COLORADO
Department of Education

Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS)

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Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement
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Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) Grant Program

The EARSS program is authorized by Colorado Revised Statute 22-33-205 to fund grants for which the purposes are to provide education services and support services to expelled students, students at risk of being expelled, enrolled truant students and/or students at risk of being declared, or already are, habitually truant, and chronically absent students.

The EARSS program is considered to be an early intervention program. It's intended to assist school districts in meeting statutory obligations to identify students at-risk of disciplinary action (i.e. violating the Code of Conduct) and habitual truancy and/or chronically absent as early as possible so support plans can be made, in conjunction with the student's family, to assist the student with avoiding future disciplinary action.

Currently there are forty-five grantees.

- Cohort 2 has twelve grantees who are currently in year 4 of their four-year grant;
- Cohort 3 has five grantees who are currently in year 3 of their four-year grant;
- Cohort 4 has six grantees continuing from an 18-month Systems Development Grant planning period into year 1 of a three-year implementation grant; and
- Cohort 5 has seventeen grantees. Seven of these grantees are continuing work from cohort 1 and ten are starting new EARSS programs with a 1-year planning period before entering the implementation period of their grant.

Additional information can be found at the EARSS homepage: Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) | CDE

Board of Cooperative Education (BOCES)

Colorado River BOCES – Yampah Mountain High School

Leigh McGown (lmcgown@ymhs.org) – Cohort 2

Colorado River BOCES and Yampah Mountain High School, working through a student involved leadership team, support at-risk students in gaining work-based learning through internships and apprenticeships and support students with core academic work in school, leading to more engagement and progress towards the goal of graduation with the help of the Student Navigator and Re-engagement Coordinator.

San Juan BOCES

Robin Halloran (rhalloran@sjboces.org) – Cohort 5

Students across BETA's nine-district service area experience chronic absenteeism, disengagement, and disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline, increasing their risk of dropping out. The BETA program addresses these challenges by embedding trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and restorative supports within school MTSS frameworks. Using early warning indicators, BETA identifies students at risk and provides interventions that address academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and attendance-related needs. Through strong partnerships with families, Tribal and community organizations, and schools, BETA strengthens school climate, reduces disciplinary exclusion, increases engagement, and supports students' persistence toward graduation.

San Luis Valley BOCES

Katrina Ruggles (kruggles@slvboces@slvboces.org) – Cohort 5

San Luis Valley districts experience high rates of exclusionary discipline, with students with disabilities disproportionately impacted by out-of-school suspensions, resulting in lost instructional time and increased risk of disengagement. The program goal is to reduce out-of-school suspensions by 25 percent by the end of the 2029-2030 school year. SLV BOCES coordinates Regional Re-Engagement and Stabilization Support (RRSS) as a consistent, regionwide alternative to suspension within a multi-tiered system of supports. RRSS integrates targeted Tier 2 interventions and intensive Tier 3 supports, anchored by Foundations Academy, to provide stabilization, counseling, trauma-

informed supports, and academic instruction for students in grades K-12, supported by regional data review, coaching, and monitoring.

South Central BOCES

Denise Locke (locke-d@sc-boces.org) – Cohort 5

The EARSS program addresses high out-of-school suspension (OSS) rates among at-risk students experiencing chronic academic failure and absenteeism. The program's goal is to reduce OSS by 30% by the end of the 2030 school year, achieving an average annual decrease of 7.5%. Student and family advocates provide targeted interventions, restorative practices, and individualized support plans to improve behavior and academic performance. Advocates engage families and staff, support student reentry after OSS, and monitor progress to prevent repeat suspensions, helping students remain in school and succeed academically and socially.

Charter Schools

Adams-Arapahoe 28J – Vanguard Classical East

Pamela Polke (ppolke@vanguardclassical.org – Cohort 2

Vanguard Classical East (VCE) is an Aurora Public Schools K-12 District Charter School. EARSS funding will provide support to 75 6th-12th grade at-risk students. 44.5% are ELL with over 30 languages, primarily Ethiopian and Spanish. In order to better serve our students most at-risk of dropping out, suspension, or expulsion, we are proposing to hire an additional, highly qualified Advocate to build staff capacity and support student outcomes in the areas of academics, attendance, and social-emotional functioning.

