

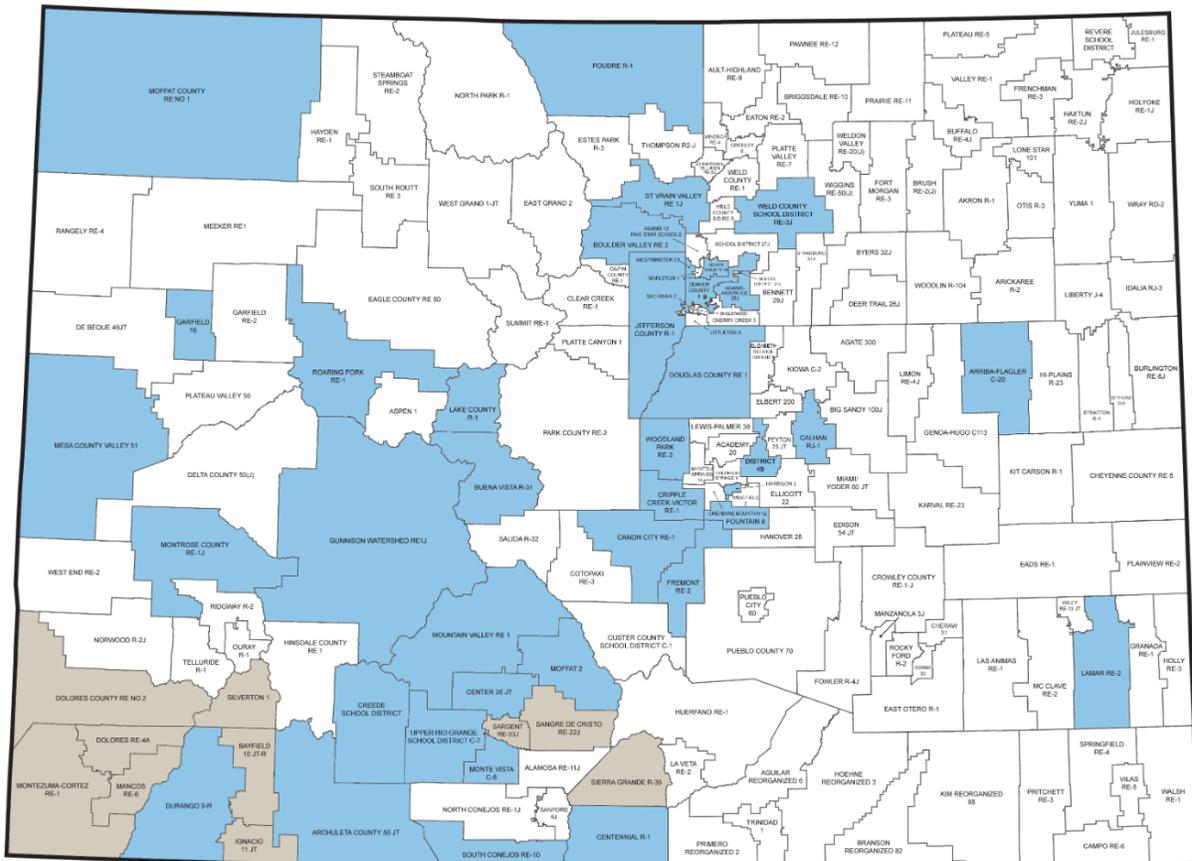


COLORADO
Department of Education

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

Grant Period: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020
Submission Date: February 2021

Colorado School District Map





Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant Program Annual 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 Office of Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention:

Juliana Rosa, Ph.D.
Research and Evaluation Consultant
Rosa_J@cde.state.co.us

Janelle Krueger, M.S.
Program Manager

Amy Werpy, M.A.
Grant Coordinator
Werpy_A@cde.state.co.us

February 2021



Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>Introduction: Expulsion Prevention and Intervention</u>	6
<u>2019-2020 Grant Awards</u>	7
<u>Students Served</u>	9
<u>Behaviors for Which Students Were Served</u>	11
<u>Program Effectiveness</u>	12
<u>Program Support Services Implemented</u>	14
<u>Parent/Family Engagement</u>	16
<u>Performance Objectives and Program Outcomes</u>	17
<u>Impact of COVID-19 on Programs</u>	20
<u>Program Sustainability</u>	23
<u>Conclusion</u>	24
<u>Endnotes</u>	25
<u>Appendices</u>	26
Appendix A - Evaluation Methodology	
Appendix B - 2019-2020 Funded Grantees	
Appendix C - Example Program Summaries	



Executive Summary

The Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) program is authorized by section 22-33-205, C.R.S. This 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 available to eligible applicants and is managed by the Office of Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention.

The program's approach maintains that more students will stay in school, maintain regular attendance, and make progress toward graduation if schools provide support services to expelled and at-risk students, offer alternatives to suspension and expulsion, and create effective attendance and discipline systems. In 2019-2020, the General Assembly appropriated \$9,493,560 for the program, and CDE awarded funds to 58 grantees.

More than 7,000 Students and 4,000 Parents/Guardians Served

Fifty-five grantees served 3,682 students at risk of being expelled. Forty-nine grantees reported supporting 3,494 truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy. Thirty grantees served 221 expelled students.

Of the more than 3,000 at-risk and expelled students served, the most common reasons for being served were disobedient/defiant behavior (38.1 percent of students) or detrimental behavior (21.5 percent of students).

Available student level data indicated that 58.4 percent of students served were male and most were Hispanic (52.8 percent of students) or White (33.1 percent of students). Most students were in ninth to twelfth grade (55.3 percent of students), followed by sixth through eighth grade (33.1 percent of students), and kindergarten through fifth grade (11.5 percent of students).

More than 4,000 parents and guardians received support services to assist in their children's learning and positive engagement and academic development.

The EARSS Program Met Legislative Intent

Evaluation results verify that the legislative intent of the EARSS program to prevent expulsions, suspensions, and truancy was met. Grantees reported that 99.4 percent of at-risk students served were not subsequently expelled while being served by the EARSS program, 82.9 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an out-of-school suspension, 81.3 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an in-school suspension, and 93.1 percent of truant students served did not have a truancy petition filed in court.

Four Out of Five Students Experienced Positive Outcomes

Eighty percent of students served experienced positive outcomes, such as school completion and continuation of education within the same school district. Of all students served, 96.2 percent remained in school or graduated/completed school. This is consistent with results from the last two years of the grant program (average of 96.6 percent).



More Time is an Important Component of Success

Overall, 41.3 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 (55.3 percent of grantees) compared to first-, second-, and third- year grantees in 2019-2020. These results demonstrate support for the 4-year grant structure that allows more time for grantees to make progress.

Impact of COVID-19 on Programs

The most common implementation challenges reported by grantees in 2019-2020 were directly due to COVID-19. Grantees cited difficulty with implementing traditionally in-person services, fewer students identified for supports, or discontinued aspects of the programs. Grantees also reported limited access to the internet/WIFI for students and staff and a decrease in student engagement/increase in disengagement during the transition from in-person programming to blended or remote programming being a barrier to implementation.

Successes were also reported as many grantees were able to adapt programming to focus more on student and family engagement, filling immediate needs, and relationship building. Grantees maintained and adapted services to the greatest extent possible during this difficult disruption to direct, in-person student services (e.g., check-in calls and virtual visits, using multiple means to track down and engage truant students, and continued one-on-one support to address individual needs, social distancing home visits).

Grantees Plan for Sustainability

Grantees were more likely to begin sustainability efforts in year three and four of their grant. All fourth-year grantees reported that grant-funded strategies will be partially or fully absorbed by other funds in 2020-2021. Future evaluations will focus on determining whether programs are sustained beyond the awarded years.



Introduction: Expulsion Prevention and Intervention

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 law 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 Colorado General Assembly has also created the EARSS grant program to assist grantee school districts in providing such services.

The EARSS Program

The Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) 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.

The program's approach maintains that more students will stay in school, maintain regular attendance, and make progress toward graduation if school staff provide support 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 program is managed through CDE's Office of Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention. 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 awarded for four sequential fiscal years provided grantees are meeting grant requirements, are making reasonable progress toward performance outcomes, and state funds are annually appropriated.

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.



Reporting Requirements

The EARSS 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 each year. 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 annually submitted to CDE by grantees. This report covers evaluation data from 58 grantees available between July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. For more details on the evaluation methodology, see [Appendix A](#). For the survey tools from the evaluation, visit the EARSS Evaluation website.

