

Illinois Student Assistance Program Data 1999 – 2013

Prepared by the Student Assistance Center at Prevention First. Collected by the Illinois Association of Student Assistance Professionals and the Student Assistance Center at Prevention First.

Academic and Behavioral Outcomes with Student Assistance Programs

How do SAPs measure outcomes?

Student “outcome” data refers to changes made by the student during the time the student is receiving Student Assistance services. SAP outcome data reflects increases or decreases in some area, and is considered continuous outcome data, rather than dichotomous data. Student Assistance outcomes do not neatly fit into a ‘yes improved’ or ‘no didn’t improve’ dichotomous category of one common threshold. SAPs measure progress in various levels of increments for individual students based upon both risk factors and resources particular to that student. There are normally numerous measurement points and multiple categories that are measured using a variety of measurement processes.

Improvement ‘outcome’ data is considered real time continuous data in that measurements are typically made during the service period (as opposed to following the service period) to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and make adjustments as needed. This data is then aggregated at the end of the year for program reporting purposes.

SAPs in all schools do not use the same standardized measurement tool for students. Rather, SAPs implement a variety of measurement tools and procedures in order to best capture accurate data based upon needs, resources, and response. The focus is assisting the student and using data gathering as a secondary activity to determine intervention effectiveness. These measurement processes are consistent with other measurement practices implemented nationally. These tools include:

- monitoring forms that have been aligned with multi-disciplinary problem-solving team best practices,
- observation notes,
- support group and other program feedback forms,
- review of archival data including attendance, homework completion, test grades, quarterly grades, behavior incidents or policy violations,
- reports from community service providers
- self-reports from students
- staff reports in meetings documented through meeting notes

What is helpful in understanding the data?

In reviewing the outcome data, several factors will be helpful to keep in mind.

1. Students are identified for a variety of reasons including attendance, health, academics, behavior, or other reasons. The percentages given for improvement show that percentage out of 100% of all students identified for SAP services, not just those referred for a specific category such as behavior. Many students identified do not need academic improvement or behavior improvement. Therefore, in reviewing the percentages of identified students improving in any area, one cannot conclude that the remaining percentage of students needed to make progress in a particular area and did not.
2. Academic and behavior problems are often indicators of larger life issues impacting the student's ability to learn and perform well in school. Therefore, measuring student progress becomes challenging when trying to isolate progress for just academics or just behavior. These two indicators of progress, while important outcomes for educators do not summarize the total potential progress for students working with Student Assistance. Students may progress in a number of areas that are not reflected in academics or behavior.
3. The reporting tool asked respondents first to report the total number of students progressing in more than one area which included academics and behavior. . The reporting tool also asked respondents to report the percentage of students who progressed in one specific area. Totals were typically more than 100% because students could demonstrate progress in more than one area.
4. Students who maintained status after working with the SAP is also an important indicator of success. At times, students may be under extreme duress from multiple risk factors such as homelessness, loss or other changing family dynamics, chronic or terminal family illness, etc. and being able to stay in school, maintain functioning with others, and keep academics at the same level is an accomplishment. Examples of maintaining status might include students who are at-risk of dropping out yet stay in school due to Student Assistance services, or honors students who are experiencing changing family situations

What does the data show us?