Charter School Institute - Kwiyagat Community Academy

Jen Flaherty (jflaherty@utekca.org) – Cohort 3

Kwiyagat Community Academy, a charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute and operated by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, in Towaoc, Colorado, serves grades K-5 through, Nuchiu Achieves. Nuchiu Achieves increase academic achievement by focusing on academic interventions, increase student socio-emotional regulation by providing student and teacher support services and increase student attendance through increased family engagement and transportation services.

Charter School Institute – New Legacy Academy

Steven Bartholomew (sbartholomew@newlegacycharter.net) – Cohort 4

The EARSS Attendance Systems Updates grant gives NLCS an opportunity to work students and staff to explore available tools and resources, and define an attendance improvement plan that addresses students' barriers as effectively as possible. Working with all high school staff, students, and students' families, our student-led Legacy Leaders team, and mentorship opportunities, students will be key players in developing this robust, relevant, equity-based approach to improving attendance.

Colorado High School Charter – GES Campus

Clark Callahan (ccallahan@chscharter.org) – Cohort 5

By the end of 2030 school year, the attendance rate will improve to 86%. To achieve this, this school will need to improve the attendance rate by 3% each year. The added positions will increase CHSC's capacity and intentionality to deliver tailored and timely, well-coordinated interventions that improve attendance, engagement, persistence, and dropout prevention outcomes. The Interventionist will strengthen and formalize CHSC's Early Warning System and Persistence, Recovery and Reengagement by ensuring consistent identification, tracking, and follow-up for students at risk due to attendance, credit, or disengagement concerns, while expanding family outreach and reengagement efforts. The half-time Social Worker will address students' mental health and trauma-related needs through targeted social-emotional supports, crisis intervention, and connections to community resources.

Colorado High School Charter – Osage

Clark Callahan (ccallahan@chscharter.org) – Cohort 5

By the end of 2030 school year, the Attendance Rate will improve to 86.4%. To achieve this, this school will need to improve the attendance rate by 3% each year. The Interventionist will strengthen and formalize CHSC's Early Warning System and Persistence, Recovery and Reengagement supports by ensuring consistent identification, tracking, and follow-up for students at risk due to attendance, credit, or disengagement concerns, while expanding family outreach and reengagement efforts. The half-time Social Worker will address students' mental health and trauma-related needs through targeted social-emotional supports, crisis intervention, and connections to community resources. Together, these positions will increase CHSC's capacity and intentionality to deliver tailored and timely, well-coordinated interventions that improve attendance, engagement, persistence, and dropout prevention outcomes.

Harrison School District 2 – Eastlake High School

CJ Berry (cjberry@eastlakehs.net) – Cohort 5

Eastlake High School implements an attendance-focused EARSS program to reduce the chronic absenteeism rate by 20% by the end of the 2030 school year for students in grades 9-12. The program provides targeted attendance supports for chronically absent and habitually truant students through structured attendance monitoring, early warning indicators, tiered interventions, and individualized case management. Engagement-based strategies, consistent adult connections, and ongoing progress monitoring increase student attendance, instructional access, credit attainment, and persistence toward graduation.

School Districts

Adams-Arapahoe 28J

Paula Niemi (pmniemi@aurorak12.org) – Cohort 4

Adams-Arapahoe 28J EARSS Attendance Leadership Team will work with high schools regarding mentorship and highschool transition, in order to decrease chronically absent rates in the high schools.