2019-2020 Grant Awards

For the 2019-2020 school year, the General Assembly appropriated \$9,493,560 for the program. CDE awarded nine new grants and 49 continuation awards for grantees moving into years two through four.

TABLE 1 shows the number and percent of grantees per cohort. See [Appendix B](#) for a list of grantees.

Eighteen grantees (31 percent of grantees) 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.

TABLE 1: Grantees by Cohort and Type (N=58)

Cohort Year	Number of Grantees	Percent of Grantees
1 st Year	9	15.5
2 nd Year	27	46.6
3 rd Year	13	22.4
4 th Year	9	15.5

Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020.

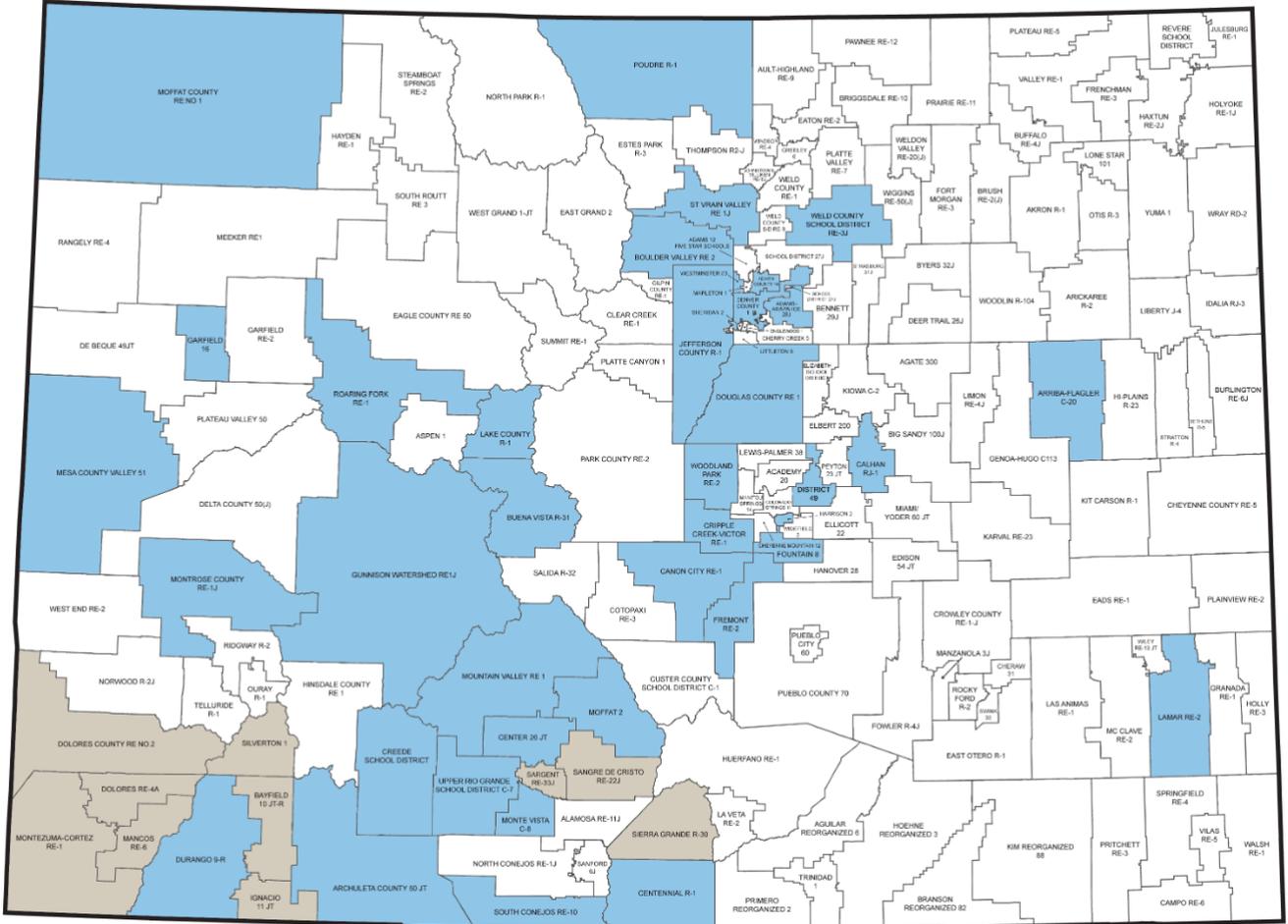
Map of District

The 58 grantees funded in 2019-2020 represent 28 counties across Colorado. EARSS funded 37 school districts, seven individual charter schools, three BOCES, and 11 facility schools. See the *School District Map* on the next page which highlights all the districts served by the grant. School districts served by BOCES are highlighted in grey.

Note: Some school districts and schools were funded with more than one EARSS grant in 2019-2020. Two awarded facility schools closed in February 2019-2020. Data for these facility schools were included in the report.



Colorado School District Map



Produced by the Colorado Department of Education - February 2019



Students Served

State Comparison

The EARSS 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. It is estimated that 30 percent of Colorado’s expelled students and five percent of suspended students are served by the EARSS program.¹

7,397

STUDENTS SERVED IN
2019-2020

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. It is estimated that two percent of habitually truant students are served by the EARSS program.¹

Students Served in 2019-2020

In 2019-2020, EARSS program grantees reported serving 7,397 students, one percent of students enrolled in Colorado in 2019-2020.

- Thirty grantees reported serving **221 expelled students** (3 percent of students served).
- Fifty-five grantees reported serving **3,682 students at risk for expulsion** (49.8 percent of students served).
- Forty-nine grantees reported serving **3,494 truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy** (47.2 percent of students served).

Facility School Grantees Students Served

Facility schools served 12.7 percent of all students served by the grant. The 943 students served by facility schools included:

- 6.7 percent expelled students
- 90.5 percent students at-risk of expulsion
- 2.8 percent truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy

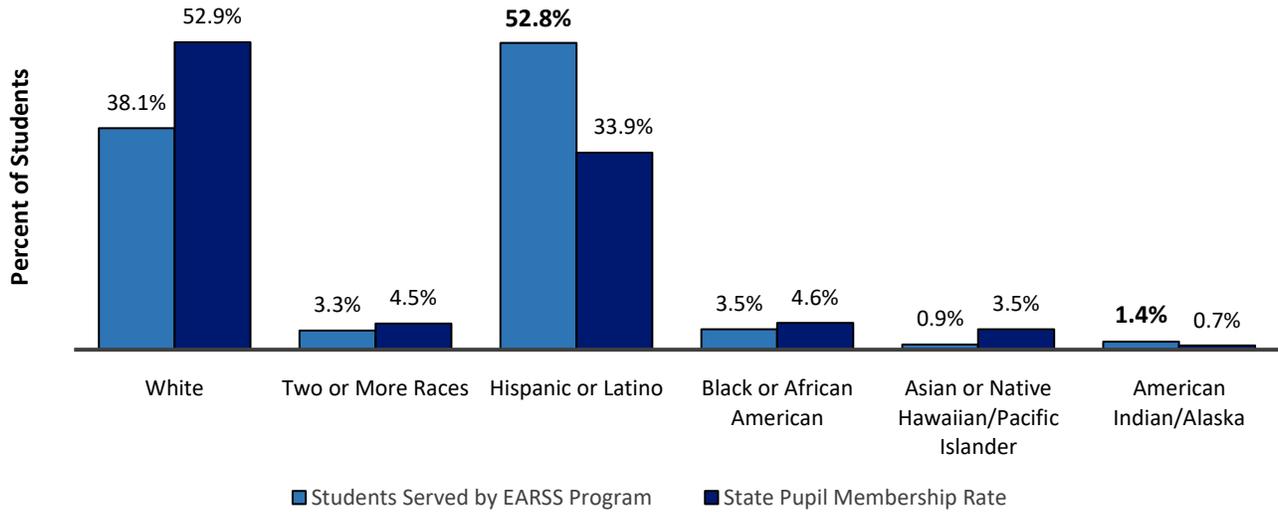
Student Demographics

Demographic data were available for 83.9 percent of the students served by an EARSS program (6,211 students). A review by grade level showed that most students were in ninth to 12th grade (55.3 percent of students), followed by sixth through eighth grade (33.1 percent of students), and kindergarten to fifth grade (11.5 percent of students).

