progress, meeting, or exceeding all their performance objectives. Ratings varied by the grantee's year of funding. Fourth-year grantees were more likely to meet or exceed their objectives (60 percent) compared to first-, second-, and third- year grantees in 2018-2019. Fourth-year grantees also showed significant improvement ($p<.05$) towards meeting or exceeding their objectives overtime. This demonstrates support for the 4-year grant structure that allows time to build capacity and impact student outcomes. Future evaluations will focus on three set performance objectives and metrics to demonstrate improvement in academic achievement, school attendance, and behavior or social emotional functioning.

Grantees Plan for Sustainability

Grantees were more likely to begin sustainability efforts in year 3 and 4 of their grant. Seven out of 10 fourth-year grantees reported that plans were in place to fully sustain programming in 2019-2020. Future evaluations will focus on determining whether programs are sustained beyond the awarded years.

Introduction: Expulsion Prevention and Intervention

COLO. REV. STAT. TITLE 22, ART. 33 PART 2: EXPULSION PREVENTION PROGRAMS

22-33-201. Legislative declaration. The general assembly hereby finds that except when a student's behavior would cause imminent harm to others in the school or when an incident requires expulsion as defined by state law or a school's conduct and discipline code, expulsion should be the last step taken after several attempts to support a student who has discipline problems.

The general assembly further finds that school districts should work with the student's parent or guardian and with state agencies and community-based non-public organizations to develop alternatives to help students who are at risk of suspension or expulsion before expulsion becomes a necessary step and to support students who are unable to avoid expulsion.

22-33-202 (2). Each school district may provide educational services to students who are identified as at risk of suspension or expulsion from school. Any school district that provides educational services to students who are at risk of suspension or expulsion may apply for moneys through the expelled and at-risk student services grant program established in section 22-33-205 to assist in providing such educational services.

Colorado's school attendance laws include several provisions that address the education of students who violate school conduct and discipline codes or are deemed at risk of suspension or expulsion. Included in these laws is a legislative framework for expulsion prevention and intervention. *See* Colo. Rev. Stat., Title 22, Article 33, Part 2: Expulsion Prevention Programs.)

The legislation states that there are disciplinary violations that justify expulsion; however, it also addresses alternatives to expulsion when discretion is allowed. In such cases, the legislation directs school districts to develop a plan to provide the necessary support services to help students avoid expulsion. The legislature has also created the EARSS grant program to assist grantee school districts in providing such services.

The EARSS Grant Program

The Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) grant program provides educational and support services to expelled students, students at-risk of being expelled, and truant students. This includes students who are at risk of being declared habitually disruptive and/or habitually truant. Funds are annually appropriated to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for the purpose of making grants in accordance with authorizing legislation.

Through the years, grantees have explained that the students they serve often have chronic and/or severe challenges that negatively impact their education, such as traumatic life events, homelessness, or foster care placement. These students may have psychosocial and academic difficulties, which can lead to low school engagement. [1] Research has shown that low school engagement is linked to health risk behaviors (e.g., substance use), delinquency, and poor academic achievement. [2,3] Low school engagement is also linked to a higher likelihood of being suspended, expelled, and dropping out of school. [1,3,4]

The program's approach maintains that more students will stay in school, maintain regular attendance, and make progress toward graduation if school staff provide supports and services to expelled and at-risk students, offer alternatives to suspension and expulsion, and create effective attendance and discipline systems in schools.

Grant Application and Selection Process

The EARSS grant program is managed through CDE's Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement. Competitive grant reviews occur each year based on the level of funding appropriated by the legislature. Eligible grant applicants include: school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), charter schools, alternative education schools within school districts, non-public non-parochial schools, and facility schools.

Grants are provided for four sequential fiscal years provided grantees are meeting grant requirements, grantees are making reasonable progress toward performance outcomes, and state funds are annually appropriated.

Reporting Requirements

Each year, the authorizing legislation (section 22-33-205, C.R.S.) requires reporting on the evaluation of the grant to the Colorado House and Senate Education Committees by January 1. This report is intended to meet the statutory reporting requirements outlined in section 22-33-205(4), C.R.S., through the analysis of program-level and student-level information. Program data is collected through an annual report, which includes progress on a specific set of performance objectives, program outcomes, and student-level data. *For more details on the evaluation methodology, see **Appendix A**. For the survey tools from the evaluation, visit the **EARSS Evaluation website***.

2018-2019 Grant Awards

The 2018 General Assembly increased the annual state appropriation for this grant program by $2 million. For the 2018-2019 school year, the appropriation was $9,493,560. The additional funds allowed for a second release of funds in 2018-2019.

Twenty-seven new grants were awarded, and 33 continuation awards were made to grantees moving into years two through four, for a total of 60 grantees. *TABLE 1 shows the number and percent of grantees per cohort. See **Appendix B** for a list of grantees.*

| TABLE 1: Grantees by Cohort and Type		
Cohort Year	**Number of Grantees**	**Percent of Grantees**
1st Year	27	45 percent
2nd Year	13	22 percent
3rd Year	9	15 percent
4th Year	11	18 percent

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019.

Twenty-two grantees (36.6 percent) served students from more than one school district. The authorizing legislation requires 45 percent of the appropriation to be awarded to grantees serving students from more than one school district. BOCES and facility schools are the most common grantees that meet these criteria. CDE did not receive sufficient applications with proposed dollar amounts to meet the 45 percent threshold in this grant cycle.

Map of District

The 60 grantees funded in 2018-2019 represent 29 counties across Colorado. EARSS funded 39 school districts (including five individual charter schools), five BOCES, and 11 facility schools. See the School District Map below which highlights all the districts served by the grant. School districts served by BOCES are highlighted in yellow. ***Note:** Some school districts and schools were funded with more than one EARSS grant in 2018-2019. An awarded facility school closed in February 2019. Data for this facility school was not available for this report.*

Colorado School District Map
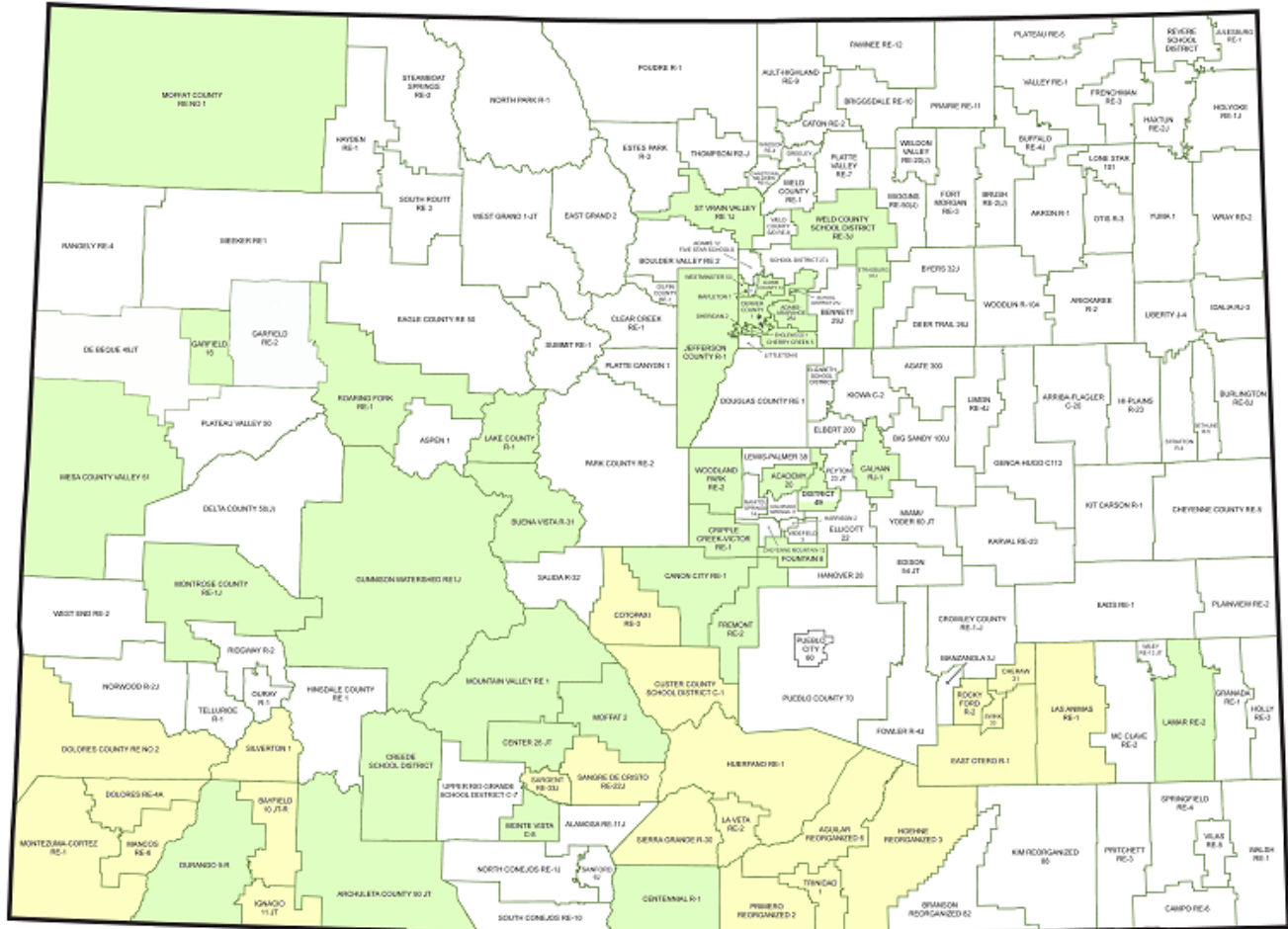
Green: Grants to school districts. Yellow: Districts served by grants to *Boards of Cooperative Education Services*