Boulder Valley RE-2 – Arapahoe Ridge High School

Kiffany Lychock (kiffany.lychock@bvsd.org) – Cohort 6

Arapahoe Ridge High School's EARSS Engagement Program will increase attendance rates among students in grades 11 and 12 at Arapahoe Ridge High School. ARHS implements an Engagement Specialist (Attendance, Re-Engagement, and Transition Support) role focused on improving academic attendance, sustained engagement, and student persistence toward graduation or credential completion. The Engagement Specialist monitors academic course-level attendance, coordinates tiered interventions aligned with MTSS, and strengthens family engagement through consistent outreach and support. The program also provides structured re-engagement and transition support for students navigating school changes or pursuing GED/HiSET pathways, ensuring students remain connected to an educational pathway and reducing dropout risk.

Canon City RE-1 – Middle Years Program

Jesse Oliver (jesse.oliver@canoncityschools.org) – Cohort 5

To address exclusionary discipline at Canon City Middle School, this program aims to reduce behavior referrals by 20% and increase engagement for 175 at-risk students in grades 6-8.

The initiative implements a multi-tiered support system featuring a dedicated Engagement Specialist to facilitate student and family re-entry and truancy intervention. Simultaneously, the program builds staff capacity through Restorative Practices training and enhances school-wide classroom engagement using AVID strategies. By combining individualized family outreach with trauma-informed professional development and academic organizational tools, the program fosters a proactive school culture that prioritizes student retention over exclusion.

Canon City RE-1 – Harrison School

Lacey Ledoux (lacey.ledoux@canoncityschools.org) – Cohort 3

Canon City School District & Harrison School leadership propose to implement a comprehensive trauma-informed support program with an intentional emphasis on the 113 students K-8 identified for EARSS programming due to in-school and out-of- school suspensions. The proposed multi-tiered approach will focus on developing a school culture that emphasizes prevention, intervention, and support rather than punishment for at-risk students. Through trauma-informed interventions students will develop social-emotional skills, emotional regulation, and positive relationships thus empowering students to excel both academically and socially. This will result in improved academic outcomes, decreased suspension rates, and minimized dropout risk.

Cherry Creek School District 5

Teresa Cummins (tcummins2@cherrycreekschools.org) – Cohort 4

CCSD will create a consistent and clear model of comprehensive best practices and trainings for key middle school staff; work to build and enrich relationships with parents and families; and refine reentry plans and protocols. Overall, we will approach work through a prevention lens as we aim to create an equitable solution that honors and values resolving conflicts and restoring trust. CCSD utilizes a strategic approach to address the need for comprehensive programming to provide alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices including four key pillars built around: restorative justice practices, equity, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed care that are focused on promoting positive school climate, relationship-building, and healthy conflict resolution.

Denver County 1

Cori Canty (cori_canty@dpsk12.net) – Cohort 4

The DPS EARSS grant will work to improve both district and school attendance systems using improvement science methodology. The grant will be implemented in three phases: Needs Assessment, Improvement Planning and Implementation. Performance Measures and Outcomes incorporate EARSS grant requirements as well as additional measures important to the implementation of the grant. The overarching intent of the DPS proposal of the EARSS Attendance Systems Updates grant is to positively impact chronic absenteeism, attendance and habitual truancy rates for Denver Public Schools students.

Durango School District 9-R

Samantha Tower (stower@durangoschools.org) – Cohort 5

The goal of the Hub Therapeutic Program is to decrease exclusionary discipline, as measured by out-of-school suspension (OSS) counts, by 15% by the end of the 2030 school year through intensive, therapeutic intervention for expelled and at-risk students. The Hub operates as Durango School District 9-R's Tier III alternative placement program for students in grades 6-12 who are expelled, at risk of suspension or expulsion, or chronically disengaged due to significant social, emotional, and psychological barriers. The program integrates therapeutic supports, personalized academics, wraparound services, and coordinated transitions to improve behavior, increase attendance, and sustain student connection to learning.