The available data show most students served were male (58.4 percent of students) and Hispanic or Latino (52.8 percent of students) and White (38.1 percent of students). **CHART 1** shows a breakout by race/ethnicity for the students served by the program compared to the 2019-2020 pupil membership rate.



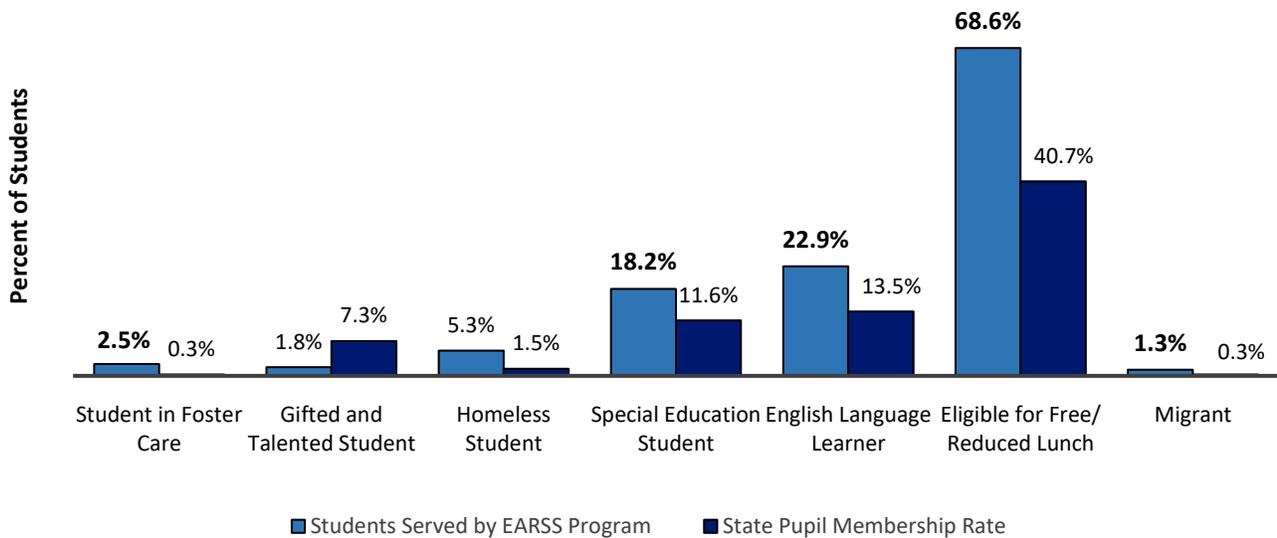
CHART 1: STATE AND PROGRAM COMPARISON BY RACE/ETHNICITY (N=6,211)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting and Pupil Membership Data, 2019-2020

Student-level data for students served in the 2019-2020 academic school year showed that 68.6 percent of students served qualified for free/reduced lunch, 22.9 percent of students were English learners, 18.2 percent of students had a special education designation, and 5.3 percent of students were homeless. **CHART 2** shows a breakout by instructional program service types for the students served by the program compared to the state average pupil membership rate of all students in the in 2019-2020.

CHART 2: STATE AND PROGRAM COMPARISON OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM SERVICE TYPES (N=6,211)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Report and Pupil Membership Data, 2019-2020.

Note: These student groups are not mutually exclusive.



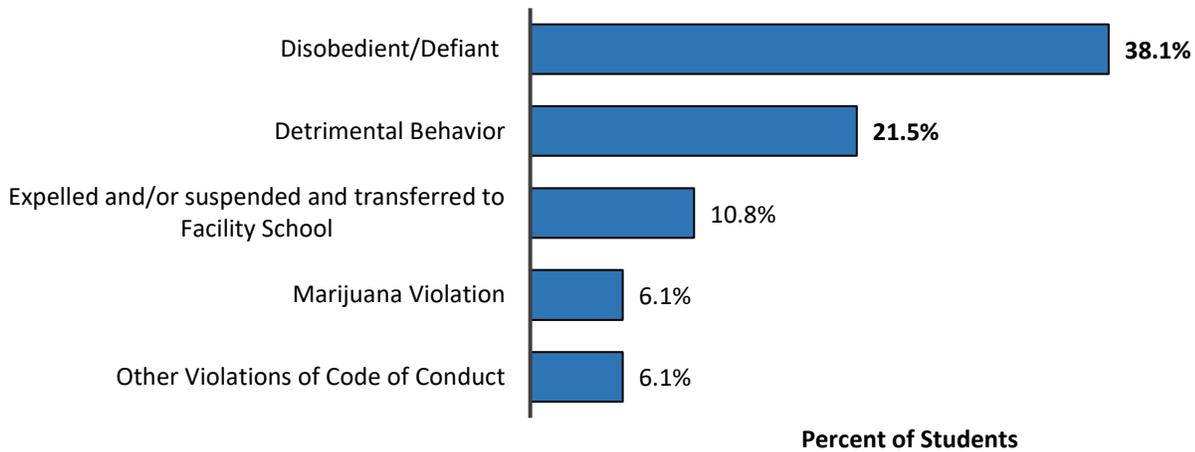
Behaviors for Which Students Were Served

Students were mainly served due to truancy issues (47.2 percent of students served). When excluding these students from the analysis, the main reasons expelled students and students at risk for expulsion were served included disobedient/defiant behavior or repeated interference (38.1 percent of students), and detrimental behavior (21.5 percent of students). **CHART 3** provides a breakout of the reasons that expelled students and students at risk for expulsion were served by an EARSS program.

Facility School Grantees Reasons Served

Facility schools were more likely to serve students transferred due to a suspension or expulsion (41.8 percent), detrimental behavior (21.1 percent), and disobedient behavior (15.7 percent).

CHART 3: MOST COMMON REASONS FOR BEING SERVED FOR EXPELLED STUDENTS AND STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR EXPULSION (N= 3,903)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020
Note: Excludes students served for truancy concerns.

Example Reasons for Being Served

Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying City

“A fourth grader was referred to our program due to disruptive, non-compliant classroom behavior and impulsiveness throughout the school day. We implemented supports such as a daily check-in paper that tracked behavior in each of their classes. We met with this student and their mother and explained the daily check-in paper, and the student was responsible for taking it with them from class to class and getting their teachers’ signatures that showed if they were on task, non-disruptive, and paying attention. The daily check-in paper, coupled with some in-class academic support, and a daily face-to-face check-in before recess, improved the student’s behavior more quickly than expected! We were all happy the interventions were so effective in such a short time period, and to such a large extent. There was a noticeable improvement in the student’s self-control and focus on tasks and expectations in the classroom.”



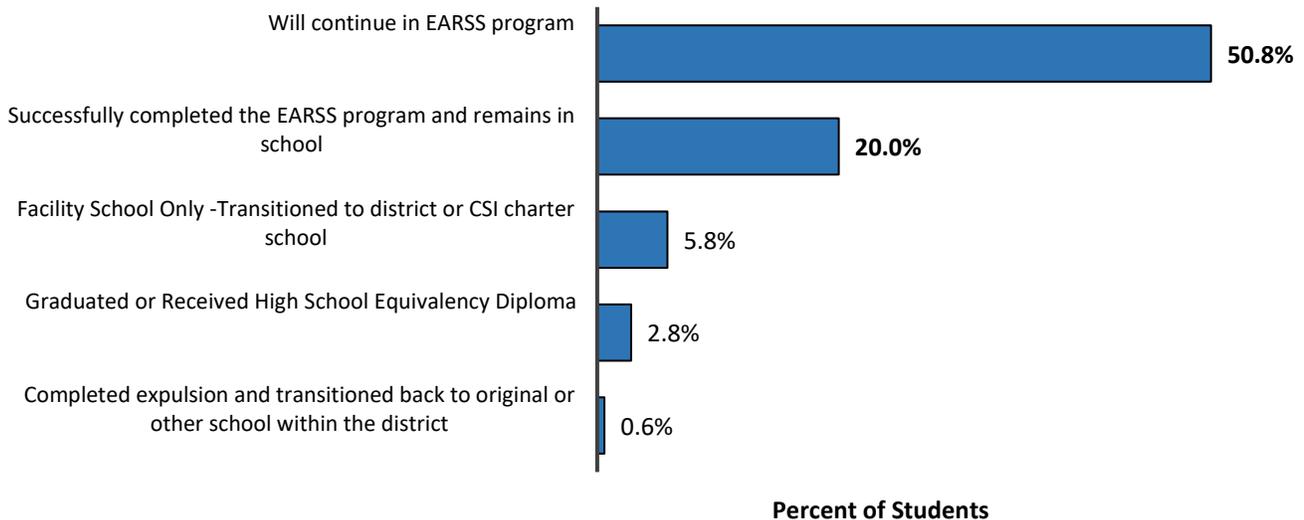
Program Effectiveness

Overall Outcomes for All Students

Of the students served by the grant, 80 percent experienced positive outcomes by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. These outcomes include 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. **CHART 4** breaks down the positive outcomes for students served by the EARSS program.