Students Served

The EARSS grant program provides educational and support services to expelled and at-risk students. This includes students at-risk of being expelled, truant students, and students who are at risk of being declared habitually truant.

8,183
STUDENTS SERVED

Students Served in 2018-2019

In 2018-2019, EARSS grantees reported serving 8,183 students.

- Thirty-seven grantees reported serving **279 expelled students** (3.4 percent of students served).
- Fifty-nine grantees reported serving **4,805 students at risk for expulsion** (58.7 percent of students served).
- Forty-nine grantees reported serving **3,099 truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy** (37.9 percent of students served).

State Comparison

CDE does not collect state data on the unduplicated number of expelled students or students at risk for expulsion. In 2018-2019, there were 909 expulsion incidents and 92,100 suspension incidents reported in Colorado. When using the duplicated counts of expelled and suspended incidents in Colorado as a proxy, it can be estimated that 30 percent of expelled students and five percent of suspended students were served by the EARSS grant program in 2018-2019. **Note:** *A few expelled students served by an EARSS program may have been serving a term of expulsion stemming from the previous school year*.

> **Facility School Grantees**
>
> Facility schools served 44.4 percent of all expelled students served by the grant (124 students) and 16 percent (1,264 students) of all at-risk students served by the grant.
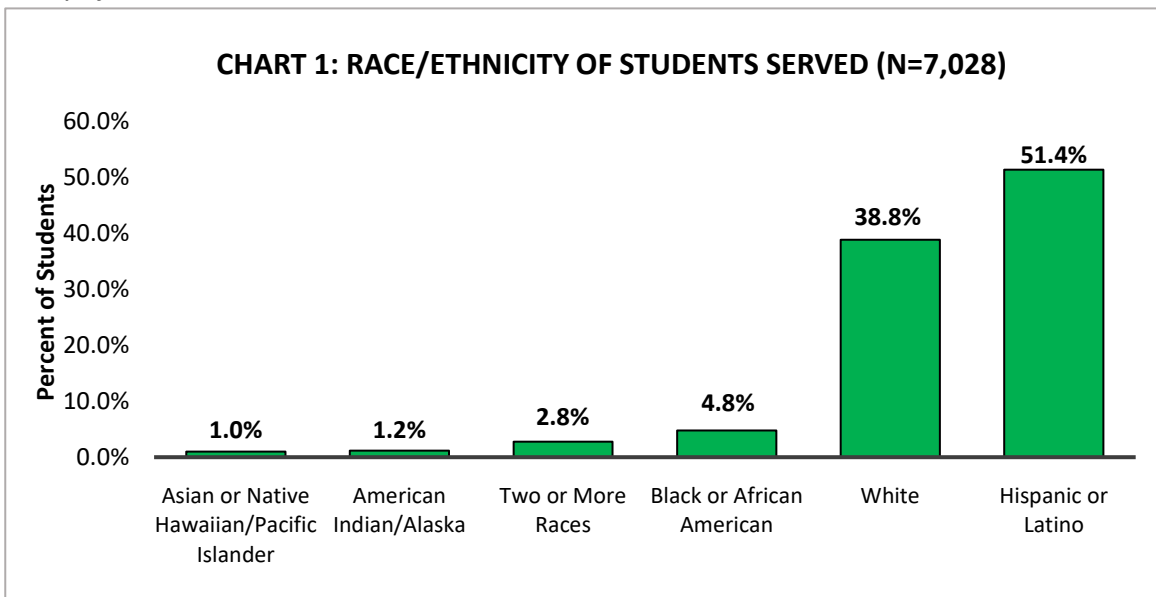
Truancy represents unexcused absences that could lead to being declared habitually truant, which increases the likelihood of petitions being filed in truancy court to enforce compulsory school attendance. The statewide number of habitually truant students stands at 140,360 students in 2018-2019. It is estimated that two percent of these students were served by the EARSS grant program in 2018-2019.

Students Served Over Time by Fourth-Year Grantees

Ten grantees originally funded in 2015-2016 completed their fourth year of the grant in 2018-2019. Using the available student-level data, it is estimated that these grantees served 4,743 students over the four years of the grant (91.3 percent at-risk students; 7.5 percent expelled students; 1.2 percent unknown category). On average, 72.8 percent of these students were only served for one of the four years while 27.2 percent of students were served for two or more years.

Student Demographics

Demographic data were available for about 85 percent of the students served by an EARSS program (7,028 students). The available data showed the majority of students served were male (59.3 percent) and Hispanic or Latino (51.4 percent). No significant differences were present based on race/ethnicity or gender for expelled students or students at risk for habitual truancy. However, White and Hispanic students were equally likely to be categorized as at risk for expulsion (44.9 percent of students served). **CHART 1** *provides a breakout of race/ethnicity of students served*.

CHART 1: RACE/ETHNICITY OF STUDENTS SERVED (N=7,028)

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Students
Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.0%
American Indian/Alaska	1.2%
Two or More Races	2.8%
Black or African American	4.8%
White	38.8%
Hispanic or Latino	51.4%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

A review by grade level showed that the majority of students were in ninth to 12th grade (61.2 percent of students), followed by sixth through eighth grade (30.1 percent of students), and kindergarten to fifth grade (8.7 percent of students served). Expelled students were significantly more likely to be in ninth through 12th grade compared to students at risk for expulsion or students at risk for habitual truancy. *Additional student demographics can be seen in CHART 2.*
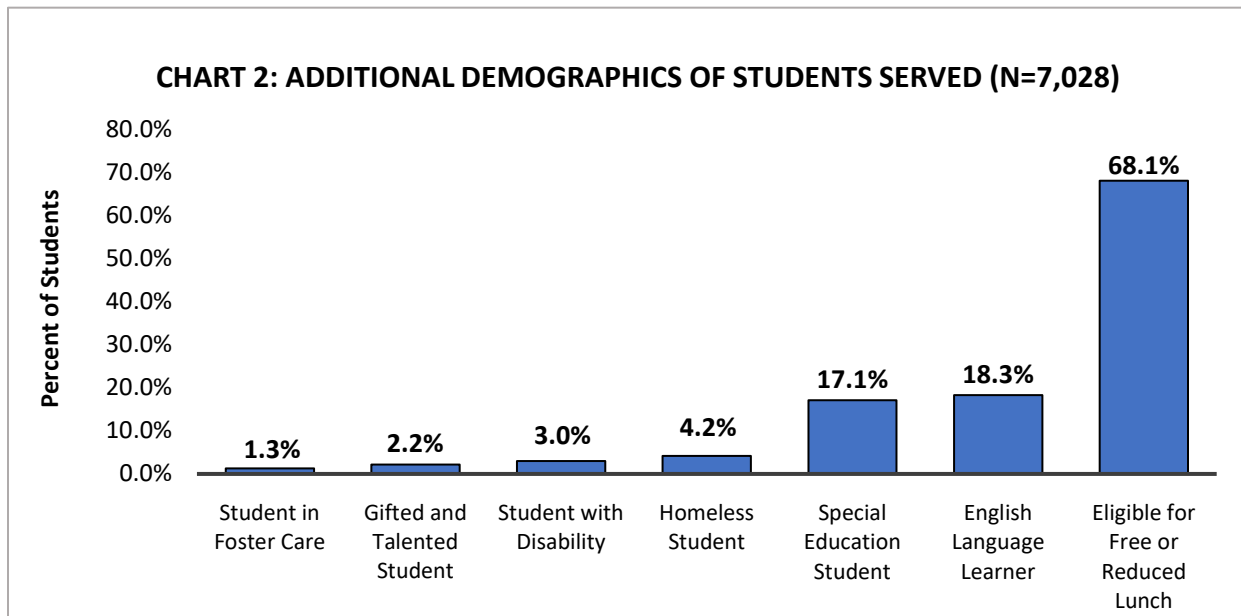
CHART 2: ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS SERVED (N=7,028)

