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Bulldog's RISE “Responsive Individualized Student Education”

Presented to the Board of Education
March 23, 2023

A large graphic of a yellow sunburst with a semi-circle at the bottom. The text 'Bulldog's RISE' is written across the sunburst in a blue, sans-serif font. The text has a reflection effect below it.

Bulldog's RISE

RANTOUL CITY SCHOOLS EXISTS TO BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY BY EDUCATING OUR STUDENTS.

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Why does RCS need an alternative program?

Need Statement:

Since we have returned full-time after covid, we have seen a significant increase in disruptive behaviors and extremely complex mental health issues from students PreK-8th grade. These behaviors, coupled with a teacher shortage and community stressors, are placing our ability to maintain a safe and effective learning environment at risk.

Fact: RCS has great needs academically (6% of students met or exceeded in ELA and 6% met or exceeded in Math, IAR, Illinois Report Card, 2022). Approximately 90% of students in our middle school are performing 2-3 grade levels below their current grade in both reading and math, (2022 Benchmark data).

Fact: RCS has many additional risk factors such as high mobility rate (19% compared to the state's 7.6%) and chronic absenteeism (47.3% compared to the state's 29.8%) which have a negative impact on our students' social emotional well being. Of our graduating 8th grade class, less than half (47%) have attended RCS since Kindergarten and of our 5th grade class, a little more than half (57%) have attended RCS since Kindergarten.

“Existing research finds that students can suffer psychologically, socially, and academically from mobility. Mobile students face the psychological challenge of coping with a new school environment. Mobile students also face the social adjustment to new peers and social expectations. Research has demonstrated that mobility is related to misbehavior and youth violence—it is easier to commit crimes against strangers”- State University, 2022,

(<https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2461/Student-Mobility.html>).

Fact: Students are asking for help. In the Fall of 2021, RCS started administering a new screener called Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS), through Illuminate Education. This screener gives us data on students' mental, social, emotional and behavioral status. The assessment has two pieces, a teacher survey and a student self-reflection survey. This fall, teacher survey data reported that 29% of student's at RCS are under some risk or high risk for mental, social, emotional or behavioral concerns. Students 2nd - 8th grade self-reported survey data indicated that districtwide, 39% of students are under some risk or high risk for these same areas. Disaggregated data shows that students in second grade (60%), 3rd grade (48%) and seventh grade (39%) are self-reporting the greatest needs.

Fact: RCS staff, especially our classroom teachers and special education staff, are being heavily impacted by these factors. In 2022, almost ¼ of our entire staff left the district, with 32% being certified/licensed employees. Nearly all of them stated that the behavioral challenges in our district were impacting their own mental health and wellness and that they were leaving the profession or taking jobs at schools with different demographics. Our current staff retention rate is 70% compared to the state average of 87.6%.

“Students haven't been in the classroom for over 500 days and it shows. They have forgotten how to respond to teachers and that alone is taking a toll on teachers. Everyone is in survival mode and it is a struggle for people to see beyond themselves which is lending itself to a hostile work environment, which is nobody's fault” - RCS Jr. High Teacher, Mental Health Survey 2021

Fact: Families need support to better understand mental health issues. Often, family and community members respond negatively toward those students who have significant self regulation and behavioral issues. These responses demonstrate an overall misunderstanding of trauma and mental health. In addition to cursing at staff, families have publicly advised others to “call the police on that child” and “tell your child to slap the fxxx out of that little girl and stomp her face in” and “put all of the bad kids in one class and let them go after each other” These extreme responses demonstrate a need for expanding mental health education to families.

Fact: Ongoing training that supports cultural sensitivity, racial perceptions, and bias is needed. Of the 1,093 discipline referrals submitted in 2021-22, 50% of those were issued to black students and 65% of those black students were given In-School suspension as a consequence. The five most common referrals were for: Physical Aggression, Disruption, Insubordination, Verbal Aggression, and Harassment/Bullying. RCS is in the top 20% of school districts in Illinois with racial disproportionality in Out-of-School suspensions. (Racial disproportionality, defined as the overrepresentation of students of color or white students in comparison to the total number of students of color or white students, which must be calculated using the same method as the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights uses.)