4 out of 5
STUDENTS EXPERIENCED
POSITIVE OUTCOMES

CHART 4: PERCENT OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING POSITIVE OUTCOMES (N=7,397)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020

Student Success Story

Submitted by an Urban-Suburban School District Grantee

“We had a senior in our program for expelled students that was pretty down on themselves and ready to drop out... Our EARSS funded counselor/social worker started engaging with them a few times a week to build a positive relationship and connected them to resources. They agreed to take part in counseling through our grant partner and started looking at post high school options. Their expulsion ended in December ... They completed their high school credits while also taking a class at Front Range Community College. They are now graduated and will keep attending FRCC in the Fall.”



Dropout Prevention

Students served by the EARSS grant are at greater risk of dropping out of school due to behavioral and attendance risk factors; 3,318 students served in 2019-2020 were also identified by grantees as at risk for dropping out of school (62 percent of seventh to 12th grade students served by the grant).

7 out of 10
GRANTEES REPORTED NO
STUDENT DROPOUT

One long-term aim of the program is to reduce the risk of dropping out of school by providing students with intensive support focused on addressing these risk factors. In 2019-2020, seven out of 10 grantees reported that none of the 3,940 students served in their program dropped out of school. Based on the available demographic and outcome data, the remaining grantees reported that 279 students (3.8 percent of all students served or 5.2 percent of students in seventh through 12th grade) dropped out of school. In general, grantees reported a higher dropout rate compared to the state rate (1.8 percent in 2019-2020) but lower than the dropout rate for Alternative Education Campuses (15.1 percent in 2019-2020).

Meeting Legislative Intent

The purpose of the EARSS program is to assist in reducing and preventing expulsions, suspensions, and truancy. Grantees reported the following disciplinary outcomes in 2019-2020:

- **Expulsions:** 99.4 percent of at-risk students who remained in school did not receive an expulsion while being served. Seven out of 10 grantees reported that no students were expelled while being served.
- **Out-of-School Suspensions:** 82.9 percent of at-risk students did not receive an out-of-school suspension while being served. Two out of 10 grantees who served at-risk students reported that no students received an out-of-school suspension while being served.
- **In-School Suspensions:** 81.3 percent of at-risk students did not receive an in-school suspension while being served. Three out of 10 grantees who served at-risk students reported that no students received an in-school suspension while being served.
- **Truancy Petitions:** 93.1 percent of truant students or students at risk for habitual truancy did not have a truancy petition filed in court while being served. Five out of 10 grantees who served habitually truant students reported no petitions filed in court.

Facility School Grantees Student Outcomes

Of the students served by facility schools, 82.3 percent experienced positive outcomes.

No students served by facility schools dropped out of school.

Student Success Story

Submitted by a Remote School District Grantee

“A student was at-risk ... Services provided included a restorative justice opportunity, opportunity for youth diversion in place of court and law enforcement, threat assessment, in school and out of school counseling services, reintegration meeting, building and co-creating a safety contract with the student and family, and relationship building through mitigating the impact of harm (repair agreements and group circles) to others which included self, family, school, law enforcement, community and peers. We continued to follow this student and developed a deeper relationship with them. The student was successfully accepted and reintegrated back into school. The student served mainly in-school suspension with a small portion being off campus. This student was not expelled, was suspended less time off campus, remained in school, and promoted to the next level without incident.”



Program Support Services Implemented

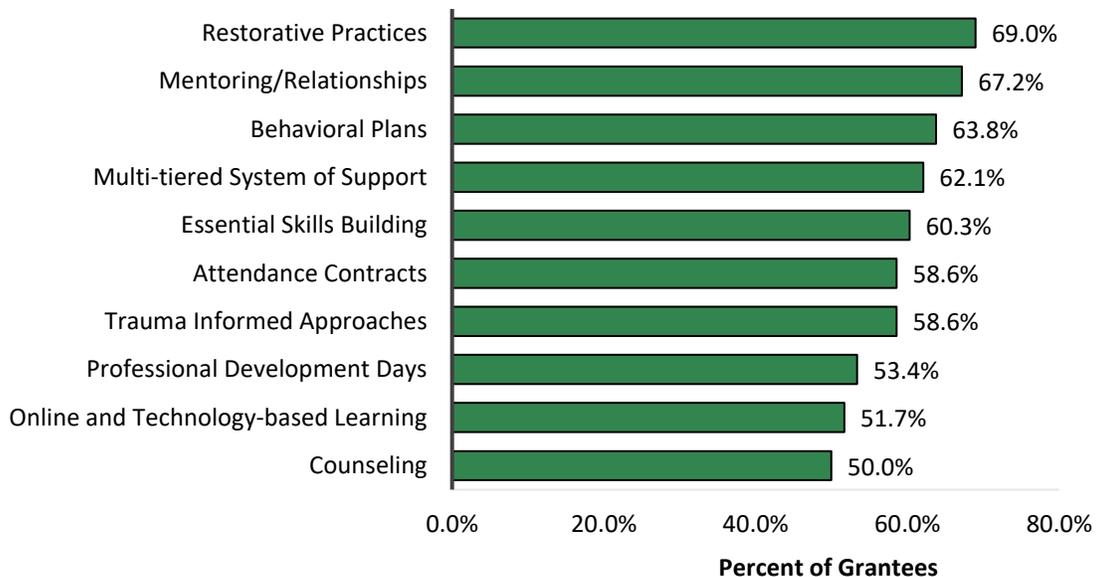
Most Funded Support Services

Various types of program support services were utilized by grantees to better serve students, including academic and attendance strategies (e.g., credit recovery), behavioral supports (e.g., counseling, mentoring), and system approaches (e.g., professional development). These grant-funded support services are primarily delivered by specialized staff (e.g., behavior interventionist, student attendance advocates, family liaisons, etc.). **CHART 5** provides a breakout of the most common support services utilized by grantees.

Facility School Grantees Support Services

Facility schools funded support services similarly to other grantees. However, facility schools reported that **transition planning** and **trauma informed approaches** were most effective when serving EARSS students.

CHART 5: MOST COMMONLY FUNDED SUPPORT SERVICES (N=58)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020

Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.

Most Effective Strategies

Grantees were asked to report on the most effective strategies that have positively impacted their programs. Survey results revealed that the implementation of **restorative practices** and **mentoring/positive relationship building** were the most reported effective strategies. A variety of other strategies were also reported as effective by grantees to meet the unique needs of the population they serve, including **counseling**, and **essential skills building**.



Program Successes

Grantees were asked to specifically describe special circumstances that positively affected progress on achieving their objectives. When focusing on grantees who were meeting or exceeding most of their goals and reported positive outcomes for at least 80 percent of students served (see [Appendix C](#)), program success was attributed to the following factors:

- Consistent communication and relationship building efforts with parents/families.
- Program staff and teams dedicated to program implementation (e.g., attendance staff, counselors, teachers).
- Individualized and relevant educational opportunities focused on student interests.

Example Program Success

Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying City

“Continued open communication with parents on a weekly basis has had positive effects with parent/teacher feedback. Keeping the parents informed and aware of their students’ academic progress, attendance, and behavior has strengthened overall staff relationships with students and parents/guardians. Parents who in the past had not actively participated in their students’ educational process attended parent teacher conferences at a rate of 100% this year-- the second year in a row. We believe that staff’s openness to work with parent’s schedules has assisted in the removal of barriers for parents/guardians in attending parent-teacher conferences.”