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Behaviors for Which Students Were Served

Behaviors for Which Expelled Students Were Served

Similar to the previous year, the main reasons expelled students were served in 2018-2019 were due to marijuana violations (21.1 percent) and detrimental behavior (19.7 percent). *CHART 3 provides a breakout of the most common reasons that expelled students were served by an EARSS program.*

State Comparison - Expulsions

Statewide data show that the most common reasons for expulsion in 2018-2019 in Colorado were also due to marijuana violations (21.5 percent of expulsion incidents) and detrimental behavior (19.6 percent of expulsion incidents).
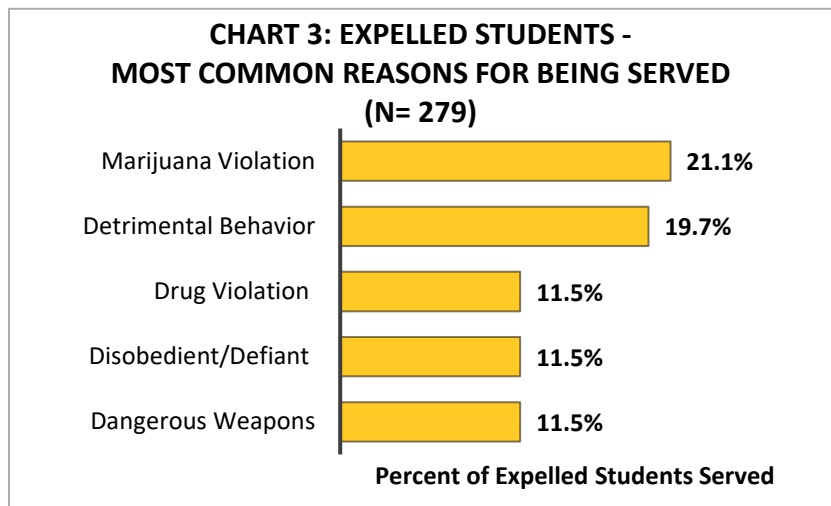
CHART 3: EXPELLED STUDENTS - MOST COMMON REASONS FOR BEING SERVED (N= 279)

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Behaviors for Which At-Risk Students Were Served

At-risk students were mainly served due to truancy issues (37.9 percent). When excluding these students from the analysis, students at risk for expulsion were mainly served due to disobedient/defiant behavior or repeated interference (41.7 percent) or detrimental behavior (24.3 percent). *CHART 4 provides a breakout of the reasons that students at risk for expulsion were served by an EARSS program.*
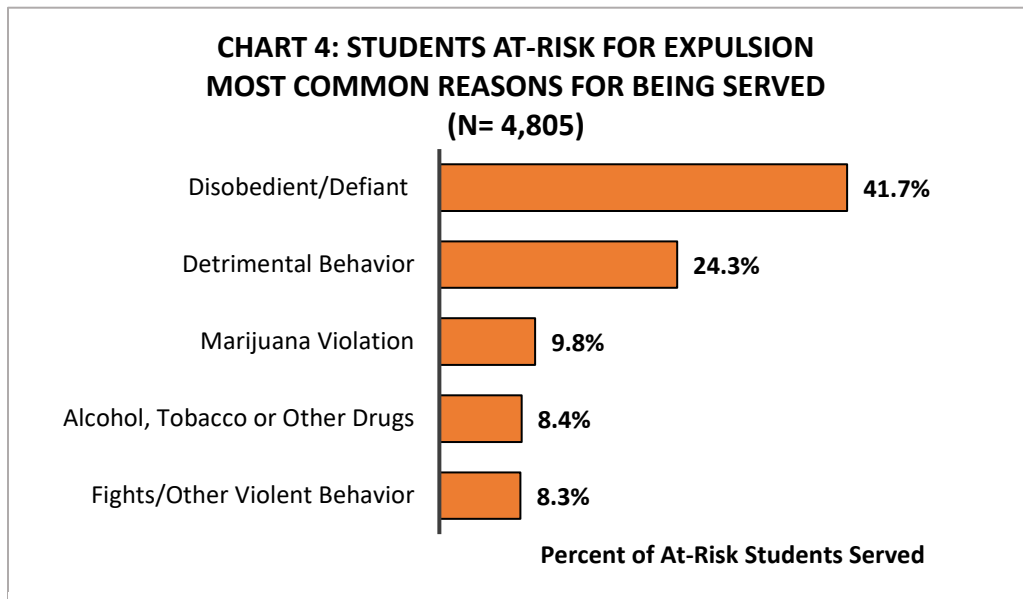
State Comparison - Suspensions

Statewide data show that the most common reasons for suspensions in 2018-2019 in Colorado were for detrimental behavior (32.7 percent of suspension incidents) and disobedient/defiant behavior or repeated interference (26.1 percent of suspension incidents).

Facility School Grantees

Facility schools were more likely to serve expelled students due to marijuana violations (26.6 percent) and drug violations (19.4 percent).

Facility schools only served 4.6 percent of at-risk students due to truancy or habitual truancy, but served the remaining students for reasons similar to those of other grantees.

**CHART 4: STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR EXPULSION
MOST COMMON REASONS FOR BEING SERVED
(N= 4,805)**

- Disobedient/Defiant — **41.7%**
- Detrimental Behavior — **24.3%**
- Marijuana Violation — **9.8%**
- Alcohol, Tobacco or Other Drugs — **8.4%**
- Fights/Other Violent Behavior — **8.3%**

Percent of At-Risk Students Served

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Program Strategies and Services Implemented

Most Commonly Funded Strategies and Services

Various types of program strategies and services were utilized by grantees to serve students, including: academic and attendance strategies (e.g., credit recovery); social emotional and behavioral supports (e.g., counseling); and system approaches (e.g., professional development). *CHART 5 provides a breakout of the most common strategies and services utilized by grantees.*

Facility School Grantees

Facility schools funded strategies and services similar to those of other grantees. However, these schools were more likely to fund transition planning services (comprising 58.3 percent of strategies and services used).

CHART 5: MOST COMMONLY FUNDED STRATEGIES AND SERVICES
(N=59)

Strategy	Percent
Mentoring/Relationships	71.2%
Behavioral Plans	69.5%
Restorative Practices	67.8%
Trauma Informed Approaches	64.4%
Professional Development Days	61.0%
Essential Skills Building	59.3%
Attendance Contracts	55.9%

Percent of Grantees
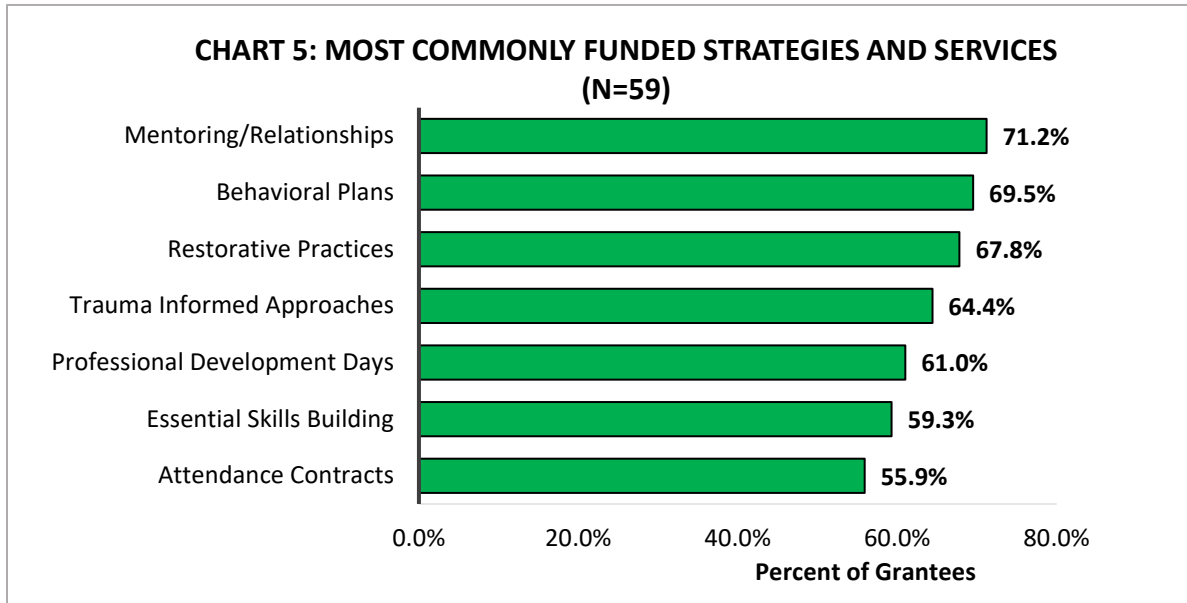
Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Most Effective Strategies

