



Communities  
In Schools

**Communities In Schools National Evaluation  
Five Year Summary Report**

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# CIS National Evaluation: Five Year Summary Report

## Introduction to CIS

Begun in 1977, Communities In Schools (CIS) is a national federation organization with about 200 affiliates currently in 25 states and the District of Columbia. It annually serves nearly 1.3 million students in 3,400 schools<sup>1</sup>. At the heart of the organization is a mission to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to say in school and achieve in life. Communities In Schools has evolved its focus from its founding principles grounded in The Five Basics<sup>2</sup> a set of essentials that every child needs and deserves — to its current direction focused on integrated student services, described as “interventions that improve student achievement by connecting community resources with both the academic and social needs of students<sup>3</sup>.”

Communities In Schools prepares students for the future by removing barriers to school success. The organization places a dedicated staff member inside partner schools to identify students at risk of dropping out. Communities In Schools engages community partners and volunteers to effectively and efficiently address both the academic and human service needs of students. The result is improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, retention rates and graduation rates. To understand Communities In Schools, it is necessary to describe the structure and functioning of the network and the Communities In Schools (CIS) model.

## The CIS Network

Communities In Schools is a national federation of independent 501(c)3 organizations. The network consists of a national office, state offices, and local affiliate offices across the country. These entities work in concert to promote success across the network with a focus on local impact for schools, students, families and communities. Each “level” of the network plays a critical role in promoting local success.

## The CIS National Office

The national office is primarily responsible for:

- Developing, enhancing and effectively communicating the CIS model across the network and to a national audience (i.e., marketing the “message” of Communities In Schools);
- Identifying best practices and providing validation of the CIS model through research and evaluation;

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<sup>1</sup> See “Communities In Schools At a Glance” fact sheet at [www.communitiesinschools.org](http://www.communitiesinschools.org) for additional information on the CIS network.

<sup>2</sup> The CIS Five Basics are: 1) A **one-on-one relationship** with a caring adult; 2) A **safe place** to learn and grow; 3) A **healthy start** and a healthy future; 4) A **marketable skill** to use upon graduation; and 5) A **chance to give back** to peers and community.

<sup>3</sup> Communities In Schools (2008). Communities In Schools and The Model of Integrated Student Services: A proven solution to America’s dropout epidemic. [www.communitiesinschools.org](http://www.communitiesinschools.org).

- Bringing together members of the network to foster collaboration, information sharing and a sense of belonging to a national organization;
- Establishing national partnerships that translate into funding and resources (local partnerships, volunteers) that can benefit the state offices and local affiliates;
- Advocating for national policy that includes integrated student services in education reform.

During the National Evaluation, the national office has carried out these responsibilities and undertaken several strategic and proactive initiatives<sup>4</sup>, including: obtaining resources for increasing local capacity (i.e., establishment of the Impact Fund); establishing a process for innovation (e.g., Performance Learning Centers and Think College); developing clear strategies for branding and communication through a four-pronged strategy for communication including internal awareness, external awareness, media relations, and special events; and developing, testing and rolling out the Total Quality System (TQS) (see sidebar).

**CIS' Total Quality System**

In 2007, the CIS national office launched its Total Quality System, which is an integrated set of standards and policies designed to: redefine the stages of CIS affiliate development; update expectations for effective nonprofit management through new CIS organization and business standards; define a unified and coherent CIS model through new CIS site operations standards; strengthen the CIS brand and identity; ensure CIS affiliates receive appropriate assistance and support at all stages of development; and ensure network-wide accountability and brand protection.

While these overarching strategies or efforts are important and recognized as such by the network, it is the day-to-day and ongoing support provided by the national office that resonates most with the network as critical to their success (see How and Why Does Communities In Schools Work?).

**State Offices**

There are currently 13 state offices across the CIS network. According to state and executive directors, the “ideal” role or purpose of the state office is to communicate the direction of the national office and to inform the direction of the local affiliates. In general, there is agreement in the network that the primary role of the state office is to support the local affiliates and therefore, the support provided by the state office is defined by the needs and priorities of the local affiliates. Essentially, the state office promotes the visibility of CIS across the state and operates in a customer service role to ensure the growth, sustainability and effectiveness of the local affiliates and their partner schools. The importance of the state office to the success of CIS is presented under Why Does Communities In Schools Work?