Program Challenges

Grantees were also asked to specifically describe circumstances that negatively affected progress on achieving their objectives. Program disruptions due to COVID-19 was the most cited challenge with program implementation and achieving program goals in 2019-2020. When focusing on grantees who were not meeting or exceeding their goals, challenges mentioned also included:

- Staff turnover and the amount of time required to fill positions.
- Families and students struggled with engagement or were uninterested in services.
- Limited referral services available for students and families.
- Life circumstances (e.g., poverty, work schedule, childcare).

Example Program Challenge

Submitted by a Charter School

“Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is not being met for so many of our students, therefore education is so much lower on their list of priorities. Our student population struggles to meet basic needs, and despite the school’s efforts to help get these needs met, we can only do so much to support our families. Many of our students also need to work in order to provide for their children and families. This has a negative impact on their attendance, as they are working nights or need to leave school early to get to work on time.”



Parent/Family Engagement

Parents/Guardians Served

In addition to students, grantees reported serving 4,186 parents/guardians of students served. These parents/guardians received support services to assist in their children’s learning and positive development.

4,186

PARENTS/GUARDIANS SERVED

Parent/Guardian Services

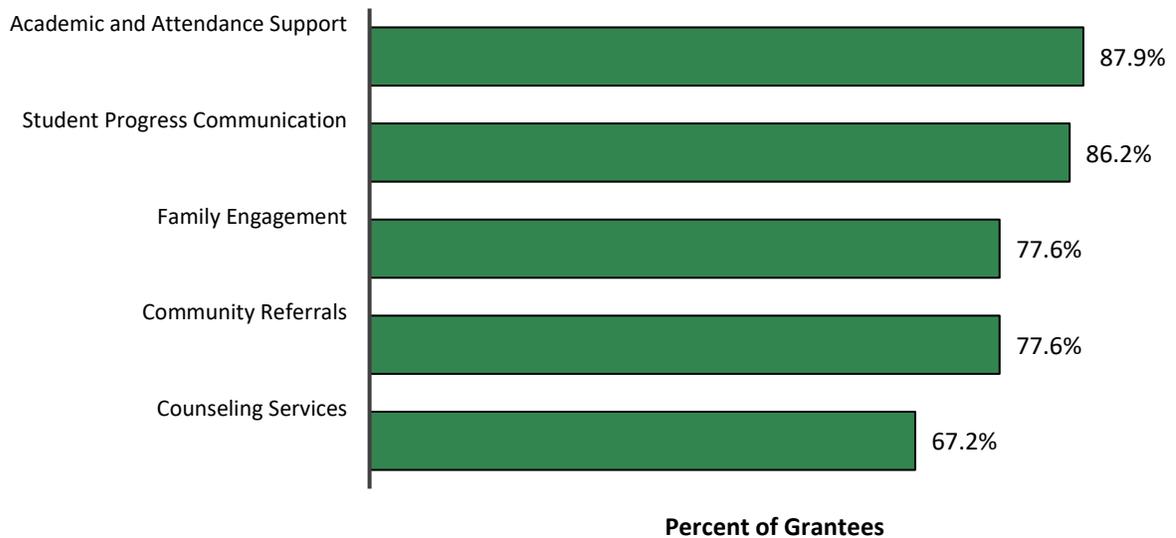
All 58 grantees provided various support services for parents, guardians, and families. The grantees indicated that the most common support services available to families included involving parents/guardians in academic, attendance, and/or behavioral planning, communication, referrals to community services/social services, and family engagement and relationship-building meetings. For many of the grantees, these support services were provided through parent liaisons, student/parent advocates, counselors, and/or support staff. **CHART 6** lists the most common support services available to parents/guardians.

Facility School Grantees Parents/Families Served

Facility schools served 15.6 percent of all parents/guardians served (652 parents/guardians).

Facility schools provided support services like those provided by other grantees.

CHART 6: MOST COMMONLY FUNDED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS (N=58)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020

Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.



Parent/Family Success Story

Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying Town

“The EARSS grant supported parents in multiple ways through the school closures. The interactions and support provided parents with education on how to support students at home. These interactions created a connection with a parent who historically was not actively involved. Through the support of the partnership, the mother developed a relationship that opened doors to communication and support. During the closures, there were several parents who expressed gratitude for the services provided through the grant. One father stated that he did not know what he would have done to support his children with their schoolwork and attendance...The supports that he and his children received helped guide him in supporting his children academically and emotionally. The partnership was able to make a strong connection to this parent by helping him support his family and meet their basic needs.”

Performance Objectives and Program Outcomes

Each grantee set or selected performance objectives in three to four core areas to be achieved by the end of the grant period: **Parent-Focused; Academic Performance; Attendance; Safety and Discipline/Behavior.** Grantees annually report progress against two-year benchmark objectives in years one and two of the grant and again in years three and four of the grant. 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/approaching.*
- *If you have made minimal gains on your objective, select not making progress.*

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on program implementation and data collection, an additional response of *unable to rate performance objective* was included in the 2019-2020 reporting survey.

Ratings for All Objectives

To better identify how many grantees met or exceeded their objectives, ratings were aggregated by grantees. When focusing on the ratings exceeding and meeting, the results were the following:

- Three out of 10 grantees met or exceeded at least half of their objectives.
- One out of 10 grantees met or exceeded all their objectives.

Facility School Grantees Performance Objectives

Eight out of 11 facility schools reported exceeding, meeting, or making progress on their goals.

Facility schools were more likely to meet or exceed their academic objectives (80 percent of objectives) but were less likely to meet or exceed their parent objectives (50 percent of objectives).



To better identify how many objectives were met, data was aggregated across all objective areas. Ratings for all objectives across areas included:

- **Exceeded or Met:** 37.0 percent of the performance objectives were rated as meeting or exceeding.
- **Making Progress:** 33.5 percent of the performance objectives were rated as making progress.
- **Not Making Progress:** 5.5 percent of the performance objectives were rated as not making progress.
- **Unable to Rate:** 24.0 percent of the performance objectives were rated as not unable to be rated due to COVID disruptions.

Grantees unable to rate their objectives were prompted to provide a follow-up explanation. The most common programmatic reasons cited included **disruption in programming, shifts in program priority, or inability to implement programming remotely.**

Example Challenge with Program Implementation

Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying City

“We have trained students in the basics of Restorative Practices. The students that were trained were seniors that acted as freshman mentors in their advisory class. Unfortunately, due to COVID, this model will not be utilized as that would violate health department recommendations. We will continue to explore how to use these trained students to facilitate with their peers.”

Grantees also reported barriers related to the evaluation of their programs and reporting to CDE. The most common barriers cited included **disrupted or canceled data collections**, changes in programming impacted the **relevance of the objective, comparison to baseline data was no longer valid** due to changes in available metrics, and **data accuracy concerns.**

Example Challenge with Data Reporting

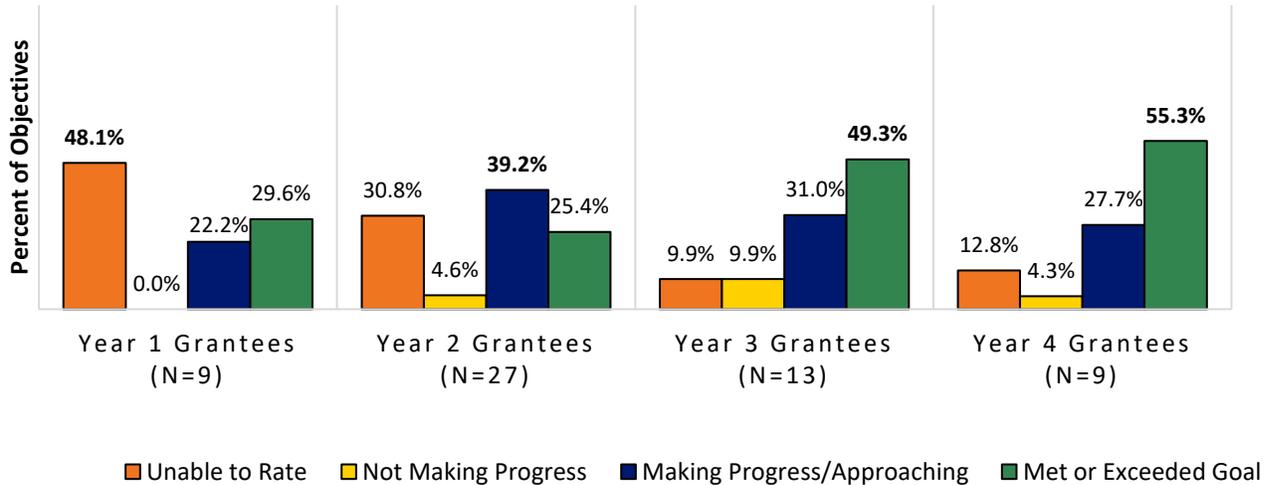
Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying Town

“Due to school closure last spring, our grading systems changed, and many courses became pass/fail while our grade level courses were adjusted based on student participation as much as anything making it impossible to get a real gauge of how we did on this measure. However, all of our seniors being served graduated so that is great!”