Grantees were asked to report on the most effective strategies that have positively impacted their programs. Results of a qualitative analyses revealed that **mentoring/positive relationship building** (reported by 42 percent of grantees as an effective strategy) and the implementation of **restorative practices** (reported by 40 percent of grantees as an effective strategy) were the two most reported effective strategies. Through positive relationship building, mentoring opportunities were cultivated and allowed positive outcomes. The utilization of restorative practices helped create a positive school climate and keep students engaged in their education. A variety of other strategies were strategically utilized by grantees to meet the unique needs of the population they serve, including **trauma-informed care, wraparound case management and services,** and **credit recovery.** Similar approaches were reported by grantees who were meeting all of their grant objectives or who reported positive outcomes for all students who were served. These grantees are highlighted in ***Appendix D***.

Example Strategy
(Submitted by a District Grantee in an Outlying City)

"Positive staff and student mentoring is what links the students to engaging or re-engaging with education. The students we serve sometimes have a bitter attitude towards education and authority. Building the bridge of positive interaction between students and staff members can foster a healthy relationship for everyone involved. Showing the students that they can trust staff and confide in them about their dreams and fears creates an environment of respect and encouragement."

Current research shows that relationship building between staff and students cultivates a positive learning environment and makes an impact on a variety of other areas within the school.[5] Schools that foster relationship building between the staff, students, and their families and utilize restorative practices are more likely to have parents and students who are more involved, have higher student achievement rates, see an improvement in students' attendance, and result in students who are more engaged in their academics. [5]

School-Parent Partnerships

Parents/Guardians Served

In addition to students, grantees reported serving 5,638 parents/guardians of students served. These parents/guardians received supports and services to assist in their children's learning and positive development. ***Note:*** *It is possible that some parents were served by more than one EARSS grant program in 2018-2019.*

5,638
PARENTS/GUARDIANS SERVED
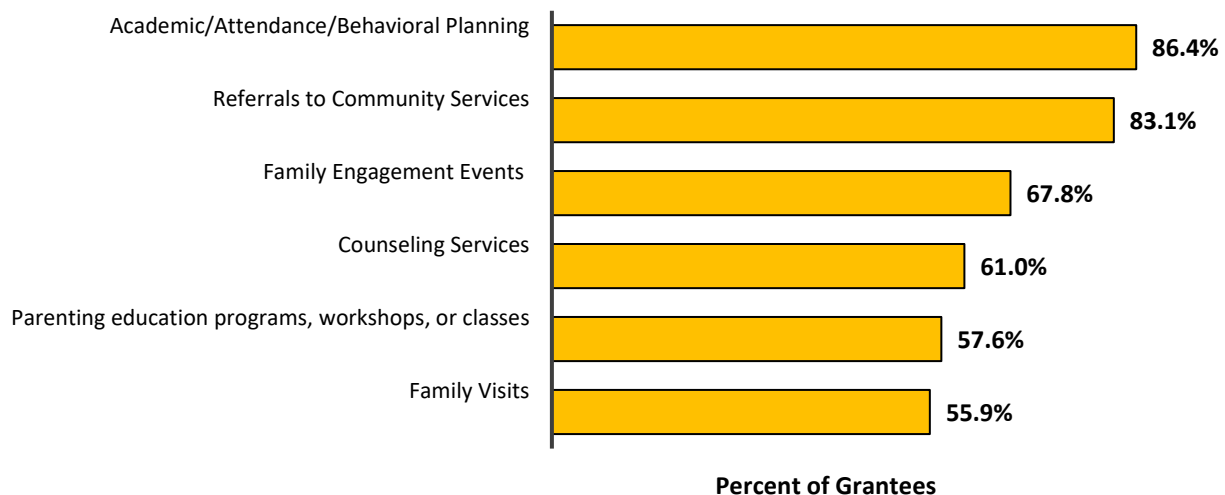
Facility School Grantees

Facility schools served 14.2 percent of all parents/guardians served by the grant (803 parents/guardians) and provided supports and services similar to those provided by other grantees.

100 percent of facility schools reported including parents/guardians in academic, attendance, and/or behavioral planning and services.

Supports and Services Provided to Parents/Guardians

Grantees provided various supports and services for parents, guardians and families using EARSS grant dollars. The grantees indicated that the most common supports and services available to families included involving parents/guardians in academic, attendance, and/or behavioral planning, referrals to community services/social services, and family engagement events. For many of the grantees, these supports, services and interventions were provided through parent liaisons, student/parent advocates, counselors, and/or caseworkers. Grantees who were meeting or exceeding all of their parent objectives reported funding more academic, attendance, and behavioral planning, referrals to services, and family visits. ***CHART 6*** *lists the most common strategies and services available to parents/guardians.*

CHART 6: MOST COMMONLY FUNDED SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS (N=59)

Service	Percent of Grantees
Academic/Attendance/Behavioral Planning	86.4%
Referrals to Community Services	83.1%
Family Engagement Events	67.8%
Counseling Services	61.0%
Parenting education programs, workshops, or classes	57.6%
Family Visits	55.9%

Percent of Grantees

Source: *Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019*

Parent/Guardian Success Story
(Submitted by a Facility School Grantee)

"A youth at our facility had an extensive history of severe substance use. He grew up with a single mom with a low income.   Her son arrived at the program and immediately dove into treatment. He met multiple times a week with his addiction specialist. His addiction specialist worked with his mother to discuss the signs and symptoms of relapse behaviors, brainstormed appropriate ways to help her son when she notices he is struggling, and set up services like Narcotics Anonymous, pro social groups, and activities to engage in after discharge. In addition, our vocational teacher helped this youth achieve his GED, create a resume, develop life skills, and secure a job in his community before he left our facility. The EARSS grant allowed our program to offer this family the services they needed to heal and support one another..."

Grant Performance Objectives

Each grantee set their own performance measures in the following four areas to be achieved by the end of the grant period: (1) **Parent Engagement**; (2) **Academic Achievement**; (3) **School Attendance**; and (4) **Safety and Discipline or Social Emotional Functioning**. For each area, grantees report on up to two performance objectives. Grantees annually report progress against a two-year benchmark measure in years one and two of the grant and again in years three and four of the grant.

Grantees chart and annually report the progress they make on their performance measures. Grantees were instructed to rate their performance objectives using the following guidance: *If you went above and beyond your objective(s), then you exceeded your goal. If you have completely (100 percent) met your objective(s), then you have met your goal, if you have partially met your objective (more than 50 percent), then indicate making progress. If you have made minimal gains on your objective, select not making progress.*

> **Facility School Grantees**
>
> On average, facility school grantees reported meeting or exceeding half of their objectives.
>
> Facility schools were more likely to meet or exceed their attendance objectives (62.5 percent of objectives), but were less likely to meet or exceed their parent objectives (40 percent of objectives).

Ratings for All Objectives

To better identify how many grantees were meeting or exceeding their objectives, ratings were aggregated by grantees. Overall, 78.0 percent of grantees reported either making progress, meeting, or exceeding all their performance objectives. When focusing on the ratings exceeding and meeting, the results were the following:

- 42.4 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least half of their objectives.
- 23.7 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least 75 percent of their objectives
- 8.5 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding all of their objectives.

To better identify how many objectives were being met, data was aggregated across all objective areas. In addition, the ratings *meeting* and *exceeding* were combined. Ratings for all objectives across areas included:

- **Exceeding or Meeting**: 37 percent of the performance objectives were rated as meeting or exceeding
- **Making progress:** 55 percent of the performance objectives were rated as making progress.
- **Not making progress:** 8 percent of the performance objectives were rated as not making progress.