**Local Affiliates**

There are approximately 200 local affiliates across the CIS network. Each affiliate is responsible for the following: developing community partnerships, resource development and fundraising, marketing and public relations; managing and developing CIS sites, ensuring the provision and/or brokering of quality youth programming and services; and data collection, evaluation and reporting. It is the local affiliate,

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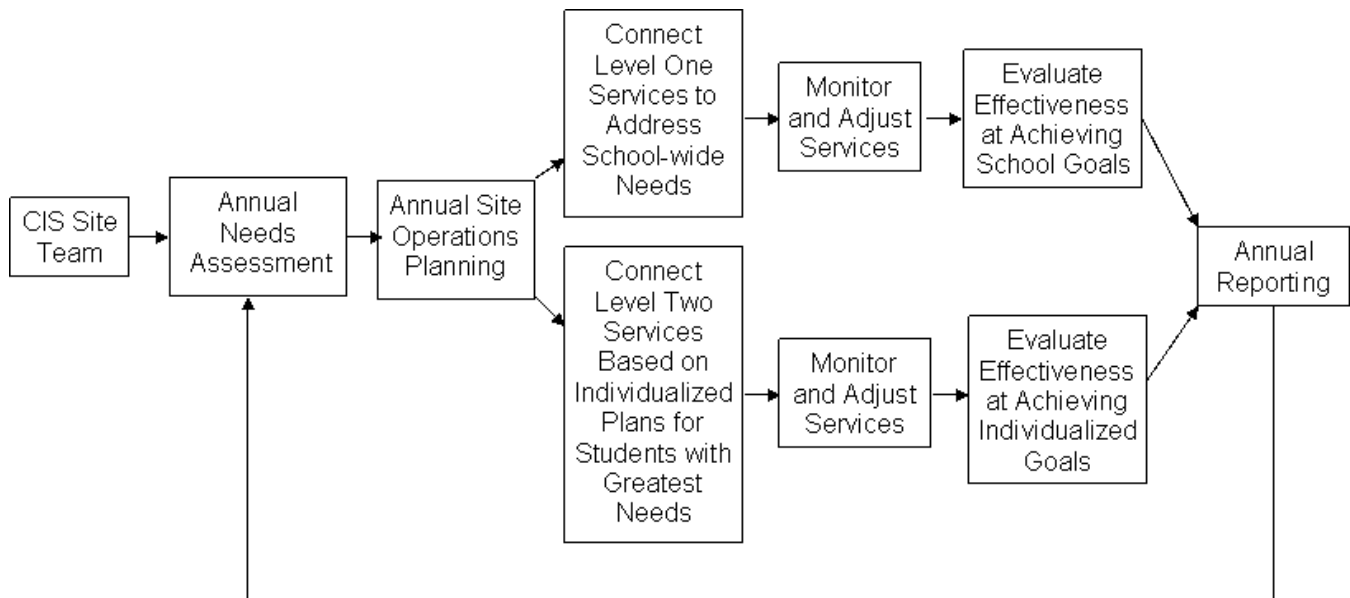
<sup>4</sup> More information on the strategic initiatives undertaken by the national office during the course of the National Evaluation is provided in the External Comparison Study: Volume 3.

through the site coordinator, that is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the CIS Model within a school.

### The CIS Model

Not surprisingly, it is within the schools where Communities In Schools ultimately has its greatest effect. Communities In Schools is able to bring about needed changes at schools and in the lives of students through the implementation of the CIS model by a trained site coordinator. As demonstrated in Exhibit 1, the CIS model is implemented throughout the school year by a CIS site team, led by a CIS site coordinator. The site coordinator is responsible for planning and managing all CIS operations at the school. The site coordinator works closely with school administrators, staff and teachers in this effort. The primary components and processes of the CIS model include needs assessment (conducted annually to determine the needs of the school); planning (reflected in a comprehensive site operations plan designed to address the identified and prioritized needs); delivery of evidence-based services (includes whole-school, Level One services and intensive and targeted case-managed or Level Two services); regular monitoring and adjustment of plans; evaluation of effectiveness in achieving school and student goals; and reporting (to the local affiliate, school leadership and other stakeholders). The CIS model is defined both by the cyclical process of continual assessment and improvement and the delivery of both school-wide and individualized, case-managed services. The importance of implementing the CIS model, as depicted in Exhibit 1, is illustrated by the National Evaluation.