Ratings for All Objectives by Grant Year

Ratings varied by year of funding. Like results from previous years, third and fourth-year grantees were more likely to report having met or exceeded more of their objectives. This demonstrates support for the 4-year grant structure that allows more time to build capacity and impact program outcomes. **CHART 7** shows the percent of rating for all objectives by cohort.

CHART 7: PERCENT OF RATING FOR ALL OBJECTIVES BY GRANTEE COHORT

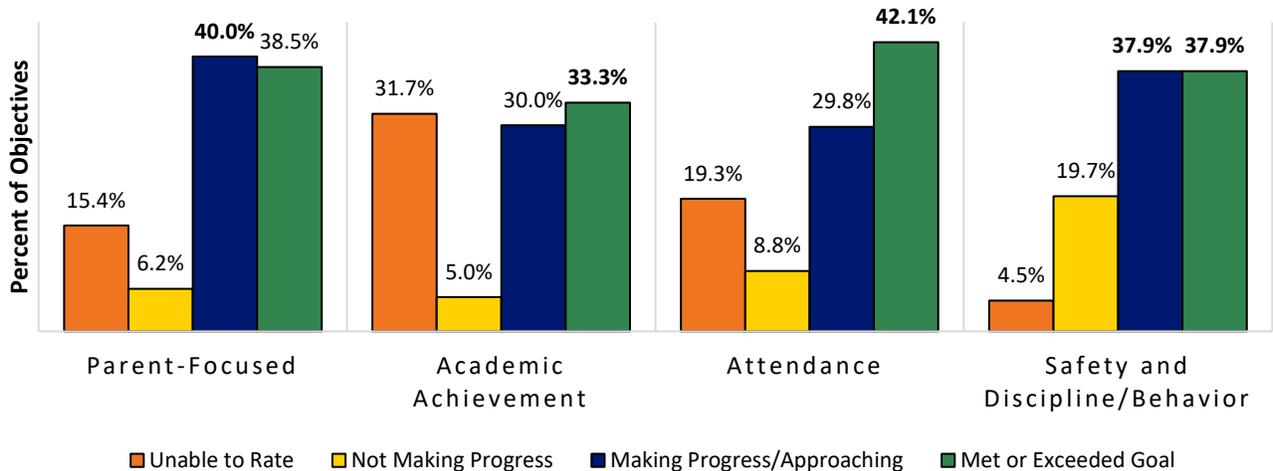


Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020
Note: Year 1 Grantees reported on three objectives while Year 2 -4 grantees reported on four to eight objectives.

Ratings by Objective Areas for Continuation Grantees

Continuation grantees (Years 2 to 4) had two performance objectives in each of the following four areas: Parent-Focused; Academic Achievement; Attendance; and Safety and Discipline/Behavior. Overall, grantees were significantly more likely to have met or exceeded their attendance objectives and parent performance objectives. **CHART 8** shows the percent by ratings for each of the four objective areas.

CHART 8: PERCENT OF RATING FOR EACH OF THE FOUR OBJECTIVE AREAS FOR YEAR 2 TO YEAR 4 GRANTEEES



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020
Note: Year 1 Grantees did not set parent engagement performance objectives.



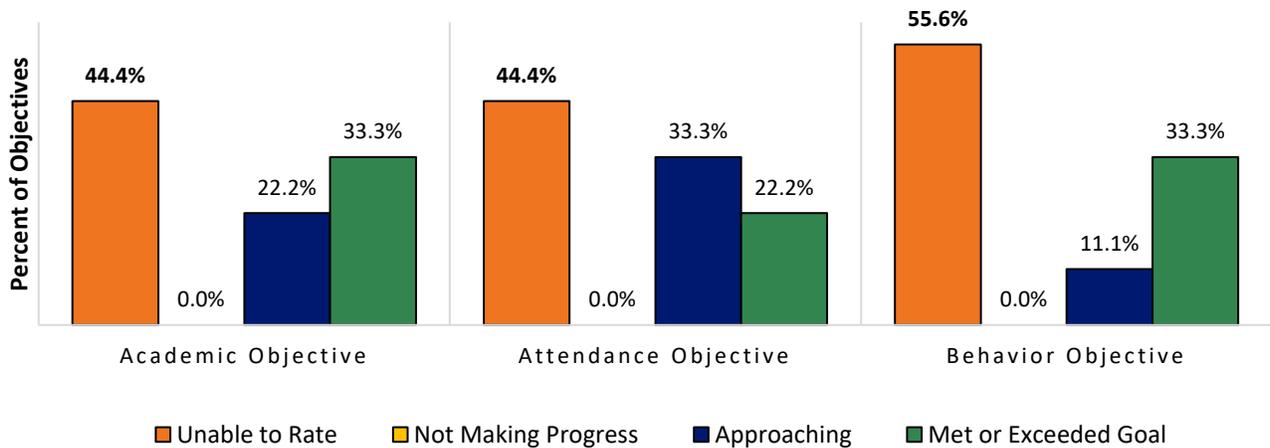
Ratings by Objective Areas for Year 1 Grantees

Grantees in their first year of the grant were no longer required to set a parent/family-related goal and were required to select department-prescribed performance objectives for academics, attendance, and behavior:

- Academic Goal: Students served by the EARSS program will demonstrate improvement in academic achievement.
- Attendance Goal: Students participating in the EARSS program will show improvement in attendance.
- Behavior Goal: Students participating in the EARSS program will show improvements in behavior.

Grantees were required to select one performance objective for each of the three prescribed goals. Overall, grantees were more likely to rate that they had met or exceeded their academic objectives and behavior objectives. **CHART 9** shows the percent by ratings for each of the three objective areas.

CHART 9: PERCENT OF RATING FOR EACH OF THE THREE OBJECTIVE AREAS FOR YEAR 1 GRANTEEES



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020

Note: Year 1 Grantees did not set parent engagement performance objectives.

Impact of COVID-19 on Programs

In general, the most common implementation challenges reported by grantees in 2019-2020 were directly due to COVID-19. Grantees were asked an optional follow-up question in the survey to explain how COVID-19 impacted their EARSS program’s services to students.

Results of a thematic analysis of the responses (N=40) revealed that several grantees were negatively impacted due to COVID-19. For example, grantees reported that **academic progress and/or attendance was less likely to be accurately tracked** due to transitions from an in-person model to a blended or remote model. This made it difficult for grantees to accurately report on program outcomes.



Impact of COVID-19 Example

Submitted by a School District Grantee in an Outlying City

“COVID-19 impacted EARSS program’s services significantly due to school closure from March to the end of the 2019-2020 school year. We were unable to collect much of the data required to accurately assess progress on our goals. As well, we were not able to serve our targeted number of students due to the closure. On a positive, we were able to pivot to create learning and service opportunities in a virtual setting, which is a positive opportunity to expand how we offer services and supports to students, families, and staff.”

Grantees also cited that a **decline in services** occurred due to **difficulty with adapting traditionally in-person services, fewer students identified for supports, or discontinued aspects of the programs**. For example, educational group activities for parents, educational field trips for students, after-school tutoring, travel for professional development, summer school in June, and in-service training scheduled for staff during the summer had to be cancelled. Forty-one percent of grantees were given a no-cost extension for 2020-2021 since they were unable to fully spend their funds in 2019-2020 due to these disruptions.

Impact of COVID-19 Example

Submitted by a Facility School

“Our residential students remain in school during the pandemic and our day treatment students are at home. It was challenging to replicate life skills when students are not able to do the sorts of hands-on activities that we did previously. For example, I am not allowed to take the residential students off campus, so they are not able to gain the experiences in person. Our day treatment students are not here at all. I’ve tried to replicate the life skills as much as possible... but it is not as engaging as learning the skills in person.”