Ratings varied by year of funding. Similar to results from previous years, fourth-year grantees were significantly more likely to report meeting or exceeding their objectives than grantees in their first year. This demonstrates support for the 4-year grant structure that allows more time to build capacity and impact student outcomes. *CHART 6* shows the percent of rating for all objectives by cohort.

CHART 6: PERCENT OF RATING FOR ALL OBJECTIVES BY GRANTEE COHORT
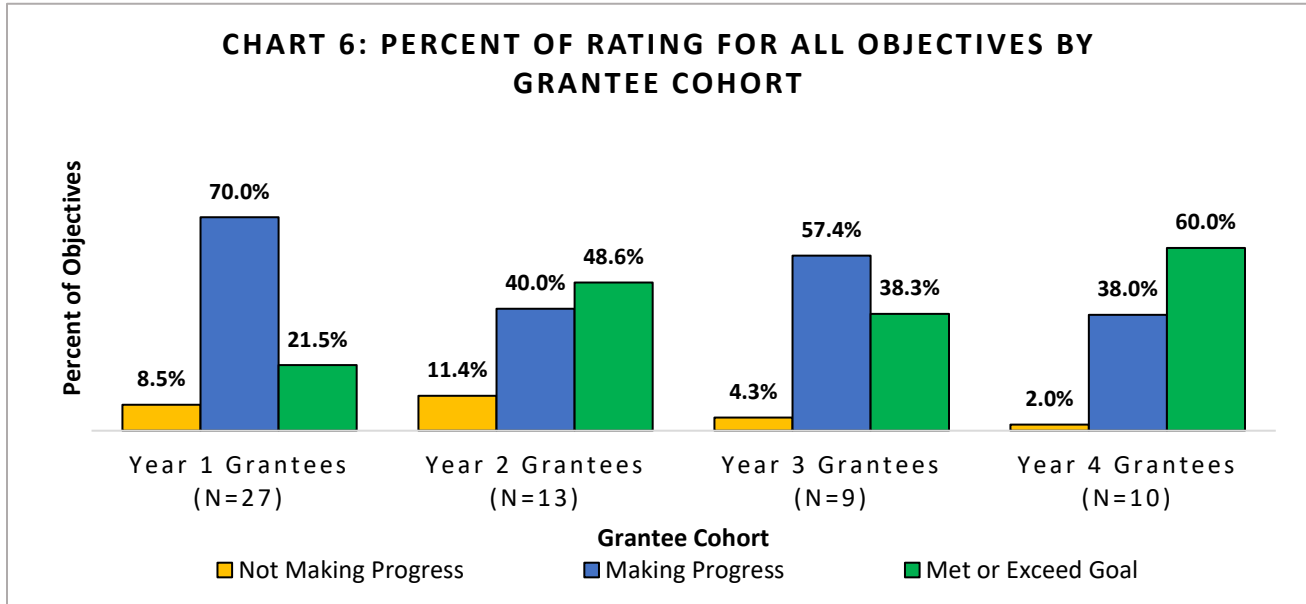
Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Ratings by Objective Areas

Ratings also differed by objective area. Overall, grantees were significantly more likely to rate meeting or exceeding their parent engagement objectives (45.5 percent) and safety/discipline or social emotional functioning objectives (38.8 percent). *CHART 7* shows the percent by ratings for each of the four objective areas.

**CHART 7: PERCENT OF RATING FOR EACH OF THE FOUR OBJECTIVE AREAS**
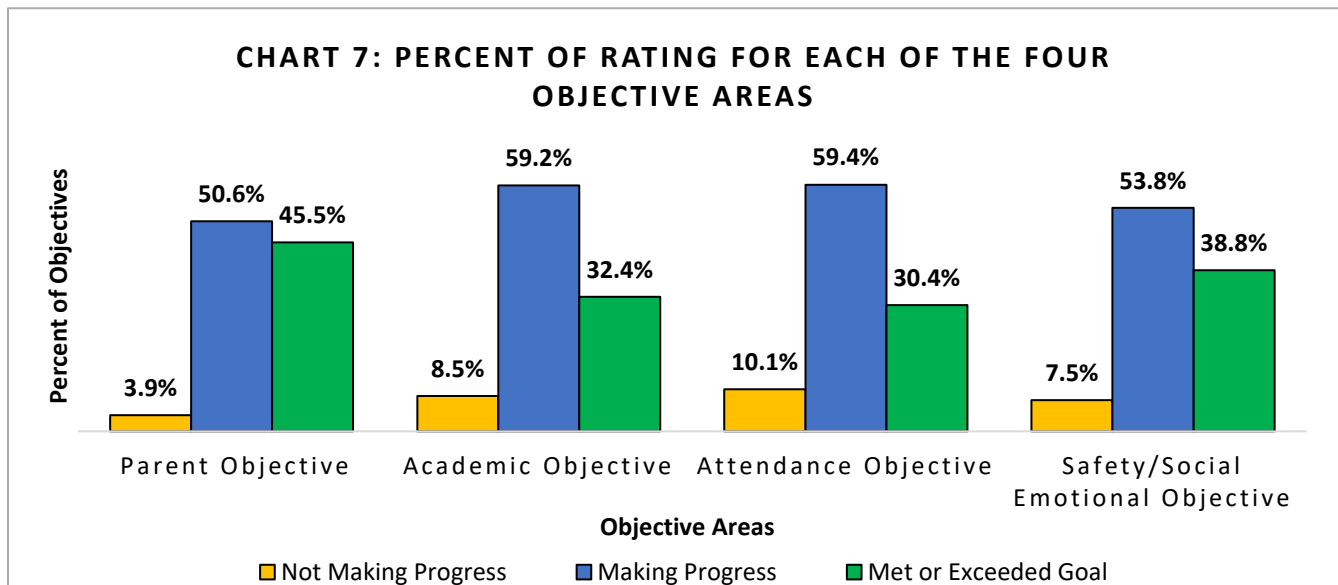
Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

When aggregating ratings by grantees, a similar pattern emerged by objective areas. Grantees were less likely to rate meeting or exceeding on their school attendance objectives.

- 49.2 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least one parent engagement objective. Grantees who reported meeting or exceeding their parent engagement objective were more likely to rate meeting or exceeding on all other objectives areas, in comparison to the grantees who did not report meeting or exceeding their parent engagement objective.
- 44.1 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least one safety/discipline or social emotional functioning objective.
- 37.3 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least one academic achievement objective.
- 32.2 percent of grantees reported meeting or exceeding at least one school attendance objective.

Ratings for Fourth-Year Grantees

For the 2018-2019 grant period, 10 grantees originally funded in 2015-2016 completed their fourth year of the grant. Grantees annually report progress against a two-year benchmark measure for years one and two and another two-year benchmark for years three and four of the grant. Progress on each performance objective was determined annually over the four years. Longitudinal analyses were used to determine whether grantees had met their objectives and improved from year one to year four. For the purpose of determining the grantees' performance, only the primary performance objectives were included in the analysis. Performance objectives were assigned numerical values ranging from *1(Not Making Progress)* to *4(Exceeding*) for each year of the grant. When averaging the rating scores across all performance objective areas, all 10 fourth-year grantees showed significant improvement when comparing their ratings from year one to year four. On average, grantees went from making progress (*Mean*=2.1) in year one to meeting their objectives (*Mean*=2.7) in year four. However, progress plateaued in year two and three of the grant, especially for the parent engagement and school attendance objective, before improving in year four. This pattern may be due to the structure of the performance objectives. Making progress in year three of the grant does not necessarily mean that grantees declined, as they are generally working toward higher goals in Year 3 and 4. Fourth-year grantees made the largest gains in their parent engagement and academic achievement objectives. ***CHART 8*** *shows trends over the course of four years for each of the four objective areas.*