Fact: Our Social Work and Psychologist-to-student ratios are just below the state average, but with our extreme needs, this is not enough. RCS employs 9 full-time employees to support student mental health and wellness for our 1695 students. We have a 1:188 teacher/student ratio for social workers.

Fact: Clinical programs designed to support students with extreme mental health and behavioral issues are full. RCS currently sends 10 Special Education students to Behavioral Health programs located in Champaign-Urbana that have clinical staff trained to support students with high needs. Unfortunately, these programs are full and unable to take on more students. The READY program in Champaign that is for general education students with behavioral and mental health issues is also full. RCS currently has 0 students attending READY. This means that students at RCS with extreme behaviors are not able to receive the level of services that they need which leads to ongoing trauma for the student and regular disruptions for other students and staff.

“As the United States approaches 2 full years of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental illness and the demand for psychological services are at all-time highs—especially among children. While some children benefited from changes like remote learning, others are facing a mental health crisis. Whether kids are facing trauma because of child abuse or loss of a family member or everyday anxiety about the virus and unpredictable routines, they need even more support now—all amid a more significant shortage of children’s mental health resources”- American Psychological Association, Jan. 2022

Proposed Solutions: RISE will support and improve our Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for Behavior/Mental Health

- **Tier I:** Ongoing training that supports cultural sensitivity, racial perceptions, and bias; Mental health education workshops for families
- **Tier II:** Increase social work and psychological supports with an emphasis on increasing staff diversity
- **Tier III:** Create alternative educational programming to support our most vulnerable children

Mission and Philosophy

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed alternative school is to meet the needs of every student within the district who may benefit from a nontraditional school environment. We know some of our students have unique needs and currently our traditional educational environments are not equipped to meet these students' needs.

Rationale: Rantoul City Schools District is uniquely positioned to create its own system which would alleviate the need for transfer to ROE safe schools and decrease the amount of in-school and out-of-school suspension in the district. We know that the pandemic, socioeconomic distress, cultural and other factors have created an opportunity gap for some of our most under-resourced students. This gap will not be overcome within a traditional school setting, but rather a setting where students are better supported individually and responded to holistically.

A review of records from the 21-22 school year shows that there were **34** students between 6th and 8th grade that received 5 or more days of out-of-school suspension at JW Eater Junior High School. There were **6** students who withdrew to homeschool. Each of these students would have benefited from an alternative learning environment. This would leave space for 20 more voluntary transfers who would benefit from a non-traditional educational environment. These transfers would help support the RCS school district in regaining attendance, increasing motivation, academic support and supporting the whole child.

Vision: The vision of the Bulldog's R.I.S.E. program is to "Create an educational environment that gives every student what they need to succeed."

Mission: Bulldog's R.I.S.E. exists to create a community where: Students will have opportunities to connect education to real world experiences. Students will be able to express themselves fully and effectively. Suspension out-of-school will be used only as a last resort to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Performance Outcomes

90% of the students who participate in RISE, will demonstrate a reduction in the number of extreme mental health and self regulation challenges (Physical aggression, disruption, insubordination, verbal aggression, and harassing/bullying) and increase their emotional wellness and academic success.

Goal 1: Increase educational options for middle grades students to support individual student needs

- **Objective:** Students will be given an opportunity to attend alternative programming- online only or a hybrid that includes therapeutic mental health support services.
- **Objective:** Online only students will follow a self led pathway using iReady Reading and iReady Math and participate in self directed Problem Based Learning through Defined Learning. A certified teacher will check in with on-line only students daily to discuss their schedule, answer questions and provide mini-lessons as necessary. Hybrid students will utilize the online pathways on-site, while also engaging in small group and one-on-one College and Career Readiness units, social-emotional lessons and therapeutic mental health support.

Instrument/Method used to collect data: Individual student learning pathways data, attendance records, student goal setting, reflection journals, and grades.

Performance Outcome: 95% of students who attend RISE Online or through a Hybrid learning option with at least 85% consistency will maintain regular attendance, meet academic requirements established by the state, and express contentment/satisfaction about their mental health and wellness.

