

ECHO
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

S.T.A.R.
QUEST ACADEMY
REGIONAL SAFE SCHOOL PROGRAM

PROGRAM GUIDE

ROE21

Program for At-Risk Students through
the Regional Office of Education #21

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The Regional Office of Education #21 provides education programs for At-Risk students in need of an alternative learning environment through the ECHO Alternative School and STARQuest Academy Regional Safe School Programs.

The information provided in this informational guide has been developed to share specific information regarding each education program. It is our hope that the information provided will clarify the procedures necessary to access the alternative and regional safe school programs. Our goal is to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to reach their maximum education potential through individualized services.

Both ECHO Alternative School and STARQuest Academy Regional Safe School Programs employ professionally licensed teaching staff, administrative staff, and a school social worker. Additionally, we collaborate with the SIU Care-A-Van, Centerstone, and Resilient Southern Illinois Network to provide additional resources for our students. Both programs have access to all of the resources provided by the ROE 21 such as professional learning and Partners Against Chronic Truancy Intervention Programs.

ECHO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

ECHO Alternative School is designed to meet the educational needs of at-risk students, grades 7 to 12. The program is available to any student residing in Franklin, Johnson, Massac, and Williamson Counties and is one of two alternative schools in Illinois to issue a high school diploma.

To participate in the Alternative School program, a student must be officially enrolled in his/her Home School District and be referred by the administration of their Home School. Students who will benefit from the educational structure and environment of ECHO may exhibit some but not all of the following characteristics:

- “At-risk” status due to social emotional factors that may affect the student’s ability to attain academic success, such as: frequent mobility, low self-esteem, and various family situations.
- Overage for grade level.
- Students who do not qualify for special educational services but would benefit from an alternative form of educational structure providing an individualized and remedial approach.
- History or current, incompatibility with traditional day school that may be indicated through truancy, minor discipline problems, and academic failure.

The ECHO Alternative Program is a Trauma Sensitive School with trained staff and a focus on the whole child:

- A trauma-informed school promotes a safe and welcoming climate.
- Seeks to create a structured and predictable learning environment that minimizes unnecessary trauma and loss reminders.
- Focuses on building positive and attuned relationships between teachers and students, and among school staff.
- Has anti-bullying and suicide prevention programs; and
- Uses balanced restorative practices approach to conflict and conflict mediation with appropriate disciplinary action.

Home Schools are responsible for recommending students who exhibit characteristics that lead the Home School personnel to believe the student may be successful at ECHO. Factors that should be considered are ability level, student support, parent support, discipline history, and willingness to participate in credit recovery. All students enrolled in ECHO will have an [Individualized Optional Education Plan \(IOEP\)](#) that will identify student goals and guide their education plans. It is the goal of the ECHO staff to do what is best for the individual student in cooperation with the student's Home School. The principal will work with the Home Schools when a student's success at ECHO may be questionable.

ECHO JR. HIGH ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM (7TH & 8TH GRADES)

Truants Alternative Optional Education Program (TAOEP)

It is important to recognize that the Project ECHO Program serving 7th and 8th grade students is a Truants Alternative Optional Educational Program (TAOEP). *Students being referred must also be referred to the Partners Against Chronic Truancy (PACT) Intervention Program.* A truant student most likely will have other referring identifiers such as a need for credit recovery. Information to identify a truant student is provided below.

TAOEP Primary Referral Reasons:

- **Dropout** - a child whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for reasons other than death, extended illness, or graduation and has not transferred to another school.
- **Chronic Truant** - a child who is absent w/o a valid cause for 5% + of the previous 180 regular school attendance days.
- **Truant** - a child who is absent w/o valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.
- **Potential Dropout** - a student whose school absences or pattern of school attendance impedes the student's learning or contributes to the student's failure to meet learning standards.

TAOEP Secondary Referral Reasons:

- **Credit Deficiency** - a junior high or high school student who has not earned an adequate number of credits for his/her appropriate grade level toward graduation.
- **Court/Law Mandated Participation** - a student whose participation in the TAOEP has been either recommended or required by a law enforcement agency or court.
- **High Failure Rate** - a student who failed at least 20% of academic courses in the previous grade reporting period.
- **Physical or Emotional Health Problems** - a student having physical or emotional health conditions that place him/her at-risk of dropping out of school.
- **Tardiness** - a student who comes to classes late, repetitively.
- **Teen Parent** - a student who is a teen parent and who has not received a high school diploma or GED.
- **Other Offenses** - please list

S.T.A.R. QUEST ACADEMY REGIONAL SAFE SCHOOL PROGRAM (RSSP)

North Campus serves 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students

South Campus serves 6th - 12th grade students

S.T.A.R. Quest Academy Regional Safe School (RSSP) serves expulsion-eligible and suspension-eligible students in grades 6-12. The statewide program began serving Illinois students in FY97 as established by 105 ILCS 5/13A of the Illinois School Code providing a system of alternative education programs for disruptive students. Because of the actions of a small number of disruptive students, local school districts face increasing problems in maintaining a safe environment for all students. Expelling or suspending disruptive students puts them on the street, which may increase safety and advance the learning environment inside the school premises but does not serve the educational needs of the expelled or suspended students or the community's need for public safety.