**Exhibit 1: The CIS Model**



## Introduction to the National Evaluation

Understanding the impact of the work of the CIS network required an evaluation design that could look at both Communities In Schools as an organization and the work that Communities In Schools undertakes at the state, affiliate and school levels. The National Evaluation design, developed by ICF International, addresses this complex set of evaluation issues. The design, as depicted in Exhibit 2, is a multi-level and multi-method approach that examines the impact of Communities In Schools at three levels—the organizational level (i.e., base level), the school level and the student level. It studies the CIS model and how that model affects the students, families and communities where Communities In Schools is operational. The complexity of the CIS network structure and the size of its operation required the use of this type of “cutting edge” design. To date, no other youth serving organization with a structure and mission similar to Communities In Schools has endeavored to undertake such an in-depth and cross-cutting examination of its processes and outcomes (see Exhibit 3 for further detail on each study component). Further, the evaluation positions Communities In Schools to be able to benchmark its work against other dropout prevention programs targeting similar populations but not necessarily addressing this issue as a comprehensive, whole school and community effort. In this report, we endeavor to erase the boundaries depicted in Exhibit 2 and provide a comprehensive set of confirmatory findings and lessons learned from this five-year evaluation effort.

**Exhibit 2: National Evaluation Design**

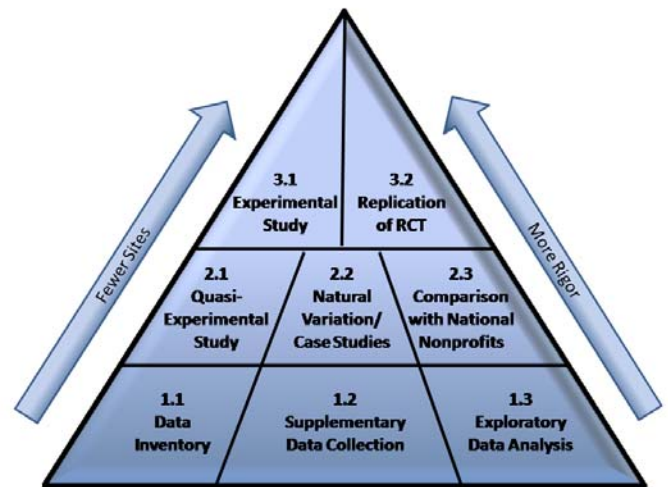


Exhibit 3: Description of All Major CIS Evaluation Studies 2005-2010	
Study	Description
1.1 Data Inventory	The National Evaluation team started the evaluation by assessing all data that had been collected by Communities In Schools to date. These data were inventoried and gaps in the data were identified. Most notably, the evaluation team identified the need for site-level process data.
1.2 Supplementary Data Collection	The National Evaluation team collected site-level process data (a need identified in study component 1.1) in January 2006. <b>The Critical Processes Survey</b> was collected from 1,894 CIS schools.
1.3 Exploratory Data Analysis	Using data from the <b>Critical Processes Survey</b> , the National Evaluation team developed a typology of CIS schools based on the fidelity of school-level implementation, as defined by CIS’ Total Quality System (TQS). “High implementers” are those CIS schools that implemented the model with fidelity. We developed a scoring rubric which was field-tested and validated, that measured implementation in four domains: planning, needs assessment, service delivery, and monitoring and adjustment. A score of 70 percent or above was considered a high implementer. “Partial Implementers” had scores below 70 percent.
2.1 The CIS School Level Study: The Quasi-Experimental Study	The <b>School Level Quasi-Experimental Study</b> was launched in Year 2 of the evaluation and completed in Year 3. It provides information on school-level outcomes using a quasi-experimental design. Data collection was limited to seven states containing the largest number of CIS schools (i.e., Texas, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Washington and North Carolina). Using a highly rigorous and sophisticated matching technique (called propensity score matching), 602 CIS schools in these seven states were matched with 602 comparable non-CIS schools and analyses were undertaken to compare school-level outcomes yielding an estimate of the effect of implementing the CIS Model within a