DRAFT 03-06-2023

What will the alternative program look like?

The Main Things

- Students in grades 5-8.
- Staff to Student ratio of 1 to 5.
- Short-term 30-40 students. Long-term 60 students.
- Increased Social Work and Therapeutic Support.
- Focus on including the family in the process.
- Classes that teach academic skills but with real-world, hands-on applications.
- Flexible class choices based on student and staff interests and needs.

School Day Logistics

Proposed School Day*

Start Time	End Time	Scheduled Activity
9:20 Doors Open	9:25 Class Begins	
9:25 am	10:00 am	Morning Meeting
10:00 am	10:50 am	Class
10:50 am	11:40 am	Class
11:40 am	12:15 pm	School Lunch as Curriculum
12:15 pm	1:05 pm	Class
1:05 pm	1:55 pm	Class
1:55 pm	2:25 pm	Group
2:25 pm	2:30 pm	Dismissal

*This proposed school day is intended to show what the school day could look like and does not necessarily represent what the school day will look like.

Class Structure Classes will consist of one teacher and one teacher's aide. Students will be in class for approximately 50 minutes and then go on to their next class. They will have three core classes and one online class. Core classes will most likely encompass units of study from math, reading, and science, with online programming being utilized to supplement live instruction in the classroom.

Typical School Day

- Students will enter the school through the designated entrance within the building.
- Students will all be brought together in the morning for Morning Meeting. This meeting will serve as a community builder and check-in daily with students. Students will also eat breakfast during this time.
- Students will have differing schedules, but will rotate through their classes. They will rotate through four different classes. Students will not need a passing period.
- There will be embedded social emotional learning in their educational classes. Classes will also be focused on college and career readiness. Students will be served breakfast and lunch within the school day.
- Students will receive transportation to and from school. Dismissal from school will be to the buses. Staff members will ride the buses home with students.

Flexible Class Choices

The lower staff to student ratio will allow RISE to provide a different menu of courses that are more hands-on and more applicable to real life situations. Classes would continue to meet all academic requirements expected of students in the typical school setting. Below are examples of coursework students in RISE may experience.

Social Media by Design This class combines the key curricular components of digital photography, web design, marketing, video editing, and ethics to teach students how to make and market content for social media. Students will show mastery of the skills through creating content for the school social media accounts.

Culinary Arts This class combines culinary arts with the food service industry to teach students valuable skills about the foodservice industry. Students will incorporate key curricular components from math (measurements, fractions, conversions), science (heat, bacteria, chemical reactions, etc.) Students will show their mastery of the skills through preparing daily meals for the student body. Presentations of food origins, nutritional value, and preparation techniques will be displayed during lunch time.

You and Your Body This class incorporates key curricular elements of mindfulness, yoga, and social emotional learning with biology, psychology, and the arts. Students will learn about the body, the brain, and how it responds to stress, trauma, and new situations. Students will learn coping strategies, calming techniques, and mindful practices that they can apply. Students will connect these strategies to the specific parts of the brain and body that they are affecting to determine the why behind these practices.

Online Educational Programming (Defined Learning, Lexia, I-Ready, Mystery Science) This class will incorporate an online curriculum that will focus on integrated, individualized and real-world Reading, Math, Social Studies, Science, and PE.

Financial Literacy and Consumers Education This class will incorporate key curricular elements of economics, financial literacy, consumers rights and responsibilities, and important life skills. This class will expose students to real world situations in which they will have to apply their financial knowledge.

Group Group will consist of targeted interventions based on their specific identified needs through SEL assessments taken upon entry into the program. Groups will not exceed ten individuals and they will be led by a trained staff person.

Morning Meeting Morning Meeting will open with an address to all students. This address will be intended to help build community within the school. After the first ten minutes, students will break up into their “teams” and will get their behavioral feedback from their student success advisor and receive an update on progress towards goals. Students will hear the feedback given to individual students as a group, and they will be able to discuss in their group opportunities to make progress on their goals.

Employment and Staffing

Staffing

In order for RISE to be successful in meeting the needs of each and every student, a well-trained, trauma informed staff is necessary. The following will identify the staffing needs and costs of the alternative school. Note: This is the proposal for initial staffing. In order to maintain an appropriate ratio of staff to students, as the program increases in enrollment, additional classroom teachers and paraprofessionals will be needed.