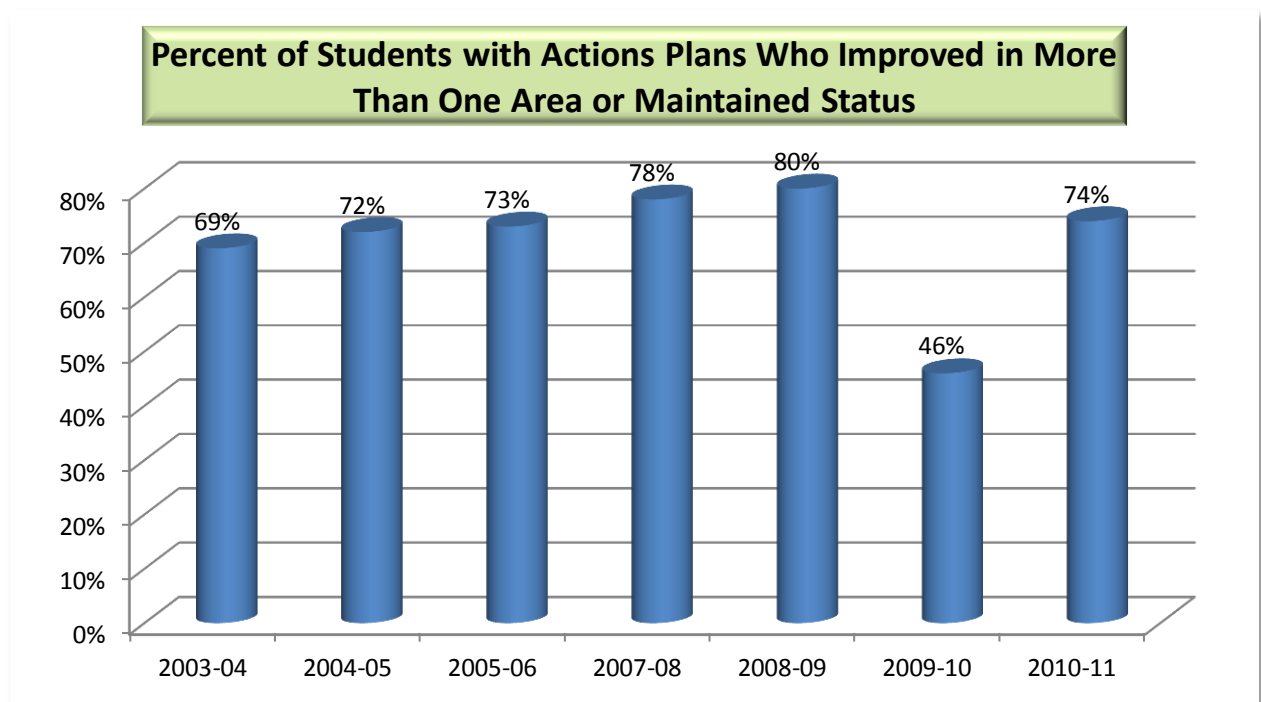
Positive student outcomes are evident for students who participate in the Student Assistance Program. Students who participate in a SAP are expected to attend school, behave and progress academically. The specific student school outcomes examined in the current study are student attendance, suspension (for behavior or drug/alcohol policy violations), and promotion, retention and graduation status after their SAP referral. Referred students show positive improvements in attendance, a decrease in discipline problems (as measured by additional suspension rate) and positive promotion and graduation status after their SAP referral.ⁱ

Illinois Student Assistance Program data confirms the findings of the University of Pittsburgh data (cited above) with Illinois Student Assistance leaders and coordinators consistently reporting progress in

academics, behaviors, and attendance along with all other categories for students receiving SAP services throughout the reporting years 2004 through 2011. Data is not available for years 2000 through 2003.