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Study	Description
(See Volume 1)	school. Outcomes from the study were measured at baseline and three years post-implementation.
2.2 The CIS Cross-Network Study: The Natural Variation Study and Case Studies (See Volumes 1 – 2)	<p>The <b>Natural Variation Study</b> is intended to determine what key attributes separate the most successful CIS schools from the schools that did not report success on a given outcome. To conduct this study, a Site Coordinator Survey was administered to quasi-experimental study participants in order to obtain more in-depth process data that were available from the Critical Processes Survey. Analysis for the Natural Variation Study simply involved the comparison of CIS schools that improved on a given measure with those that did not. Because response rates were low (249 surveys returned out of 602 quasi-experimental study participants), this study is based on a limited sample sizes.</p> <p>In-depth site visits were conducted at eight CIS affiliates to develop cross-network <b>Case Studies</b> focusing on how Communities In Schools is creating permanent change with respect to the students, schools and communities it serves. The study examined the perspectives of a wide range of key stakeholders connected with Communities In Schools as well as data on demographics, staff and partner roles and responsibilities, student and parent perceptions of the CIS program and other attributes of Communities In Schools in three schools served by each affiliate. Findings from these case studies provide valuable information for Communities In Schools to encourage the adoption of common factors and strategies that have been identified to have an effect on schools and students.</p>
2.3 The External Comparison Study (See Volume 3)	The <b>External Comparison Study</b> compares how Communities In Schools operates in five key areas relative to peer organizations with similar missions and organizational structures—specifically youth serving organizations that employ a federation model. <sup>5</sup> The study provides important descriptive and other data on the similarities and differences between CIS’ structure and operations and those of other similar federations.
3.1 and 3.2 The Randomized Controlled Trials in Jacksonville, FL, Austin, TX, and Wichita, KS (See Volumes 4 – 6)	<p><b>Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)</b> represent the most rigorous studies of the evaluation design. The RCTs explore student-level outcomes in an effort to answer the evaluation question: What is the impact or value-added of CIS case-managed services on student-level outcomes including school engagement, attitude toward school, relationship with a caring adult, commitment to school, pro-social behavior, academic performance, and involvement in community? Two RCTs began in the 2007-2008 school year in six high schools in Austin and two middle schools in Jacksonville. The studies follow 2 cohorts of students over a two-year period to explore the impact of CIS case-managed services on individual student behavior and performance. A replication of the RCT began in Wichita in one high school in the 2008-2009 school year. This study followed one cohort of students for two years and one cohort of students for a single year. Impact estimates from the Wichita RCT reflect one year of Communities in Schools for both cohorts of students. Year 2 findings are considered preliminary. Data collection will continue in Wichita during the 2010-2011 school year for the second cohort.</p> <p>Final Sample Sizes:            Jacksonville: 164 CIS students and 168 non-CIS students            Austin: 93 CIS students and 58 non-CIS students            Wichita: 50 CIS students and 40 non-CIS students.</p>
Supplemental Studies (See Volumes 7 - 8)	<p>In response to findings from the CIS case studies, in which teachers indicated a strong sense of support from the CIS program, a <b>Teacher Support Study</b> was implemented. For this study, the National Evaluation team developed and administered a survey to teachers in CIS schools. We received 1,678 responses from teachers in 8 states: TX, GA, FL, NC, MI, PA, WA, and OH.</p> <p><b>The CIS National and State Office Support Study</b> involved in-depth interviews with CIS state office and national office staff, surveys of 157 affiliate executive directors, four case studies of the state offices in</p>

<sup>5</sup> “A federation is a network of local affiliates that share a mission, a brand and a program model but are legally independent [501(c) 3 tax-exempt] of one another and of the national office.” O’Flanagan, M., and Taliento, L.K. (N.D.). Nonprofits: Ensuring that bigger is better. *The McKinsey Quarterly*.

Exhibit 3: Description of All Major CIS Evaluation Studies 2005-2010	
Study	Description
	Washington, Delaware, Kansas, and North Carolina, and interviews with representatives from three youth-serving organizations, including Boys and Girls Club of America, City Year, and Girl Scouts USA. Together, information from these sources was intended to inform Communities In Schools of the effectiveness of various state office structures; the relevance of affiliate, state, and national offices to the national network; improvements that could strengthen the network; whether core functions appropriately guide the most important functions of the respective offices; and how effectively each organization supports the implementation of TQS for itself and its network.

## Evaluation Questions

The National Evaluation was designed to answer a broad set of evaluation questions organized across three domains or areas of focus: strengthening the CIS network, key processes at the affiliate and site/school levels, and key outcomes for CIS students and schools. These domains correspond to the levels of the evaluation and areas CIS staff and the National Evaluation team identified as key indicators of organizational and performance-based outcomes. The specific evaluation questions for each domain are presented in Appendix A, along with the primary study component(s) designed to answer each question. While each level and study component provides answers to specific questions and addresses specific domains, it is the synthesis of the results that provides a comprehensive assessment of Communities In Schools. Specifically, the findings from the evaluation provide clear answers to the most basic, yet important questions for understanding Communities In Schools as a solution to the dropout epidemic in our nation:

- Does Communities In Schools Work?
- How and Why Does Communities In Schools Work? and
- In What Situations Does Communities In Schools Work?