CHART 8: AVERAGE RATINGS OVERTIME BY OBJECTIVE AREAS (N=40)
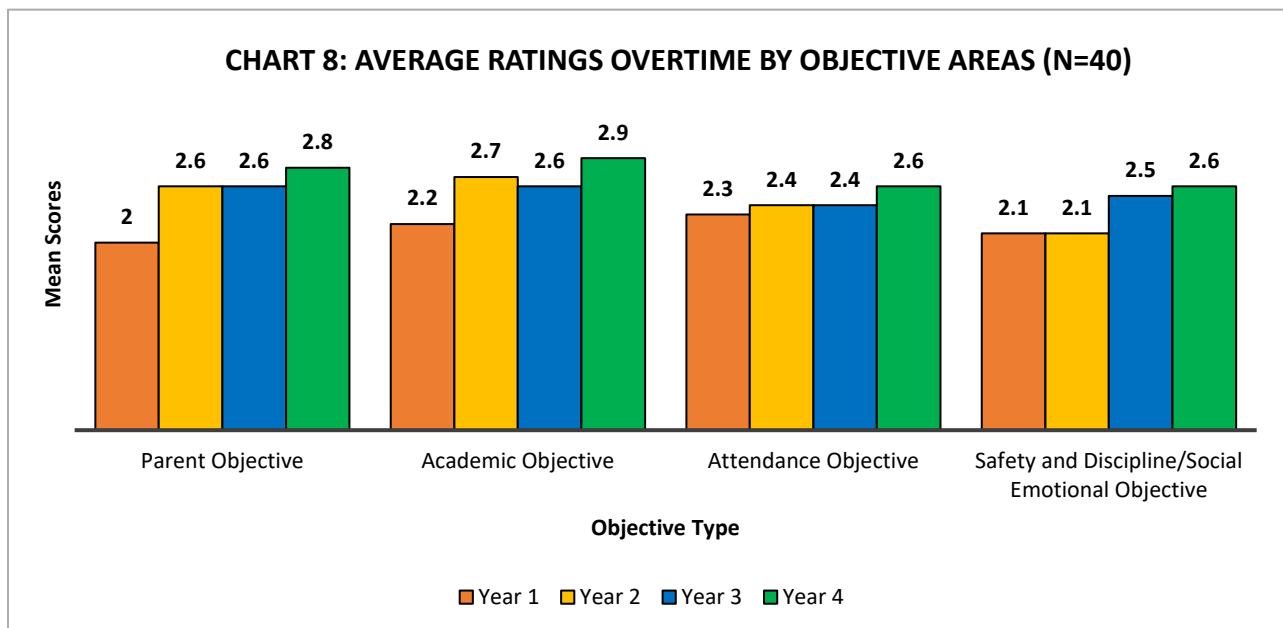
Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Implementation Successes and Challenges

Grantees were also asked to specifically describe special circumstances that positively or negatively affected progress on achieving their objectives. Several themes emerged across the objective areas.

Successes

For grantees who were meeting or exceeding their objectives, program success was attributed to the following factors:

- Consistent and active approach to parental outreach and engagement;
- Staff team meetings and professional development opportunities;
- Targeted student-centered direct services and family-centered direct services;
- Positive relationships built and fostered between staff and students; and/or
- Availability of alternative plans, supports, and programming.

> **Successful Implementation**
> *(Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying City*
>
> *"Once students have regularly attended the school program, and have experienced some success, effectively, an epiphany occurs for them. This has happened in various portions of students' enrollment in the program. They start to learn the value of attendance, and it creates a positive momentum for them. The special circumstances with attendance is when the student values being at school and participating in their own education. They become empowered from within and realize they can take control of their destiny."*

Challenges

For grantees who are were not meeting their objectives, program challenges included the following:

- Systemic or environmental factors that were out of the school's control (e.g., parents having busy schedules, parents not responding to outreach, parents with multiple jobs);
- Difficulties with staff turn-over and subsequently hiring and training new staff was time-consuming;
- Lack of parental communication, trust, and buy-in;
- Interventions that were implemented were not targeted and not intentional to meet the specific needs for students and their families;
- Lack of implementation of programing with fidelity;
- Launching a new program takes time; and/or
- Lack of buy-in from staff and leadership.

Program Effectiveness

Outcomes for All Students

Of the students served by the grant, 85.5 percent experienced positive outcomes. These outcomes reflected school completion, continuation of education, completion of the expulsion term and return to school. No differences in positive outcomes were observed based on grantee cohort year.

4 out of 5

STUDENTS
EXPERIENCED POSITIVE
OUTCOMES

Of the students served by the EARSS program, at-risk students were more likely than expelled students to experience positive outcomes: **86.0 percent of at-risk students** experienced positive outcomes compared to **70.8 percent of expelled students**. This is consistent with trends for the grant program in the last two years. Future evaluations will focus on comparing outcomes of students receiving EARSS services and those not receiving services.

Meeting Legislative Intent

The purpose of the EARSS grant program is to assist in reducing and preventing expulsions, suspensions, and truancy. Grantees reported the following disciplinary outcomes in 2018-2019:

- *Expulsions:* 99.6 percent of at-risk students who remained in school did not receive an expulsion while being served. Out of 59 grantees who served at-risk students, 78 percent reported that no students were expelled while being served.
- *Out-of-School Suspensions:* 85.9 percent of at-risk students did not receive an out-of-school suspension while being served. Out of 59 grantees who served at-risk students, 23.7 percent reported that no students received an out-of-school suspension while being served.
- *In-School Suspensions*: 87.3 percent of at-risk students did not receive an in-school suspension while being served. Out of 59 grantees who served at-risk students, 27.1 percent reported that no students received an in-school suspension while being served.
- *Truancy Petitions:* 95.1 percent of truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy did not have a truancy petition filed in court while being served. Out of 49 grantees who served habitually truant students, 49.6 percent reported no petitions filed in court.

> **Facility School Grantees**
>
> Of the students served by facility schools, 85.3 percent experienced positive outcomes.
>
> About 0.4 percent of students served at facility schools dropped out of school.

Dropout Prevention

An estimated 4.0 percent of students served by the EARSS grant program dropped out of school. Further analyses revealed the following trends:

- Patterns differed by the type of student served: **1.4 percent of expelled students** and **4.1 percent of at-risk students** dropped out of school in 2018-2019. This is a decrease from last year's rate of 1.8 percent for expelled students and an increase from last year's rate of 3.7 percent for at-risk students.
- Students were more likely to dropout out in programs in the **first year of the grant (4.2 percent)** compared to the **fourth year of the grant (2.2 percent).**
- More than half of grantees (61 percent) reported that none of the students served in their program dropped out of school in 2018-2019.

Student Success Story
(Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying Town)

"We had an 8th grade student who suffered great loss this last school year. This student had a larger than life attitude and misplaced anger… She was sent to my office for behavior concerns almost weekly which eventually resulted in multiple suspensions. We spent more than 20 hours together working to repair the harm her behavior and choices caused others…We worked with our school counselor and the student's guardian to get her into therapy. Coupled with therapy and restorative justice, this young lady turned her life around and began to heal; both her own pain and the pain her behavior caused to others at the school. She found ways to give back to her school community and peers, apologized for her behavior, made better decisions, and ultimately began advocating to her fellow peers about why kindness matters. She is an amazing young lady amidst adversity, trials and personal pitfalls; chose to trust in the restorative justice process (and me). She learned to be happy and to smile even when life goes sideways. She learned she has strengths and many amazing qualities that supersede her past and poor choices. She learned to build trusting relationships with her teachers and other adults in the school. Finally, she learned to take responsibility for her actions and that she mattered, too! "

Note: State data on 2018-2019 dropout rates will not be available until January 2020.
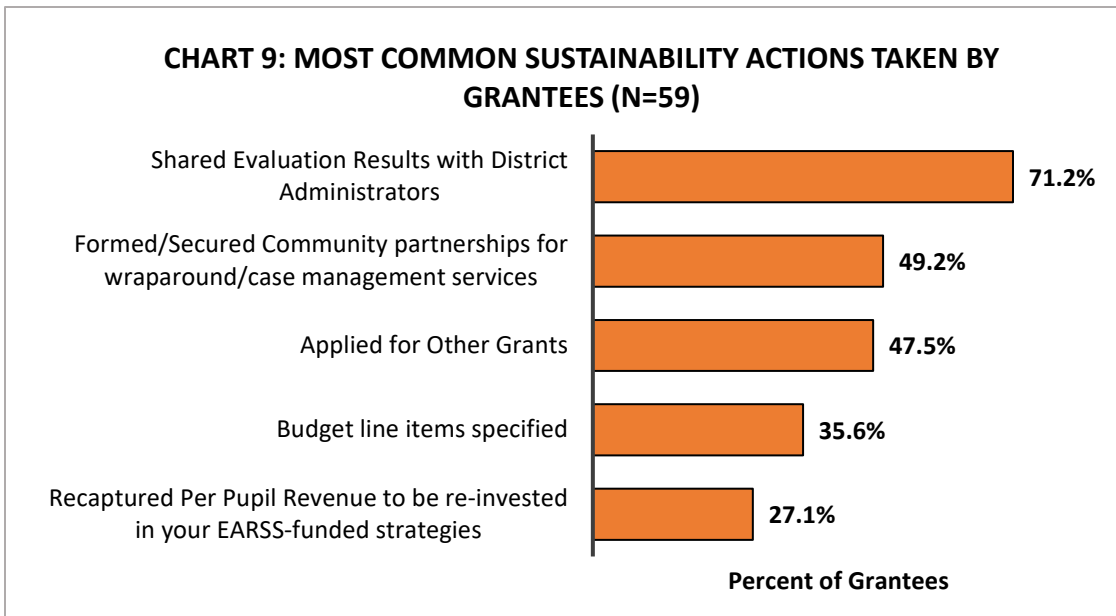
Program Sustainability