Director of Alternative Programs (1)

The Director of Alternative Programs will serve as the principal and will be responsible for day to day operations of the alternative program. The principal will complete duties which include: Enrollment, Communication, Scheduling (Staff and Student), Staff Supervision, Discipline (staff and student), Compliance, Student supervision, and other duties as assigned by the Superintendent.

Administrative Secretary (1)

The administrative secretary will be responsible for duties as assigned by the principal. These duties may include: Attendance, communication, reporting, filing, compliance, and other duties as assigned by the principal.

Therapists (1)

The Therapist will be responsible for meeting the social emotional needs of the students through group, individual sessions, and schoolwide initiatives. We anticipate that the therapist will be grant funded and provided by a third party.

Social Worker (1)

The Social worker will be responsible for developing and implementing social emotional curriculum, responding to mental health concerns, group counseling sessions and schoolwide initiatives. The Social worker will also be the Cooperating teacher for the SW interns.

Classroom Teachers (3)

Classroom teachers will be responsible for delivering content, giving feedback both academically and behaviorally, ensuring a safe learning environment, and communicating with families about student progress.

Paraprofessionals (3)

Paraprofessionals will aid classroom teachers in instruction, behavior management and student success. Paraprofessionals will also have other duties such as supervision, behavioral interventions, and other duties as assigned. At least one paraprofessional should be English-Spanish bilingual.

Custodian (.5)

Responsible for the cleaning and general upkeep of the facility used by RISE.

CARE (3)

The current K-5 alternative program, CARE, will be housed in the same facility as RISE.

Transportation

- If the school is housed in a current RCS school or a centrally located facility, regular transportation rules will apply.
- If the school is housed in a non-RCS school site that is not centrally located, transportation will be provided for all students in RISE. We anticipate using a bus stop system and not offering door-to-door transportation. Families may decline transportation.

Clubs, Activities, and Sports

- Students in grades 6-8 are able to participate in clubs, activities, and sports at JW Eater according to the eligibility requirements that apply to all students. Transportation to and from JW Eater are not the responsibility of RCS.
- Students in grade 5 are eligible to participate in clubs, activities, and sports at their neighborhood/home school according to eligibility requirements that apply to all students. Transportation to and from the neighborhood/ home school are not the responsibility of RCS.

Who will be able to attend the alternative program?

- All students may be considered.
- Four pathways for consideration:
 - Behavior
 - Attendance
 - Alternative to Retention
 - Parent-Family Request
- All pathways must involve the family and school in the decision making process.
- No changes to CARE process.
- To start, we anticipate staffing to accommodate 30-40 students.
- The initial pool of students would be determined at the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Process for Entry

Option 1: Placement/Transfer

RISE may begin as an alternative placement for students who are exhibiting behavioral or attendance concerns within their homeschool environment as well as an alternative to grade-level retention. Once all reasonable school based behavioral interventions have been exhausted and documented a student may transfer into the RISE. (*We believe that for most students, their home placement will be the most beneficial for that student. We recognize that for some students, a traditional educational environment may not meet their needs.*)

- **Students who have been suspended out of school for no less than 5 days in a current school year.** *We believe that when students are suspended out-of-school, it can send negative messages to students about their ability and worth. There will be instances where students are suspended due to behavior that they are not regularly exhibiting. These students are not ones that are eligible for transfer to RISE. We also believe that being in school is the best way for students to learn to change their behavior. When a student misses significant amounts of school due to behavior, we are doing that student a disservice. Therefore, we must look for an alternative to the environment in which the student has been unsuccessful.*
- **A Review of Data will have been conducted by the referring school administrator, RISE administrator, and the Board Certified Behavioral Analyst.** *We believe that each student should be reviewed before they are transferred to the alternative school. An extensive review of data and systems will take place prior to the change of placement for that student. We also believe that disciplinary action can and oftentimes does inequitably target our Black and Brown students. A review of disciplinary data, interventions, and interviews will help determine if RISE is an appropriate placement for the student.*
- **An Entrance Interview will be conducted between the RISE Team and the family of the student to determine appropriate fit into the program.** *We believe that for there to be any success within our program, we have to have a strong relationship between the school and home. We know that our families are our most important resource and that without them we will not be successful in meeting the needs of our students.*

Option 2: Application

Parent-Family and/or Student may apply to the alternative school if stakeholders conclude that the student might be best served in a non-traditional educational setting.