In addition to highlighting what has been learned from the five-year evaluation, this summary includes insights into areas of further study that emerged from the evaluation and should be of interest to researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

## Does Communities In Schools Work?

The evaluation examined the effectiveness of Communities In Schools on both school and student outcomes. The school-level study used a quasi-experimental design to determine the *effects* of implementing the CIS model on school outcomes.<sup>6</sup> The student-level studies used randomized controlled trials<sup>7</sup> to determine the *impact* or value-added of CIS case-managed (Level Two) services on

<sup>6</sup> The full quasi-experimental report is included in Volume 1.

<sup>7</sup> The RCT in Austin, TX followed incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade high school students through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The RCT in Jacksonville, FL followed incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade middle school students through 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Finally, the RCT in Wichita, KS followed 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school students through 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

individual student outcomes.<sup>8</sup> The key findings from these studies are highlighted below and presented in Exhibits 4 and 5.<sup>9</sup>

## Effectiveness of the CIS Model

### Dropout and Graduation

CIS schools demonstrated positive effects on both dropout and graduation relative to their non-CIS comparison schools. Those CIS schools implementing the model with a high degree of fidelity (i.e., “high implementers”)<sup>10</sup>, however, had considerably greater effects on reducing dropout rates and increasing on-time graduation than their non-CIS comparisons and other CIS schools (i.e., “partial implementers”), suggesting that the CIS Model does work as intended. Among high implementers, effect sizes were .36 for dropout<sup>11</sup> and .31 for graduation<sup>12</sup>, which is over the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse’s<sup>13</sup> threshold for a “substantively important effect” (.25).

*When CIS schools implement with fidelity to the model, the results are strongest across all outcomes—dropout, graduation, academic achievement, and attendance.*

### Academics

Results from the school-level quasi-experimental study indicate that CIS students experienced small but consistent improvements in performance on state-mandated assessments. Moreover, performance on math assessments was generally stronger than on reading/English language arts assessments. According to the quasi-experimental study, when schools fully implemented the CIS model with fidelity, improvements in math and reading were stronger, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. This finding underscores the importance of reaching students early to maximize their chances of future success.

### Attendance

The quasi-experimental study indicated that CIS schools at all levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) reported consistently positive but small improvements in attendance. Improvements in attendance were not large because the attendance measure suffers from ceiling effects (i.e., it is difficult to demonstrate improvement because there is little room for growth). For example, average daily

<sup>8</sup> The full randomized controlled trial reports are included in Volumes 4 – 6.

<sup>9</sup> Effect size tables are presented in Appendix B.

<sup>10</sup> The National Evaluation developed a typology of CIS schools using valid data from the Critical Process Survey (N=1,518). The typology assessed how thoroughly CIS schools employed the components or domains of the CIS Model, including needs assessment, planning, site coordination, services, and monitoring and adjustment. High implementers are considered those who are implementing the CIS Model with a high degree of fidelity.

<sup>11</sup> Because dropout is measured differently in different states, we used Promoting Power as a proxy for dropout rates. Promoting Power is defined as the number of seniors enrolled in a high school to the number of freshmen four years earlier (or three years earlier in a 10-12 high school).

<sup>12</sup> On-time graduation rates were measured using the Cumulative Promotion Index. This measure was developed by Chris Swanson to capture the proportion of a cohort that graduates with a regular high school diploma within four years.



<sup>13</sup> The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, is a central source of scientific evidence for what works in education that produces practice guides that address instructional challenges with research-based recommendations; (b) assesses the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions; (c) develops and implements standards for reviewing and synthesizing education research; and (d) provides a public registry of education evaluation researchers.



attendance at elementary, middle, and high schools in the quasi-experimental study were well over 90%, and the lowest attendance rates in the elementary and middle school samples were in the 89% to 90% range.

**Exhibit 4: Summary of Effects From the School-level  
Quasi-Experimental Study: Effectiveness of the CIS Model**

Outcome	High Implementers	All CIS Schools
<b>Dropout and Completion</b>		
Dropout Rate	↑	↑
Graduation Rate	↑	↑
<b>Attendance</b>		
Attendance: Elementary	↑	↑
Attendance: Middle	↑	↑
Attendance: High	↑	↑
<b>Academics</b>		
Elementary School Math	↑	↑
Elementary School Reading	↑	---
Middle School Math	↑	↑
Middle School Reading	↑	---
High School Math	↑	↑
High School Reading	---	---

 Demonstrated a substantively important positive effect (effect size greater than .25)  
 Demonstrated a positive effect (effect size between .01 and .25)  
 --- Demonstrated a neutral or negative effect