Eagle County RE-50

Lisa Pisciotta (lisa.pisciotta@eagleschools.net) – Cohort 4

ECSD will establish a District Restorative Practices Leadership Team (RPLT) comprising the Restorative Practices Coordinator, Assistant Superintendent, school administrators, counselors, and teacher leaders. This diverse team will utilize their varied expertise in restorative practices and discipline policies to ensure a comprehensive approach that incorporates multiple perspectives. Funding from the EARSS grant will compensate 17 staff for their participation on the RPLT, recognizing the extra hours they will dedicate to this critical work. The team will consist of diverse stakeholders, including teachers, counselors, and administrators from each school, ensuring a comprehensive approach.

Englewood 1

Diana Zakhem (diana_zakhem@engschools.net) – Cohort 3

Englewood Schools will implement an intensive Credit Recovery and GED Lab for students attending Englewood High School (EHS) and Colorado's Finest High School of Choice (CFHSC). This lab will address the critical need for credit recovery options and GED preparation resources coupled with extensive wrap-around supports to ultimately increase high school completion rates and enable better academic and professional opportunities for our target population, including the support of students who are at risk of dropping out based on habitual truancy and chronic absenteeism.

Garfield County School District 16

Claudia Flores Cruz (cflorescruz@garfield16.org) – Cohort 2

Garfield County School District 16 hopes to implement services that meet the needs of students (K-12) with high acuity mental and physical health needs with the goal of improving their overall school experience. Garfield County School District 16 (Garfield 16) hopes to support these students and their families through the following roles: Family Meeting Facilitator, Student Advocate, and Student Support Services Coordinator.

Gunnison Watershed School District RE-1J

Megan Wells (mwells@gunnisonschools.net) – Cohort 2

Gunnison Watershed School District will provide intensive, individualized support to students to overcome barriers to attendance and academic growth, as well as provide restorative services for students who are assigned in-school suspension. Over 15% percent of the K-12 students in our district are identified as having some risk for academic failure and/or discipline referral. This targeted support intends to improve overall outcomes in youth behavior and functioning, family support/resources, and maintenance in our school setting.

Harrison School District 2

Josh Hobgood (jhobgood@hsd2.org) – Cohort 5

The goal of the EARSS program is to reduce dropout risk by improving attendance, behavior, academic engagement, and persistence for students who are expelled, at risk of expulsion, chronically absent, truant, or impacted by substance use. Harrison School

District 2 implements a wraparound, case-managed intervention model aligned to the Colorado Dropout Prevention Framework. Wrap Around Center Specialists provide tiered supports including goal setting, progress monitoring, family communication, collaboration with teachers and counselors, and coordination of academic, behavioral, attendance, and substance use supports. The program uses MTSS-aligned data review and referrals to deliver timely, individualized interventions that keep students engaged and on track for graduation

Lake County R-1

Kerri Quinlan (k.quinlan@lakecountyschools.net) – Cohort 5

Lake County High School's exclusionary discipline rates remain high, and disproportionate disciplinary patterns are significant and striking, particularly in the middle school years. Our EARSS program assesses gaps in our behavior support and discipline systems and supports school leaders in planning and implementing changes to ensure that students have the educational resources to succeed in school. The EARSS program supports and trains staff in systemic change, and a Middle School Engagement Specialist partners directly with students and families to improve students' individual outcomes.

Mesa County Valley 51

Dan Bunnell (dan.bunnell@d51schools.org) – Cohort 5

Mesa County Valley School District 51 implements an EARSS program to reduce repeated out-of-school suspensions among middle school students at Bookcliff, Grand Mesa, Mt. Garfield, and Orchard Mesa Middle Schools. The program's goal is to decrease OSS counts by 20% by 2030 through behavior-focused early intervention. EARSS provides individualized behavioral intervention plans, restorative reentry supports, wraparound case management, essential skills building, and positive staff-student mentoring for students at the highest risk of repeated exclusionary discipline. These coordinated supports reduce instructional loss, strengthen engagement, and prevent escalation to expulsion.

