



Regional Office of Education #3

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As a representative of the Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) as well as the Illinois Association for Regional Superintendent of Schools, I would like to recommend the points listed below be included in the commission for High School Graduation Achievement and Success report.

- Restore funding to TAOEP grants at FY09 level of \$20 million. The grant should also be non-competitive and targeted according to need to ensure greater statewide access. This will provide needed truancy services that will help prevent students from dropping out. Programs can also be designed and used to focus on 9th grade students. These will help our schools keep students enrolled at this important stage and assist schools with additional staff to monitor academic and behavioral success. Additionally, these funds also provide alternative programs for students who need even more personal attention towards preventing truancy and dropouts. These programs (could/do) provide classes aimed at the student receiving a HS diploma, not a GED®. They also work with the student's transition to post-secondary training or career choice. Programs could be run through the Regional Offices of Education to ensure state-wide coverage serving at-risk youth.
- Restore funding to RSSP grants at FY 09 level of \$18 million. These programs provide an alternative setting for suspended and expelled youth. They allow students who are disruptive to the regular school environment to be removed to an alternative academic environment - keeping other students safe and disruptive students off the street.
- These two funding sources have taken disproportionate cuts compared to other education funding items. It is extremely important that if this commission's goal is to be realized, current successful programs that reduce truancy, keep kids in school, and are already in place be funded at a level allowing them to not only continue their work, but expand to more students, more schools, and more areas.
- Reinforce and recommend the programs, classes, and practices that schools presently engage in to keep students in school. However, this cannot be done successfully with the current funding levels and/or the threat of reduced funding that our schools currently function under.

Julie Wollerman
Regional Superintendent of Schools
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