## Impact of CIS (Level Two) Case-Managed Services

### Dropout and Retention

While data on student dropout were only available for the RCTs in Austin, the results are nonetheless encouraging. Fewer CIS case-managed students dropped out of school during their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year than students in the control group. This difference represents an effect size of .70 on dropout; which is a substantively important effect. In Austin, CIS case-managed students also completed more credits

during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade than control students (ES=.38;  $p<.05$ )<sup>14</sup>. While CIS case-managed students in Wichita received fewer credits than their control group during the first year, the second year results are more favorable for CIS case-managed students (ES=.47). In Jacksonville, data were available on the number of students retained in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The results are once again positive and in favor of CIS case-managed students (ES = .50); that is, fewer CIS case-managed students were retained. These findings suggest that providing high-risk students with case-managed services is contributing to not only keeping kids in school but also progressing in school.

*Providing high-risk students with CIS case-managed services is contributing to not only keeping kids in school but also progressing in school.*

## Academics

Data from two of the three randomized controlled trials provide mixed support for the impact of CIS case-managed services on academic performance. For Jacksonville, CIS case management had a sizable and statistically significant main impact on students' performance in reading (ES=.26;  $p<.05$ ). In Austin, the greatest impact was found on overall grade point average for CIS case-managed students (ES=.38;  $p<.05$ ). While CIS case-managed students in Wichita lost ground in academic performance relative to their control group during the first year, these findings were reversed by the end of the second year for math (ES=.55;  $p<.05$ ) and overall grade point average (ES=.45).

## Attendance

Improvement in attendance was strongest for CIS case-managed students in Austin (ES=.45;  $p<.05$ ). No differences were found between treatment and control groups in Jacksonville. Once again in Wichita, the first year results were negative for CIS case-managed students but turned around by the second year with CIS case-managed students having fewer absences (ES=.72;  $p<.05$ ).

## Behavioral Problems/Discipline

Behavioral problems were measured using two metrics: (1) out of school suspensions and (2) disciplinary referrals. The middle school RCT in Jacksonville produced positive findings regarding disciplinary referrals and out of school suspensions, which both declined.<sup>15</sup> Disciplinary referrals in both high school RCTs increased relative to the control group. It is unclear at this time whether Communities In Schools brought more scrutiny to some students' behavior, causing more disciplinary referrals, or whether these findings reflect a truly negative impact of the CIS program.

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<sup>14</sup> For the RCTs, the main impacts were assessed at the end of the first year of enrollment in CIS. This was the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Austin, the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Jacksonville, and the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Wichita. Subsequent years represent follow on effects for all schools and are detailed in Appendix B.

<sup>15</sup> Effect sizes are presented so positive effect sizes represent effects that favor the treatment group while negative effect sizes favor the control/comparison group.

<b>Exhibit 5: Student-level RCT Main Impacts: Effectiveness of CIS Case-Managed Services</b>			
	<b>RCT: Jacksonville</b>	<b>RCT: Austin</b>	<b>RCT: Wichita</b>
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Year 1 (Baseline- Post1)</b>	<b>Year 1 (Baseline- Post1)</b>	<b>Year 1 (Baseline- Post1)</b>
<b>Dropout and Completion</b>			
Dropout Rate		▲ <sup>a</sup>	
Credit Completion		▲*	---
Grade Retention	▲ <sup>a</sup>		
<b>Attendance</b>			
Attendance: Middle	---		
Attendance: High		▲*	---
<b>Academics</b>			
Middle School Math	▲		
Middle School Reading	▲*		
High School Math		▲	---
High School Reading		---	---
Grade Point Average	▲ <sup>a</sup>	▲*	---
<b>Behavioral Problems</b>			
Out-of-School Suspensions	▲		
Discipline	▲	---	---
<b>Student Attitudes and Behaviors*</b>			
Personal Responsibility	▲	---	▲
Self Worth	---	▲	---
School-Community Involvement	▲	---	▲
Family Relationships/ Parent Involvement	▲	---	▲
Negative Behaviors	---	---	---
Future Aspirations	---	---	▲

<sup>a</sup> Comparison was based on posttest only

\* Difference between CIS and non-CIS group statistically significant at the p<.05 level.



Demonstrated a substantively important positive effect (effect size greater than .25)



Demonstrated a positive effect (effect size between .01 and .25)

--- Demonstrated a neutral or negative effect

## Attitudes and Behaviors

Our experimental studies afforded the opportunity to study other outcomes that, while not the primary focus of our evaluation, do represent important predecessors to reducing dropout rates. The National Evaluation team measured six constructs in the student survey: personal responsibility, self-worth, school and community involvement, family relationships, negative behaviors, and future aspirations.