Respondents also reported **limited access to the internet/WIFI** for students and staff and a **decrease in student engagement/increase in disengagement** during the transition from in-person programming to blended or remote programming being a barrier to implementation.

Impact of COVID-19 Example

Submitted by a BOCES Grantee

“COVID-19 had a significant impact on our program due mostly to the fact that many of our students and families had multiple barriers to access school services remotely. Due to our location, many families do not have access to internet, or even cell phone service in their homes. Additionally, there is virtually no public transportation, creating another barrier for families to access hot spots, or offers to use the school internet, or pick-up devices. Many of our students live in families with multiple children in the home and very limited access to the use of a tech device.”



However, grantees also reported successes during this time. For example, grantees commonly reported that programs were able to **adapt programming to focus more on student and family engagement** as well as to **fill immediate needs**. Grantees maintained services to the greatest extent possible during this difficult disruption to direct, in-person student services (e.g., check-in calls and virtual visits, using multiple means to track down and engage truant students, and continued one-on-one support to address individual needs, social distancing home visits).

Impact of COVID-19 Example

Submitted by a Denver Metro Grantee

“COVID-19 and the tumultuous change to distance learning certainly challenged us as a school. However, we are proud of the way we met the challenges head on and continued to support students' and families' needs during that time. We were able to organize a massive campaign to contact all of our families and identify the supports they required. We met as a staff to learn about how we planned to respond to the change to online learning and how best to support students. We continued to nourish not only student's SEL needs but also maintained student learning. We also mobilized our efforts and used EARSS services to conduct home visits, bi-weekly calls, and several online family events. Counseling and wellbeing support continued online for both students and families, but a larger emphasis was placed on staff wellbeing as well.”

Some respondents also reported that relationships with students **improved due to increased connections with students**.

Impact of COVID-19 Example

Submitted by a Remote School District Grantee

“COVID 19 impacted the program services in that it was all done remotely. We did keep our mentoring program going through virtual and ten-foot apart walks and talks. The restorative practices coach continued to build phone/virtual relationships. I would say we got very creative in a good way and really got more personal and built better relationships. We called them every day. Every single student!”



Program Sustainability

Sustainability Over Time

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.

Facility School Grantees Sustainability

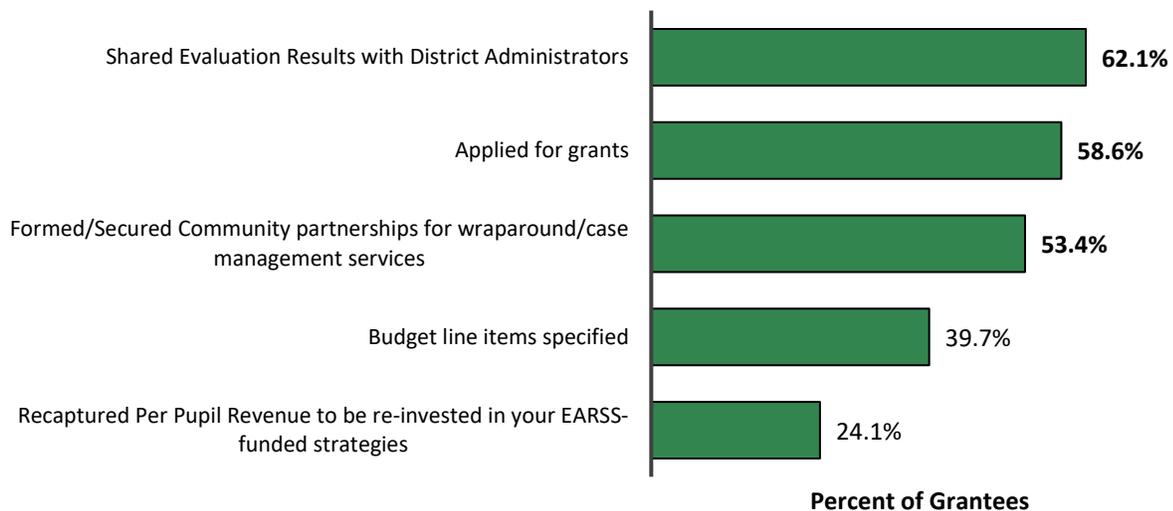
Facility school grantees were more likely to report sustaining the EARSS programs by applying for grants (45.4 percent of grantees) and forming/securing community partnerships for case management (45.4 percent of grantees)

On average, grantees report beginning sustainability efforts in year 3 and 4 of their grant. All fourth-year grantees reported that grant-funded strategies have been partially or fully absorbed on funds other than the EARSS program for 2020-2021. Future evaluations will focus on determining whether programs are sustained beyond the awarded years.

Most Common Actions Taken for Sustainability

Grantees were asked to indicate what actions were taken in 2019-2020 to sustain their program. The most common actions taken were related to sharing the results of this evaluation report with district administrators or boards (62.1 percent of grantees), applied for grants (58.6 percent of grantees), and formed/secured community partnerships (53.4 percent of grantees). **CHART 10** shows the most common sustainability actions taken by grantees.

CHART 10: MOST COMMON SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS TAKEN BY GRANTEEES (N=58)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, EARSS End-of-Year Reporting, 2019-2020



Conclusion

The EARSS program represents the state's primary investment in reducing expulsions and decreasing truancy and supporting engagement of expelled students and those at risk of suspension or expulsion mainly due to disobedient, defiant, or detrimental behavior. In the 2019-2020 academic school year, more than 7,000 students were served by the EARSS program. Through the years, grantees have explained that the students they serve often have chronic and/or severe challenges, such as adverse childhood experiences, homelessness, or foster care placement. These experiences and challenges can contribute to lower school engagement.² Research has repeatedly shown that low school engagement is linked to health risk behaviors (e.g., substance use), delinquency, poor academic achievement, suspension, expulsion, and school dropout.^{3,4,5}

Results from the current evaluation revealed that academic and attendance strategies (e.g., credit recovery); behavioral supports (e.g., counseling); and system approaches (e.g., professional development) contributed to positive results on performance objectives and student outcomes. Grantees reported that the most effective strategies that have positively impacted achieving their performance objectives included restorative practices, mentoring/positive relationship building, counseling, and essential skills building.

COVID-19 impacted programs in several ways (e.g., inability to track student progress, decline in services, fewer students identified for supports, discontinued program aspects) and barriers such as limited access to the internet and a decrease in student engagement were identified during the transition to remote programming. Although disruptions due to COVID-19 occurred, most grantees were able to adapt and leverage their programs to focus more on student and family engagement and filling immediate needs. Grantees were also able to achieve positive program and student outcomes. Many grantees reported meeting or making progress in meeting their program objectives, especially fourth-year grantees. Eighty percent of 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 99.4 percent of at-risk students served were not subsequently expelled while being served by the EARSS program, 82.9 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an out-of-school suspension, 81.3 percent of at-risk students served did not receive an in-school suspension, and 93.1 percent of truant students served did not have a truancy petition filed in court.

Research continues to show 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., school retention, test scores).^{7,8} The EARSS program provides opportunities to students who may otherwise not have these supports. 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.



Endnotes

- ¹ Rosa, J., Krueger, J., Werpy, A., & Kim, A. (2020). *Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant Program Evaluation Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/earss20182019legislativereport>.
- ² Robles, A., Gjelsvik, A., Hirway, P., Vivier, P. M., & High, P. (2019). Adverse childhood experiences and protective factors with school engagement. Available in *Pediatrics*, Volume 144(2), e20182945.
- ³ Dolzan, M., Sartori, R., Charkhabi, M., & De Paola, F. (2015). *The effect of school engagement on health risk behaviours among high school students: Testing the mediating role of self-efficacy*. Available in *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 205, Pages 608-613.
- ⁴ Wang, Ming-Te, and Jennifer A. Fredricks (2014). *The reciprocal links between school engagement, youth problem behaviors, and school dropout during adolescence*. Available in *Child Development*, Volume 85.2, Pages 722-737.
- ⁵ Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). *Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter?* Available in the *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*, Springer, Boston, MA.
- ⁶ Technical Report. *National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N)*.
- ⁷ Fabelo, T., Thompson, M., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D. Marchbanks III, M., & Booth, E. (2011). *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center.
- ⁸ Anderson, K. P., Ritter, G. W., & Zamarro, G. (2019). *Understanding a vicious cycle: The relationship between student discipline and student academic outcomes*. Available in *Educational Researcher*, Volume 48(5), Pages 251-262.
- ⁹ Novak, A. (2019). *The school-to-prison pipeline: An examination of the association between suspension and justice system involvement*. Available in *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Volume 46(8), Pages 1165-1180.