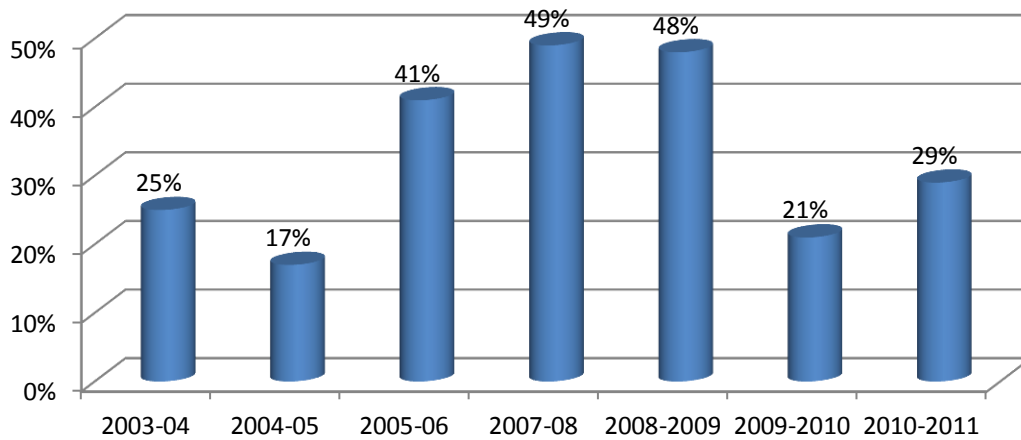
The data chart “Percent of Students with Action Plans Who Improved in More than One Area or Maintained Status” represents those students each year who improved or who were able to maintain status in more than one area regardless of the reason for referral.. The data shows between 70 and 80 percent of students with intervention / action plans improve in multiple areas or maintain status while receiving Student Assistance services. It is unknown why the percentage differs for the 2009-2010 school year. Both the high percentage over the report years and the consistency of the percentages tells us that Student Assistance makes a difference in success rates for many students receiving those services.

The data in the “More Than One Area” chart is not broken into the multiple measurement categories. Respondents are not asked on the measurement tool to differentiate the various categories of improvement because the data gathering process would become more time consuming than the service delivery itself.

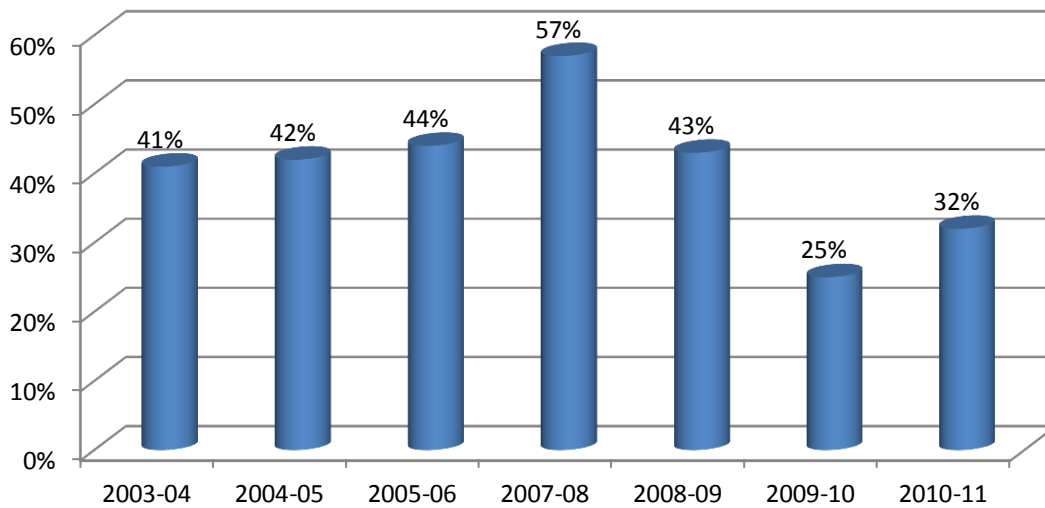


Each of the following charts represents individualized categories in which students improved. Data shows a significant percentage of referred students progressing in behavior, academics and attendance. The percentage is compared to 100% of students receiving Student Assistance services for any reason. It is not accurate to think of the percentage as 100% of students referred for behavior when reviewing percentages for behavior, etc.