In Jacksonville, CIS students improved relative to the control group on personal responsibility, school/community involvement, and family relationships/parental involvement. In both Austin and Wichita, main impacts on most constructs were less favorable for CIS students. These trends tended to hold in Austin, with the exception of CIS students demonstrating stronger future aspirations than control students by the second year. In Wichita, however, almost all trends reversed. Given the high rates of attrition with the student survey, these results need to be viewed with caution.

## Other Findings

It was clear from the case studies that Communities In Schools was having an effect on multiple aspects of students' lives. Through the quasi-experimental study and RCTs, we were able to identify the effects and impacts of CIS on the primary outcomes of interest: dropout, graduation, attendance, and academics. However, there is a growing body of evidence through the case studies and the exploratory Teacher Support Study that these key outcomes do not sufficiently describe Communities In Schools' total impact on students, schools, families, and the communities they serve.

## For Schools

Many principals and other school personnel attributed Communities In Schools to helping them meet or make progress toward meeting their AYP. Without Communities In Schools, principals suggested that many students would have fallen through the cracks and dropped out of school. With increased pressures regarding state testing and AYP, teachers have less time in the classroom to provide one-on-one assistance and guidance counselors are spending much of their time tracking course enrollment and credit completion. The additional academic assistance needed by some students and much of the behavioral intervention needed is provided by or through Communities In Schools.

Several teachers and guidance counselors indicated that they would not still be in their current positions if it wasn't for Communities In Schools. That is, they attributed their retention to Communities In Schools.

*Communities In Schools helps improve teachers' ability to teach by improving students' preparation for and attitudes toward learning.*

The additional support provided for students and families by Communities In Schools allowed teachers and guidance counselors to focus on their responsibilities. According to teachers participating in the Teacher Support Study, Communities In Schools has a positive effect on their performance in the classroom. The areas of greatest impact include assisting with students' preparation and students' attitudes toward learning. This supports the Communities In Schools mantra that it allows students to concentrate on learning and teachers to concentrate on teaching.

## For Families

Many parents shared with the National Evaluation team that Communities In Schools helped them by helping their children. For some parents, they felt ill-equipped to assist their children with homework. Communities In Schools provided the academic assistance that they were unable to provide. This reduced stress for the parent and the child. This support also translated into better academic performance by students, according to most parents. Parents also acknowledged that Communities In Schools was able to offer their children opportunities, such as field trips and exposure to art/culture, that they could not provide. Some parents also recognized behavioral changes in their children as a result of Communities In Schools; which in turn meant better cooperation and behavior at home. Other parents reported receiving direct benefits from Communities In Schools through information and referral to needed services. Parents acknowledged that they would not have known certain services were available in their community if it wasn't for Communities In Schools.

Another benefit reported by parents was greater involvement with their child's education. Parents stated that Communities In Schools helped serve as a bridge between them and the schools. Communities In Schools made them feel welcome and CIS staff often advocated for their families with other school personnel.

## For Communities

While most of the benefits of Communities In Schools were realized by students, families, and the schools, a few stakeholders identified a long-term benefit of Communities In Schools for communities. "By getting students through school and into college or a professional trade school, both the education system and our economy will benefit." It was expressed that communities will be better positioned to attract businesses that will provide jobs for the local community because Communities In Schools is investing in the future of every community by investing in students and families today.

Additionally, by collaborating with other social service providers in the community, especially in small, rural communities, according to some, resources are being maximized by reducing duplication of services and competition for resources and ensuring coordinated delivery of services for more students and families.

In short, Communities In Schools is affecting not only students and schools, but families and communities as well.

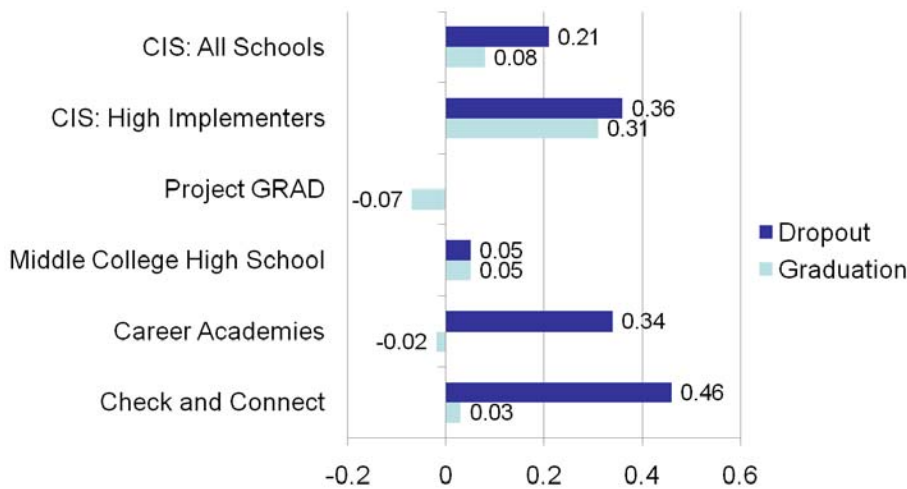
## Communities In Schools Compared to Other Dropout Prevention Initiatives