- Parents-Families and/or Students who wish to apply and be voluntarily transferred to RISE will be able to do so. These students will fill out an application with their home school. The students who want to go to the program will be given a comprehensive overview of what the program entails. The process for voluntary entry will be as follows:
 - The home school administrator will review the application, meet with the family, and determine if this is the best fit for the student.
 - The home school administrator or designee will forward the application request on to the RISE administrator.
 - The administrator or designee will reach out to the family of the student to set up an interview for entry into RISE.
 - Voluntary transfers will be admitted based on the availability of space within the program.

Process for Exit

The RISE Program will have a process for exit from the program. *We believe that for most students, their home placement will be the most beneficial for that student. We also believe that there are many factors which affect the ability of a student to be successful in their homeschool environment. With these beliefs, Bulldog's RISE Program exists to provide behavioral and social emotional interventions with the purpose of reintegrating students into their homeschool environment.*

RISE Placements will be no less than one academic semester. *We believe that any effective intervention takes 6 to 8 weeks to show progress. We also believe that in order to build community, students need to feel a sense of belonging and consistency.. In order to reach this, we would like for students to be able to show consistent success within our educational environment and be able to apply it to other environments as well.*

RISE Students will be graded Academically and Behaviorally. *We believe that consistent and accurate feedback is the best way to learn. We will apply this both academically and behaviorally. Students will be graded on their behaviors daily within the program. Students will have a student success advisor who will go over their behavior grades with them every morning during morning meetings. Students will have an opportunity to discuss their behavior, learn from their mistakes, and improve their behavior daily. Students' behavior will be tied to incentives within RISE.*

Students will be dismissed from RISE to their homeschool through a specified process. *The process will include a combination of the following components: behavior charting, social worker goal progress, attendance, behavior plan, and exit interview with the Bulldog team and board certified behavioral analyst. Students dismissed from the program will continue to be monitored by the home school with communication to the RISE Team.*

Other Considerations

When will this happen?

The program will begin at the start of the 2023-2024 school year, and will follow the regular school district calendar. The school day start and end times are not finalized, but an example schedule is 9:20 AM-2:30 PM.

Where will this program be?

- The final location has not been determined.
 - Considering current school district facilities.
 - Considering third-party facilities.
- Administration prefers a location that is just for RISE.
 - Any location will need to be able to house at least five classrooms and offices for support staff. Fitting this into existing school facilities without disrupting current attendance boundaries would be difficult.
 - RISE also needs to be able to operate independently in order to support the needs of the students without being disrupted by what is happening in a typical school. Likewise, we do not want RISE to be disruptive to a one of our typical schools.
 - Why is it important for RISE to have its own location? In order to be as successful as possible, students need to be able to build community, develop relationships, and take pride and responsibility in their environment. The environment in which the students are learning is one of the most important resources we can give our students. For example, students currently enrolled in Bulldog Academy at JW Eater are in a classroom in a hallway and perceive a label that they are different from other students in the building. Furthermore, the Bulldog Academy is at capacity and we are seeing behaviors that could be avoided if we had the ability to separate students during their school day. Students with challenging behaviors need staff that are devoted to them and their needs. They need staff to wrap around them and make specific bonds. In a traditional learning environment, there are too many demands on staff members to be able to devote the time, compassion, energy, and understanding to these students.
- Any location chosen must be within RCS boundaries.

Why not do this for all kids?

- Most children can be successful in a traditional school setting and do not need specialized programming.
- There is a significant additional cost to running a school this way.
 - More staff are needed to lower the staff-to-student ratio.
 - Investment in additional mental health services.
 - Transportation.
- Lack of available staffing state-wide.
 - Even if we had the money to do this type of program for all students, state-wide, there are not enough people to fill the positions we would need.