Montrose County School District RE-1J

Jack Christensen (john.christensen@mcsd.org) – Cohort 2

The Student Wellness and Engagement (SWE) model operates as a tiered intervention for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. The purpose of SWE is to provide prevention and intervention for attendance, behavior and social-emotional wellbeing through a district-wide mechanism that is operated out of the Engagement Center (EC). SWE was developed as a result of increased chronic absenteeism, behavior needs, and lack of engagement in all levels. As needs increase, SWE will expand to increase prevention and intervention strategies.

Poudre School District R-1

Kate Sherrill (ksherrill@psdschools.org) – Cohort 2

Boltz Middle School (BMS) and Fort Collins High School (FCHS) propose an EARRS-funded transition program, impacting up to 160 7th-10th grade students every year. A strong partnership between middle and high school provides a greater impact on student success with a proactive approach to improving graduation rates. Grant monies will support one (1) FTE Transition Counselor position: .5 FTE housed at Boltz Middle School and .5 FTE housed at FCHS in addition to programming that facilitates effective student transition and engagement.

Pueblo County School District 70

Chris Slobodnik (cslobodnik@district70.org) – Cohort 5

The goal of the D70 EARSS program is to reduce its exclusionary discipline rate by 10% by the end of the 2030 school year, as measured by the OSS counts. The grant employs a .5 Student Advocate and 2 Wraparound Case Managers to support eligible students, while addressing systemic change. This team focuses on three strategies to achieve the identified goal: wraparound case management, restorative practices, and essential skills building. By leveraging resources, establishing partnerships, and prioritizing sustainability, District 70 aims to reduce the incidence of discipline-related behaviors, which are risk factors for dropping out of school.

Roaring Fork School District RE-1

Anna Cole (acole@rfschools.com) – Cohort 2

Since 2018, Roaring Fork School District (RFSD) has been working with an EARSS grant to improve outcomes for at- risk students in regard to their behavior, attendance, and discipline. Despite significant efforts, we continue to struggle to serve our EARSS-eligible

students - especially students of color. This application seeks to expand and refine our current promising strategies and prioritize and implement culturally responsive, student- and family-centered, equitable strategies to serve at-risk students. Approximately 400 students in grades K-12 would be served.

Salida R-32

David Blackburn (dblackburn@salidaschools.org) – Cohort 5

The goal of the EARSS program at Horizons Exploratory Academy is to reduce the chronically absent rate by 50 percent by the end of the 2030 school year. HEA implements a schoolwide attendance and engagement system aligned to Attendance Works including establishment of an Attendance and Engagement Team, formal attendance protocols, early warning data reviews, and tiered interventions. The program uses daily and class-period attendance monitoring, coordinated student and family communication, professional development for staff, and community partnerships with Colorado Mountain College and SWAP to expand relevant instruction, graduation pathways, and career-connected learning. These structures support improved attendance, increased engagement, and sustained academic progress toward graduation.

School District 27J

Darcy Brown (dbrown@sd27j.net) – Cohort 5

By 2029-30, 27J will reduce its districtwide Chronically Absent rate by 11.88%, reducing that rate by 3.96% -- approximately 818 students -- each year. EARSS funding allows the district to implement a cohesive, standardized, and prevention-focused approach across all grade levels. This includes expanded early intervention at the elementary level, structured tiered supports at middle and high schools, collaboration with the 17th Judicial District, and sustained technical assistance to ensure consistent, equitable implementation districtwide.

Sheridan 2

Shelagh Burke (sburke@ssd2.org) – Cohort 3

The purpose of this application is to provide targeted support and interventions for approximately 260 secondary students (approximately 20% of students) in Sheridan School District who are struggling academically due to habitual absenteeism, or from

behaviors and social emotional functioning that resulted in out-of-school suspension or expulsion. This grant will provide resources to address the three identified goals, and help the students served by the grant to graduate and be college and career ready.

South Conejos RE-10

Josephine Montoya (jomontoya@southconejos.com – Cohort 4

Establishing protocol and training staff in in order to provide real-time behavioral support, de-escalating students allowing the students in crisis and returning to the classroom as quickly as possible, minimiing lost learning time.