Most Common Actions Taken for Sustainability

Grantees were asked to indicate what actions were taken in 2018-2019 to sustain their program. The most common actions taken were related to sharing the results of this evaluation report with district administrators or boards (71.2 percent of grantees) and forming partnerships (49.2 percent of grantees). *CHART 9 shows the most common sustainability actions taken by grantees.*

7 out of 10

FOURTH-YEAR GRANTEES PLANNED TO FULLY SUSTAIN PROGRAMMING

CHART 9: MOST COMMON SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS TAKEN BY GRANTEES (N=59)

Action	Percent of Grantees
Shared Evaluation Results with District Administrators	71.2%
Formed/Secured Community partnerships for wraparound/case management services	49.2%
Applied for Other Grants	47.5%
Budget line items specified	35.6%
Recaptured Per Pupil Revenue to be re-invested in your EARSS-funded strategies	27.1%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2018-2019

Sustainability Overtime

Grantees included a plan to sustain their program as part of their proposal for funding. In their proposal, applicants explain how services and programs will continue past the 4-year funding period with no reduction in quality of services. To facilitate sustainability planning, grant awards are adjusted through phased reductions in the amount of funding. As the awards decrease, grantees are to maintain the same level of quality services by supplementing the grant funds with other resources such as federal, state, and local funding, in-kind contributions, and Per Pupil Revenue.

On average, grantees report beginning sustainability efforts in year 3 and 4 of their grant. Seventy percent of grantees in their fourth year reported that there was a plan in place to fully sustain programming in 2019-2020. Future evaluations will focus on determining whether programs are sustained beyond the awarded years.

Community Partnership Success Story
(Submitted by Remote School District Grantee)

"The truancy review board is one of the collaborations that have been developed through the EARSS grant. This board includes representatives from the Department of Human Services, a community mental health center, the probation department and other agencies as indicated. This board convenes, along with the student's family, when attendance is becoming a concern to discuss causes for the attendance issues and what services can be provided to help address the issues. One of the successes that this board has provided involves a 15 year old male who had missed almost 30% of the school year in less than the first semester and was failing the majority of his classes. Instead of referring him to truancy court, the young man was referred to the truancy review board. During this meeting, the parent's problems with getting him to school were addressed and solutions presented. By the end of the second semester, this young man was not only attending school on a regular basis, he was passing all of his classes with A's and B's. He reported that his outlook on school and his future were more positive than they had previously been. "

Conclusion

The EARSS Grant Program represents the state's primary investment in reducing expulsions, decreasing truancy, and supporting engagement of expelled students and those at risk of suspension or expulsion. In 2018-2019, more than 8,000 students were served by the EARSS grant program.

Results revealed that academic and attendance strategies (e.g., credit recovery), social emotional and behavioral support strategies (e.g., essential skills building), and the system approaches and strategies (e.g., positive staff-student mentoring and relationship building) contributed to positive results on performance objectives and student outcomes. Many grantees reported meeting or making progress in meeting their parent engagement, academic achievement, school attendance, and safety and discipline/social emotional functioning objectives, especially fourth-year grantees. Successful parent engagement also predicted success in meeting additional program objectives.

Seventy percent of expelled students and 86 percent of at-risk students that were served by the grant program attained positive outcomes by the end of the school year. This included outcomes such as continuation of education and school completion. Ninety-six percent of students remained in school.

Due to these funds, grantees reported that 99.6 percent of at-risk students served were not subsequently expelled while being served by the EARSS program, 85.6 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an out-of-school suspension, 87.3 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an in-school suspension, and 95.1 percent of truant students served did not have a truancy petition filed in court.

Research has shown that exclusionary discipline practices and harsh disciplinary policies disrupt academic achievement and push students out of school. Students who are suspended are more likely to have future challenges in passing classes and with chronic absenteeism. [6] Once a student is suspended or expelled, it increases the odds that the student will receive additional expulsions and suspensions, become involved in the juvenile justice system, and/or experience negative academic outcomes (e.g., repeating a grade or dropping out of school).[7,8] The EARSS grant program provides unique opportunities to students who may otherwise not have these opportunities. Evaluation results for the EARSS programs indicate that the program continues to meet its

legislative intent to prevent exclusionary discipline practices such as expulsions and suspensions as well as habitual truancy among students being served by the grant-funded programs and services.

Appendices

Endnotes

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Appendices

Appendix A – Evaluation Methodology

Data Collection

Evaluation data were collected from all 59 grantees funded by the EARSS grant program. Grantees were responsible for submitting their End-of-Year Survey to CDE using a Qualtrics survey platform. In addition, they were required to securely submit State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) for all students served using the Student Engagement Evaluation System (SEES).

The results reported in this document reflect data collected at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Four webinars were conducted in preparing grantees to collect and enter data. Throughout the reporting period, CDE staff were available to assist with problems and answer questions.

The CDE staff analyzed the data for any irregularities and conducted mathematical checks to correctly calculate and tabulate data. If data were not accurate, CDE staff would contact the grantee for clarification and revisions. These strategies ensure that year-end reporting is as accurate as possible.

Analysis

Aggregated data from the materials collected were downloaded from the SEES and Qualtrics systems as Excel spreadsheets by CDE staff, which facilitated the statistical analysis of process and outcome data. All Personally Identified Information (PII) data was handled and stored securely in accordance to CDE guidelines. Using disaggregated and aggregated data, CDE staff conducted quantitative (i.e., descriptive statistics and inferential statistics) and qualitative analyses (i.e., thematic analysis). For quantitative analyses, statistical significance was set at $p<.05$. When appropriate, inferential analyses included an investigation of differences by grant year and student type. Due to the unique nature of facility schools, additional analyses were conducted focused on those grantees.

[Appendices](#)

Appendix B – 2018-2019 Funded Grantees

County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Adams	1	Adams County School District 14	Middle School Mentoring	School District	$103,875
Adams, Arapahoe	1	Adams-Arapahoe 28J	APS Avenues Program	School District	$121,490
El Paso	1	Atlas Preparatory School	At-risk Student Services	Charter School	$45,885
La Plata	1	Durango School District	Restorative Practices Expansion	School District	$158,841
Jefferson	1	Jefferson County R1	EARSS Program	School District	$245,922
Boulder	1	Justice High School - Lafayette	EARSS Program	Charter School	$159,000
Rio Grande	1	Monte Vista School District	Monte Vista Family Involvement	School District	$45,884
N/A	1	Mount Saint Vincent	Refocus Restorative Practices Program	Facility School	$154,427
Adams, Jefferson, Denver	1	Charter School Institute	New America School Attendance Casework	Charter School	$167,476
Arapahoe	1	Sheridan School District	High School System of Support	School District	$312,230
Bolder	1	St. Vrain Valley Schools	Credit Recovery	School District	$190,000
Denver	1	Tennyson Center for Children	EARSS Life Skills	Facility School	$102,814
Adams	1	Westminster Public Schools	Intensive Services - Case Management	School District	$134,240
Saguache	1	Center Consolidated Schools	EARSS - Districtwide	School District	$321,463
Denver	1	Charter School Institute	New Legacy	Charter School	$199,750