Budget Considerations

DRAFT Budget

RISE PROJECTIONS	FY24	FY24 New Costs	FY25	FY25 New Costs
Salary	\$ 605,796.84	\$ 605,796.84	\$ 630,028.71	\$ -
SHIFT Salary from Other Buildings	\$ (245,413.11)	FY24 One-Time Costs	\$ -	FY25 One-Time Costs
Benefits	\$ 145,084.29	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 150,887.66	\$ -
SHIFT Benefits from other Buildings	\$ (61,894.20)	FY24 Total Cost	\$ -	FY25 Total Cost
Transportation	\$ 107,592.00	\$ 1,078,473.13	\$ 111,895.68	\$ 1,035,612.06
SHIFT Transportation	\$ (30,000.00)		\$ -	
Instructional Subscriptions	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 20,800.00	
SHIFT Instructional Subscriptions	\$ (10,000.00)		\$ -	
Misc Instrucitonal Supplies	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00	
SHIFT Misc Instructional Supplies	\$ (3,000.00)		\$ -	
Property Rental	\$ 60,000.00		\$ 60,000.00	
Utilities	\$ 50,000.00		\$ 52,000.00	
Initial Construction	\$ 50,000.00		\$ -	
Initial Technology	\$ 15,000.00		\$ -	
Initial Capital Equipment	\$ 15,000.00		\$ -	

All numbers listed above are DRAFT.

- Existing staff positions from CARE and Bulldog Academy will be transferred into this program and those numbers are represented in the SHIFTS of Salary and Benefits. Salary estimates are based on the average of all current employees in a particular position type. Benefits estimates are based on the salary estimates and assume that the employee will take RCS health benefits.
- Transportation costs are preliminary. Current transportation for students in CARE and Bulldog Academy are represented as the SHIFT in transportation expenses.
- Property rental and utility expenses are not yet settled and, for example, \$60,000 does not represent a negotiated amount of rent with a property owner. If RCS does not rent a third party property, this expense will not be necessary; likewise, utility costs would not be additional.
- Initial construction costs are estimated based on leasing a third party facility that may require construction of classrooms/office space.
- Initial technology and capital equipment will likely be necessary regardless of the facility.
- FY25 assumes a 4% increase in variable costs.

Appendix: Illinois School Code detailing the need for alternative schools.

(105 ILCS 5/13A-1)

Sec. 13A-1. Legislative declaration. The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

- (a) The children of this State constitute its most important resource, and in order to enable those children to reach their full potential, the State must provide them the quality public education that the Constitution of the State of Illinois mandates.
- (b) The State cannot provide its children with the education they deserve and require unless the environment of the public schools is conducive to learning.
- (c) That environment cannot be achieved unless an atmosphere of safety prevails, assuring that the person of each student, teacher, and staff member is respected, and that none of those people are subjected to violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, or otherwise confrontational or inappropriate behaviors that disrupt the educational atmosphere.
- (d) In most schools, although the disruptive students who are the primary cause of inappropriate educational environments comprise a small percentage of the total student body, they nevertheless consume a substantial amount of the time and resources of teachers and school administrators who are required to address and contain that disruptive behavior.
- (e) Disruptive students typically derive little benefit from traditional school programs and may benefit substantially by being transferred from their current school into an alternative public school program, where their particular needs may be more appropriately and individually addressed and where they may benefit from the opportunity for a fresh start in a new educational environment. At those alternative school programs, innovative academic and school-to-work programs, including but not limited to the techniques of work based learning and technology delivered learning, can be utilized to best help the students enrolled in those schools to become productive citizens.
- (f) Students need an appropriate, constructive classroom atmosphere in order to benefit from the teacher's presentations. Students cannot afford the classroom disruptions and often become frustrated and angry at the inability of their teachers and schools to control disruptive students. As a result, they drop out of school too often. Furthermore, even if these students stay in school and graduate, they have been deprived by their disruptive classmates of the attention to their educational needs that their teachers would otherwise have provided, thereby diminishing their receiving the education and skills necessary to secure good jobs and become productive members of an increasingly competitive economic environment.