St Vrain Valley School District RE-1J

Hilary Sontag (Sontag_hilary@svvsd.org) – Cohort 2

Longs Peak Middle School, Sunset Middle School, and Frederick High School will serve approximately 300 5th - 12th graders annually, utilizing a family-centered and culturally responsive approach to strengthen attendance and academic achievement among chronically absent students. Strategies will include case management, family engagement, home visits, attendance plans, counseling/mentoring, and restorative practices. The schools will also emphasize career/future-connected planning and research-based family engagement strategies such as the Academic Parent Teacher Teams program.

St Vrain Valley School District RE-1J

Fiorella Martinez (martinez_maria@svvsd.org) – Cohort 3

St. Vrain Valley Schools will utilize EARSS funds to serve chronically absent students at three schools: New Meridian High School, Niwot High school, and Skyline High School. The schools will serve chronically absent 9th and 10th graders, working with students and families to address root causes of chronic absenteeism while also increasing future focused, career-connected conversations and planning in alignment with students' individual career and academic plan (ICAP). The overall goals of the grant are to increase attendance, academic achievement, and effective planning for postsecondary/workforce goals.

Teller County – Cripple Creek-Victor School District RE-1

Tonya Copley (tcopley@ccvschools.com) – Cohort 5

Our exclusionary discipline rate is higher than we want it to be. We are employing well trained individuals in strategic positions to cement the implementation of REPS (Restore, Engage & Provide Support) in our school district. We are continuing the significant progress we have achieved over the past five years through the continuance of two Dean positions and we expect exponential growth in our success. With a focus on decreasing instances of OSS, we are moving our qualitative assessments into quantitative tools for more proactive identification of at-risk behaviors.

Upper Rio Grande School District C-7

Aaron Horrocks (ahorrocks@urtigers.co) – Cohort 2

Upper Rio Grande School District works with local programs to increase student achievement and address behavior concerns in our students. We will serve at least 60 students per year though clubs, mentorship, and essential skills building.

Facility Schools

Laradon Hall

Keenan White (keenan.white@laradon.org) – Cohort 2

The Laradon School supports K-12 students with intellectual/developmental disabilities with significant behavioral needs. We are developing an intensive literacy engagement and growth project to improve and strengthen the academic, behavioral and transition outcomes of our students. By diversifying and increasing literacy instruction and supports, we believe we will see an increase in literacy growth, higher levels of engagement in all learning, and grow the number of students returning to a less restrictive environment.

Roundup School

Kathy Stults (kstults@rup.org) – Cohort 2

In order to continue our progress in meeting our student's needs and the goal to rejoin their home school while reducing suspension, explsion, and truancy potential, Roundup

Fellowship will utilize EARSS funding to enhance our BCBA (Board Certified Behavioral Analysts) and RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) program. Through expanding and enhancing our program we will see imporved educational course performance, reduced out-of-school time, and improved social-emotional competence.

Tennyson Center for Children

Djuana Osby (djuana.osby@tennysoncenter.org) – Cohort 5

Tennyson Center for Children is implementing the Neurosequential Model (NSM) to better support students impacted by trauma who cannot succeed in traditional school settings. The goal for the program is to reduce behavioral crises, increase student engagement, and create a safe, supportive learning environment by addressing the root causes of behavior. NSM highlights how trauma affects brain development and guides interventions that build regulation, relationships, and learning readiness.

Third Way Center

Amy Thomas (athomas@thirdwaycenter.org) – Cohort 2

The Successful Futures Project will enhance the school performance, engagement, graduation rates, family/community involvement and vocational opportunities for 160 high school students at Third Way Center. These youth are considered the most at-risk in the state with numerous suspensions, expulsions and up to 30 previous human service placements. This project will include a variety of academic (arts and voc-ed) opportunities that will lead to an increase in GPA, an increase in course completion and thus in graduation rates, and an increase in prosocial skills leading to a decrease in suspension rates.