Appendices

Appendix A - Evaluation Methodology

Data Collection

Evaluation data were collected from all 59 grantees funded by the EARSS 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 2019-2020 school year. Four webinars were conducted to prepare 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 with 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 - 2019-2020 Funded Grantees

County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Kit Carson	1	Arriba-Flagler CSD #20	Kit Carson Co EARSS 2020-23	School District	\$111,000
Boulder	1	Boulder Valley	Boulder Prep High School EARSS Program	Charter School	\$89,957
Douglas	1	Douglas County	DCSD Student Assistance Grant	School District	\$337,027
Jefferson	1	Forest Heights	EARSS Program	Facility School	\$27,825
Saguache	1	Mountain Valley	EARSS 2020-2023	School District	\$91,365
Larimer	1	Poudre	Poudre District Smart Start	School District	\$177,039
Denver	1	Savio School	Savio Sustainability Program	Facility School	\$164,678
Conejos	1	South Conejos	EARSS 2020-2023	School District	\$162,210
Rio Grande	1	Upper Rio Grande School District	URGSD EARSS	School District	\$97,421
Adams	2	Adams County School District 14	Middle School Mentoring	School District	\$147,900
Adams, Arapahoe	2	Adams-Arapahoe 28J	APS Avenues Program	School District	\$120,657
El Paso	2	Atlas Preparatory School	At-risk Student Services	Charter School	\$169,659
La Plata	2	Durango School District	Restorative Practices Expansion	School District	\$266,139
Jefferson	2	Jefferson County R1	EARSS Program	School District	\$306,421
Boulder	2	Justice High School - Lafayette	EARSS Program	Charter School	\$213,000



County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Rio Grande	2	Monte Vista School District	Monte Vista Family Involvement	School District	\$109,331
N/A	2	Mount Saint Vincent	Refocus Restorative Practices Program	Facility School	\$182,204
Adams, Jefferson, Denver	2	Charter School Institute	New America School Attendance Casework	Charter School	\$225,823
Arapahoe	2	Sheridan School District	High School System of Support	School District	\$365,388
Boulder	2	St. Vrain Valley Schools	Credit Recovery	School District	\$256,468
Denver	2	Tennyson Center for Children	EARSS Life Skills	Facility School	\$141,866
Adams	2	Westminster Public Schools	Intensive Services - Case Management	School District	\$229,545
Saguache	2	Center Consolidated Schools	EARSS - Districtwide	School District	\$348,493
Denver	2	Charter School Institute	New Legacy	Charter School	\$187,412
El Paso +	2	Education reEnvisioned BOCES	Pikes Peak Online School	BOCES	\$126,967
Mineral	2	Creede School District	Restorative Practices	School District	\$128,244
Fremont	2	Fremont RE-2	ATS, RJ & Family Outreach	School District	\$175,600
Garfield	2	Garfield County School District No. 16	Wraparound Services	School District	\$250,000
Lake	2	Lake County School District	EARSS - LCIS and LCHS	School District	\$172,532
Saguache	2	Moffat Consolidated School District 2	EARSS - Districtwide	School District	\$152,205
Moffat	2	Moffat County School District RE-1	MCHS-EARSS Program	School District	\$304,626
Garfield	2	Roaring Fork Schools	Truancy Reduction	School District	\$366,992
El Paso	2	Roundup Fellowship	Behavior Intervention	Facility School	\$96,836



County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
BOCES	2	San Juan BOCES	BETA Program	BOCES	\$205,714
Weld	2	Weld County School District Re-3J	Wrap-Around Services	School District	\$289,820
Teller	2	Woodland Park School District	Restorative Practices	School District	\$145,134
Archuleta	3	Archuleta School District	K-4 Stepping Stones	School District	\$73,602
El Paso	3	Calhan School District	School of Challenge and Opportunity	School District	\$76,990
Denver	3	Charter School Institute	New America School - Tiered Behavior Intervention	Charter School	\$138,705
Denver	3	Denver Children’s Home	Bansbach Academy	Facility School	\$117,350
Denver	3	Denver Public Schools	Compass Academy	Charter School	\$150,000
El Paso	3	District 49	Community Engagement Advocate	School District	\$53,225
Arapahoe	3	Englewood School District	Secondary Restorative Practices	School District	\$124,346
El Paso	3	Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8	Welte Education Center Support	School District	\$73,675
Prowers	3	Lamar School District RE-2	EARSS Supportive Interventions	School District	\$277,779
Mesa	3	Mesa County Valley School District 51	Trauma Informed Behavior Coaches	School District	\$229,500
Fremont	3	Southern Peaks Regional Treatment Center	Phoenix Academy	Facility School	\$38,298
Denver	3	Tennyson Center for Children	ARC Framework	Facility School	\$75,188



County*	Year of 4-year Grant	Grantee	School or Program Funded, or District-wide Strategies	Grantee Type	Amount Awarded
Larimer	3	Turning Point - The Waverly School	The Bridges Program	Facility School	\$190,220
Chaffee	4	Buena Vista School District	McGinnis MS & Buena Vista HS	School District	\$12,500
Fremont	4	Cañon City School District	Cañon City High School	School District	\$40,744
Costilla	4	Centennial School District R-1	EARSS Program	School District	\$91,191
Teller	4	Cripple Creek-Victor RE-1	Mountain Alternative Education	School District	\$75,600
El Paso	4	Griffith Center for Children, Inc.	EARSS Program	Facility School	\$135,496
Gunnison	4	Gunnison Watershed School District	EARSS High Fidelity Wraparound	School District	\$25,000
Montrose	4	Montrose Co. School District RE-1J	Attendance Advocates	School District	\$103,030
Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande	4	San Luis Valley BOCES	EARSS Program	BOCES	\$104,416
Adams, Boulder, Denver	4	Shiloh House	Shiloh Academy	Facility School	\$116,054

* **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 Summaries

Below is a list of all grantees and summaries of their programs of the grantees who reported positive outcomes for 80 percent or more of students served and reported having met or exceeds at least 75 percent of their performance objectives in 2019-2020. **Note:** the below information was summarized from program descriptions submitted along with their initial grant applications.

Grantee	Program Summary
Buena Vista School District	The Affective Needs Program serves students grades 6-12 at McGinnis Middle School and Buena Vista High School with a Significant Emotional Disability (SED). The program focuses on teaching effective behavioral strategies for SED students.
Calhan School District	The academic support program serves about 28 percent of the district’s secondary students and those of neighboring districts at risk of expulsion, truancy, and dropout. The program provides credit recovery, vocational training, and counseling for students, parents, and families. The goal of the program is to foster greater student attachment to school and increase postsecondary readiness.
Cañon City School District	Canon City School District provides academic supports to students grades 9-12, such as academic tutoring, an alternative to suspension program, and truancy abatement efforts.
Creede School District	The district-wide restorative practices program and Career and Technical programs was implemented to replace punitive systems and to provide restorative practices and educational services to secondary students and parents.
Gunnison Watershed School District	Gunnison Watershed School District provides direct intervention supports and services (e.g., individualized planning and management) through High Fidelity Wraparound and behavioral interventions to the district’s highest risk students (preschool through 12th grade) who demonstrate multiple risk factors in addition to truancy and/or delinquency.
Lamar School District RE-2	Lamar School District provides at-risk students in Lamar High School (grades 9-12) and Lamar Middle School (grades 6-8) support services to avoid expulsion and reduce truancy such as early truancy intervention by an Individualized Service and Support Team and community collaboration to identify and resolve barriers in school attendance.
Mount Saint Vincent	The ReFocus Restorative Practices Program provides evidence-based restorative practices and trauma-informed services to child survivors of abuse, neglect, and mental illness. The program embeds restorative practices within the school by training and coaching teachers, mental health workers, students, and parents/guardians, and by providing in-school suspension to prevent students from missing school.
Tennyson Center for Children	Tennyson provides traumatized students at-risk for poor school performance and behaviors leading to suspension, expulsion, and/or habitual truancy with specialized services to reintegrate into a less restrictive educational setting, typically public school. The Pathways Program includes internship opportunities for 200 youth over four years ages 12+ in acquiring proven academic, life, and workforce skills.