Behavior Improvements in Referred Students for Whom an Intervention Plan was Developed

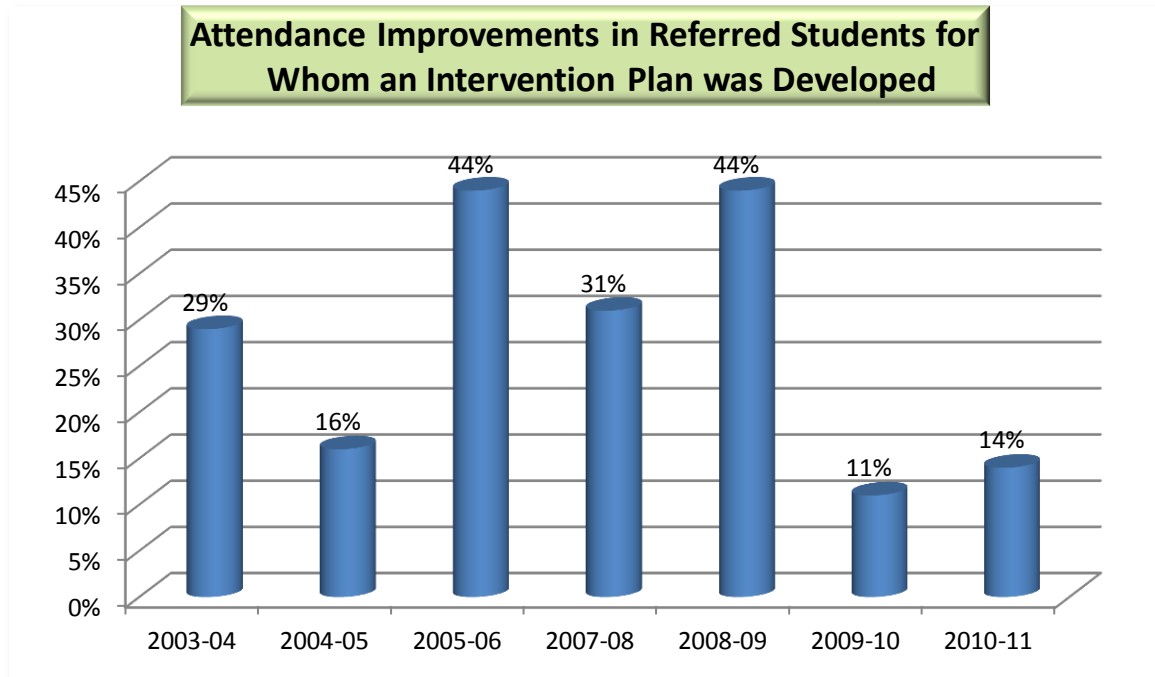


Academic Improvements in Referred Students for Whom an Intervention Plan was Developed



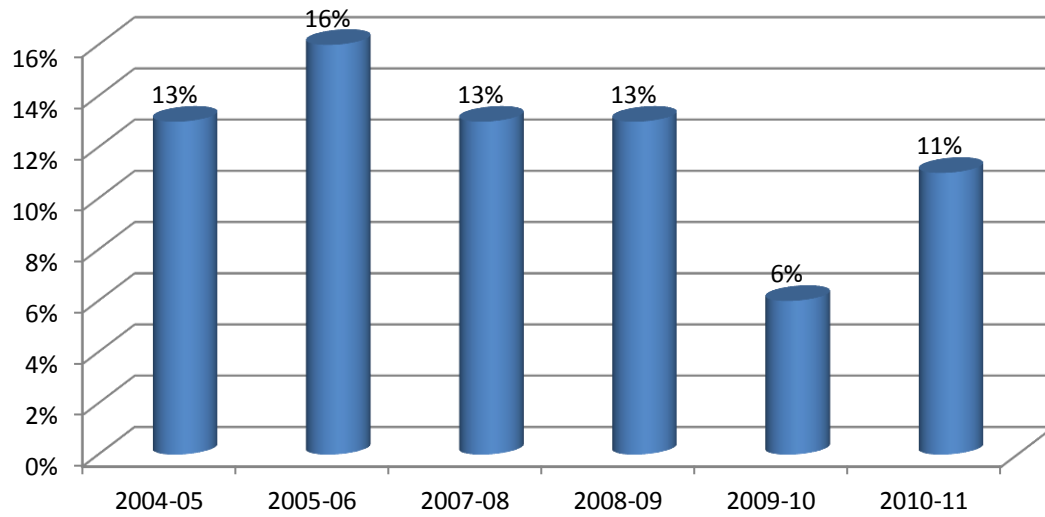
One factor that may impact percentages in the last two reporting years is implementation of Response to Intervention, especially at the K through 6th grades. SAPs were beginning to report implementation of Response to Intervention in the 2009-2010 school year, with more middle and high schools reporting implementation in the 2010 school year. SAPs were in the process of working with their school's Response to Intervention coordinators to develop protocols that would coordinate rather than duplicate services. Many students identified for Student Assistance services have academic problems without an