County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
El Paso +	1	Education reEnvisioned BOCES	Pikes Peak Online School	BOCES	$120,119
Mineral	1	Creede School District	Restorative Practices	School District	$120,580
Fremont	1	Fremont RE-2	ATS, RJ & Family Outreach	School District	$175,809
Garfield	1	Garfield County School District No. 16	Wraparound Services	School District	$210,000
Lake	1	Lake County School District	EARSS - LCIS and LCHS	School District	$154,625
Saguache	1	Moffat Consolidated School District 2	EARSS - Districtwide	School District	$152,205
Moffat	1	Moffat County School District RE-1	MCHS-EARSS Program	School District	$405,690
Garfield	1	Roaring Fork Schools	Truancy Reduction	School District	$343,028
El Paso	1	Roundup Fellowship	Behavior Intervention	Facility School	$89,970
BOCES	1	San Juan BOCES	BETA Program	BOCES	$205,714
Weld	1	Weld County School District Re-3J	Wrap-Around Services	School District	$329,350
Teller	1	Woodland Park School District	Restorative Justice	School District	$152,094
Archuleta	2	Archuleta School District	K-4 Stepping Stones	School District	$87,257
El Paso	2	Calhan School District	School of Challenge and Opportunity	School District	$104,924
Denver	2	Charter School Institute	New America School - Tiered Behavior Intervention	Charter School	$195,669
Denver	2	Denver Children's Home	Bansbach Academy	Facility School	$157,018
Denver	2	Denver Public Schools	Compass Academy	Charter School	$200,000
El Paso	2	District 49	Community Engagement Advocate	School District	$69,740

County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Arapahoe	2	Englewood School District	Secondary Restorative Practices	School District	$165,794
El Paso	2	Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8	Welte Education Center Support	School District	$98,400
Prowers	2	Lamar School District RE-2	EARSS Supportive Interventions	School District	$339,792
Mesa	2	Mesa County Valley School District 51	Trauma Informed Behavior Coaches	School District	$306,000
Fremont	2	Southern Peaks Regional Treatment Center	Phoenix Academy	Facility School	$57,449
Denver	2	Tennyson Center for Children	ARC Framework	Facility School	$103,250
Larimer	2	Turning Point - The Waverly School	The Bridges Program	Facility School	$253,877
Chaffee	3	Buena Vista School District	McGinnis MS & Buena Vista HS	School District	$18,750
Fremont	3	Cañon City School District	Cañon City High School	School District	$63,425
Costilla	3	Centennial School District R-1	EARSS Program	School District	$124,844
Teller	3	Cripple Creek-Victor RE-1	Mountain Alternative Education	School District	$113,400
El Paso	3	Griffith Center for Children, Inc.	EARSS Program	Facility School	$201,818
Gunnison	3	Gunnison Watershed School District	EARSS High Fidelity Wraparound	School District	$37,500
Montrose	3	Montrose Co. School District RE-1J	Attendance Advocates	School District	$133,964
Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande	3	San Luis Valley BOCES	EARSS Program	BOCES	$183,659

County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Adams, Boulder, Denver	3	Shiloh House	Shiloh Academy	Facility School	$174,081
El Paso	4	Academy School District 20	Academy School District 20	School District	$134,000
Adams	4	Adams County School District 14	Adams 14 EARSS	School District	$121,600
Weld	4	Alternative Homes for Youth	Alternative Homes for Youth	Facility School	$9,418
Arapahoe	4	Cherry Creek School District 5	Endeavor Academy	School District	$166,491
Jefferson	4	Jeffco Public Schools	Office of Student Engagement	School District	$102,498
Multiple	4	Jefferson Hills	Jefferson Hills Aurora	Facility School	$128,600
Larimer	4	Midway Youth Services	Remington House School	Facility School	$46,273
Saguache	4	Mountain Valley School District RE-1	Mountain Valley School District RE-1	School District	$61,800
Otero	4	Santa Fe Trail BOCES	SFTBOCES Alternative Education Academy	BOCES	$62,500
Multiple	4	South Central BOCES	Dropout Prevention Program	BOCES	$152,516

*** Note:** *County refers to where the city of administration was located. It might not reflect all counties receiving services per grantee.*

Appendices

Appendix C – Example Program Descriptions

Below is a list of all grantees and the descriptions of their programs of the grantees who reported positive outcomes for all students served and/or reported meeting or exceeding all grant performance measures in 2018-2019. *Note: the below descriptions were submitted along with their initial grant applications.*

Grantee and Program Name	Program Description
Buena Vista School District McGinnis MS & Buena Vista HS	Buena Vista School District will implement the Affective Needs Program for the secondary schools: McGinnis Middle School and Buena Vista High School, grades 6-12. It will serve students labeled with a Significant Emotional Disability (SED). The program is based on a level system to avoid suspension for students with disabilities and will teach strategies and replacement behaviors, including social skills, for SED students to be more successful in their general education classes.
Centennial School District R-1 EARSS Program	In an effort to reduce the number of expulsions, suspensions, and students who are habitually truant, Centennial School District in San Luis, CO, will provide programs that offer truancy and behavioral mediation, counseling, academic support and tutoring, in-home family counseling and parenting classes, and social-skills development. Parent engagement will also be promoted to support these efforts through parent mentoring, education, and events.
Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8 Welte Education Center Support	Providing another opportunity for at-risk secondary students to stay in school in our district is a continued priority. Students will be referred into the program as part of the comprehensive MTSS processes, habitual truancy or detrimental behavior in the school setting, expulsion, or at-risk of expulsion. This educational opportunity will include the use of an on-line academic curriculum, mentoring, effective instructional supports, and parent participation in progress monitoring of students with specific staff members and/or potential family mental health services.
Garfield County School District No. 16 Wraparound Services	Garfield County School District No. 16 will serve at least 75 habitually truant students and/or students at-risk of suspension or expulsion through Individualized Service and Support Teams, wraparound services and behavioral intervention. Services will be provided at Bea Underwood Elementary and Grand Valley Middle Schools, with the objective of creating plans with students and families that include support services to help them improve attendance and attain success in school.
Jefferson County R1 EARSS Program	Jeffco Public Schools will utilize three Restorative Practices Specialists to provide individualized student support as well as whole school Restorative Practices implementation support. They will examine trend data to identify which secondary schools are experiencing a high rate of suspensions, expulsions, and students identified as habitually truant. Identified students and schools will receive individualized support utilizing Restorative Practices to address the attendance and discipline concerns in the schools.

Grantee and Program Name	Program Description
Montrose Co. School District RE-1J Attendance Advocates	This plan supports 424 Montrose County Schools' students at high risk for chronic truancy or expulsion in grades 1-12 via Attendance Advocates who facilitate improved student engagement through targeted case management using school based SET Teams. Case management includes students and families, coordinating services collaboratively throughout the community using the 1451/CMP coalition to address needs, and using Restorative Justice practices for discipline support to increase student accountability for truancy and behavior.
Lamar School District RE-2 EARSS Supportive Interventions	Lamar School district will provide EARSS eligible students in Lamar High School (grades 9-12) and Lamar Middle School (grades 6-8) support services to avoid expulsion and reduce truancy. Supports will be initiated through an early truancy intervention by an Individualized Service and Support Team and community collaboration to identify barriers in school attendance and work to resolve them. Possible solutions to keep students engaged in their learning might include alternative education, parenting support, tutoring, and mentoring.
Mountain Valley School District RE-1	Mountain Valley School District RE-1 will be the acting fiscal agent for Mountain Valley and Moffat Consolidated School District 2. The grant will provide direct intervention supports to 75 EARSS-eligible students at these schools. The program includes services for eligible students in the form of AmeriCorps volunteers as mentors, tutoring, credit recovery, GED, leadership activities and counseling. The schools will work with families of EARSS participating students to meet their specific needs to graduate and reduce truancy.
Midway Youth Services Remington House School	Remington House School aims to serve students who are at high risk for expulsion and suspension by providing enhanced programming. We hope to serve 45 youth the first year, grades 6-12. If awarded, our W.I.N.S. (What I Need to Succeed) program will focus on the following areas: improving academic growth/engagement; increasing family support; increasing student attendance and participation; increasing vocational capabilities; and improving transitional services for youth and families.
Southern Peaks Regional Treatment Center Phoenix Academy	SPRTC serves approximately 100 students per day in grades 4-12. The student population reflects youth who struggle to maintain safety at home, school, and in the community. Residents have significant trauma-related histories and require targeted educational, life skill, and therapeutic intervention to stabilize their lives. Average length of stay is 240 days. SPRTC plans to broaden its educational services by providing a culinary arts program and an online educational track for access by all residents.
San Juan BOCES Beta Program	The San Juan BOCES will create a sustainable alternative program for at-risk youth, The Behavior Emotional Transition Academic (BETA) Program. The BETA program will successfully braid together behavioral health, transition services and personalized academic programming through intensive coordinated case management in the environment that best meets the need of the student and family. There will be a Success Plan and a Transition Plan tailored to the student's strengths, community and available resources to provide the greatest opportunity for success.