The purpose of the RSSP is twofold:

1. To increase safety and promote the learning environment in schools and
2. To meet the particular educational needs of disruptive students more appropriately and individually in an alternative educational environment

The RSSP is designed to meet the educational and personal growth needs of students who have been disruptive to the learning environment or have the potential to be harmful and may pose a threat to themselves or their peers within the school setting. The program is available to students residing in Franklin, Johnson, Massac, and Williamson Counties. To participate in the S.T.A.R. Quest program, a student must be officially enrolled in his/her Home School District and be referred by the administration of their Home School based on **student eligibility**:

- The student has been suspended at least twice for a period of 4-10 days for gross misconduct.
- The student has been arrested by police and/or remanded to juvenile or criminal courts for acts related to school activities.
- The student is eligible for disciplinary reassignment pursuant to violation of school district policies.
- The student has been involved in repetitive incidents of misconduct that can be demonstrated as serious, repetitive and/or cumulative.
- The student has been previously remediated at least once by the local school district

Behavior modification training and other counseling, life skills training, community service, and work-based learning experiences are aspects of RSSP. Computerized learning systems may supplement the primary academic instruction or may be used as the primary method of instruction. STARQuest Academy is a Trauma Sensitive School with trained staff and a focus on the whole child:

- A trauma-informed school promotes a safe and welcoming climate.
- Seeks to create a structured and predictable learning environment that minimizes unnecessary trauma and loss reminders.

- Focuses on building positive and attuned relationships between teachers and students, and among school staff.
- Has anti-bullying and suicide prevention programs; and
- Uses a balanced restorative justice (a.k.a. restorative practices) approach to conflict and conflict mediation with appropriate disciplinary action.

Home Schools are responsible for recommending students who exhibit characteristics that lead them to believe the student may benefit by enrolling in the S.T.A.R. Quest program. It is the goal of S.T.A.R. Quest to do what is best for the individual student in cooperation with the student's Home School. The Principal will work with the Home Schools when a student's success in the S.T.A.R. Quest Program may be questionable. The RSSP has a set of guidelines, based upon best practices for alternative programs. Each student will have an [Individual Optional Education Plan \(IOEP\)](#) to guide their educational and behavior goals that include positive outcomes including reduction in disruptive behavior, regular attendance, coursework completion and credit received, advancement in grade level, return to home school, grammar, or high school graduation.

RSSP Referral Reasons:

- **Suspension Eligible** - a student who has been suspended at least twice for a period of 4-10 days for gross misconduct or involved in conduct that can be demonstrated as serious, repetitive and/or cumulative.
- **PA 97-0495 Suspended and Administratively Transferred** - a student who was suspended in excess of 20 days.
- **Expulsion Eligible** - a student who was expulsion-eligible due to serious/repetitive/cumulative conduct and is transferred in lieu of expulsion.
- **PA 97-0495 Expelled and Administratively Transferred** - a student who was expelled and administratively transferred.

RSSP Primary and Secondary Referral Reasons:

- **Alcohol** - liquor law violations
- **Disorderly conduct** - disruptive behavior
- **Drugs** - (excluding alcohol and tobacco) illegal drug possession, sale, use/under the influence
- **Fighting** - mutual altercation, battery, and/or physical altercation
- **Harassment/nonsexual** - physical, verbal, or psychological
- **Insubordination** - disobedience to school staff or school personnel
- **Robbery** - taking of things by force or theft
- **Threats** - including school threats
- **Vandalism** - damage to school or personal property
- **Violation of school rules** - disobeying school policy
- **Weapons possession** - firearms and other weapons
- **Other Offenses** - please list

ISBE Guidelines for the Regional Safe Schools Program:

https://www.isbe.net/Documents/guidelines_rs.pdf

REFERRAL PROCESS

1. A school refers a student to ECHO Alternative School or STARQuest Academy RSSP by completing the referral form.
 - a. [ECHO - Referral Form](#)
 - b. [STARQuest Academy - Referral Form](#)
2. An administrator from ECHO/STAR Quest Academy will evaluate the referral and determine proper placement. Proper referral documents shall include:
 - a. ECHO/STARQuest Academy referral form
 - b. Updated / Current transcript
 - c. One year attendance data
 - d. Documentation of any truancy interventions/services (letters, conferences, referrals, etc)
 - e. One year of behavior information
 - f. Any previous Standardized Test data and/or current academic levels in reading and math
 - g. Most recent grade reports
3. If the administrative staff evaluates and determines that a student is eligible for placement, a student enrollment meeting will be scheduled with the student, family, sending school (if applicable), and Project ECHO/STAR Quest Academy staff. During this meeting the student's Individual Optional Education Plan ([ECHO IOEP](#)) ([STARQuest Academy IOEP](#)) will be developed.
4. When conditions of placement are agreed upon, the student is transferred into the alternative placement program. First day of attendance will be determined by administrative staff.
 - a. The student's enrollment in SIS will identify ECHO or STARQuest as the Serving School
 - i. A SIS Enrollment/Exit Enrollment Form: ([ECHO SIS Enrollment Form](#)) ([STAR Quest North SIS Enrollment Form](#)) ([STAR Quest South SIS Enrollment Form](#)) will be sent to the Home School to provide the correct dates of the student's entry and exit dates.
5. A student transitioning back to the sending school will be assisted and monitored by the ECHO Alternative School or STAR Quest Academy team.