existing skill deficit, and are not in need of academic or behavior skill interventions. Home situations and other life situations are the mitigating factors rather than academic or behavior skill deficits. These students need other types of support. As the supports begin to help the student, progress in behavior and academics is also noted in those areas.

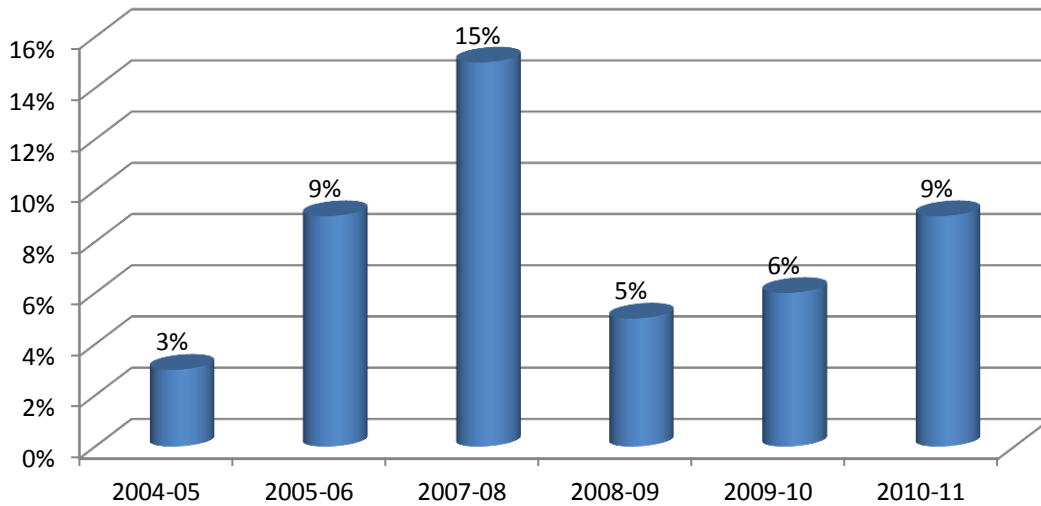


Data about student improvement with substance use and mental health is limited to federal confidentiality protections, and therefore can be gleaned by student self-report or by agency shared information with the appropriate releases in place. When substance use or mental health treatment is part of a conditional policy violation remediation plan, successful completion must be reported to the school, and often specifically the Student Assistance Coordinator. Again, appropriate information sharing documents must be in place. Additionally, if there is no identified person on the Student Assistance team who is listed as part of the confidentiality release to share data, the SAP may not be aware that a student is receiving protected services, and would not have access to that data to report. These data gathering conditions are noted by SAPs as restricting the amount of data that can be gathered and reported. The data is still useful in understanding the role of Student Assistance with community substance use and mental health services.

Percentage of Students Who Reported Improvement with Substance Use Problems



Percentage of Students Reporting Improvement with a Mental Health Issue



Overall, the data shows us that Student Assistance services do improve outcomes for many students receiving those services.

ⁱ Fertman, et al. Retrospective Analysis of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Outcome Data: Implications for Practice and Research, 2003, Executive Summary.