The National Evaluation team used outcomes reported by the U.S. Department of Education's WWC to benchmark Communities In Schools against other large-scale or well-known dropout prevention programs (Exhibit 6). We found that although many programs have been able to lower dropout rates, only a handful of programs have had an impact on high school completion. Moreover, the only programs that have been proven to have an effect on high school completion did so by helping students earn their GEDs, not graduate from high school with a regular diploma, as Communities In

*Communities in Schools is unique in its ability to lower dropout rates and increase on-time graduation compared to other dropout prevention programs.*

Schools has done. Compared with large-scale or well-known dropout prevention programs reviewed by the WWC, Communities In Schools had the strongest effect on students’ on-time graduation rates.

**Exhibit 6: The Reduction in Dropout Rates and Concurrent Increase in Graduation Rates Reported by CIS Schools is Unique Relative to Other Dropout Prevention Programs Reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse**



When making any side-by-side comparisons between organizations and programs, it is helpful not only to identify the most successful programs, but also the most successful programs for the price. Exhibit 7 compares the cost of implementing the CIS model to other peer organizations included in the WWC.

**Exhibit 7: Peer Organization Cost Comparison**

Program	Cost Per Student	Number of Schools	Number of Students
CIS Model	<\$200	3,400	1.2 million
Career Academies	\$600	1,600 high schools	48,000-96,000+
Check and Connect	\$1,400	2 currently	Not given

While the CIS model includes whole-school (Level One) services to all students as well as targeted, sustained services (Level Two) to the highest-need students, both Career Academies and Check and Connect offer only Level Two-type services. These comparison programs reflect a more cost-intensive service model than Communities In Schools. However, the results suggest that the CIS model is comparably as effective as the more cost-intensive Level Two-only service approach of other programs in reducing dropout and in particular, in increased on-time graduation rates.

*Communities In Schools is a cost effective and cost competitive solution for reducing dropout and increasing on-time graduation rates.*

But how is it that CIS is effective at both reducing dropout and increasing on-time graduation rates? A plausible answer can be found within the CIS model itself and the results of the Natural Variation Study.

As shown previously, high implementers were successful at reducing both dropout and increasing on-time graduation rates. In addition to implementing various processes associated with the CIS model (needs assessments, monitoring and assessment), high implementers were characterized as those schools that provided both Level One and Level Two services; compared to partial implementers that offered only Level One or Level Two services. It is likely this combination of whole-school prevention and targeted, sustained case-managed intervention services that is contributing to these unique and positive results. Further study is needed, however, to determine the contribution of each level of service and the effects of different blends of Level One and Level Two services on school outcomes.

## How and Why Does Communities In Schools Work?

While knowing whether a program does or does not work is important, this information has limited practical utility if we cannot also explain how and why the program works. Findings from the National Evaluation provide important insight into understanding both the “how” and the “why” behind the success of Communities In Schools.

### Adherence to the CIS Model of Integrated Student Support

As demonstrated previously, while CIS schools show noticeable improvement in school outcomes compared to non-CIS schools, it is the implementation of the CIS model with the greatest degree of fidelity that produces the strongest outcomes. That is, those schools designated as “high implementers” experienced greater positive change in dropout, graduation, attendance, and academic achievement. As demonstrated in Exhibit 8, among high implementers, improvements in dropout and graduation rates were nearly double those of partial implementers. In other cases (e.g., elementary school attendance and academics), the difference between partial and high implementers was precisely the difference between having negative and positive findings, respectively.

But what does this mean? This suggests that it is the effective implementation of the CIS model by a trained school-based site coordinator that correlates more strongly with positive school-level outcomes compared to uncoordinated provision of services alone. In fact, this conclusion was supported by data from various components of the National Evaluation. CIS schools that were highly successful in both implementing the model with fidelity and attaining positive school-level outcomes attributed part of their success to key elements of the CIS model. For example, a comprehensive needs assessment and the presence of a CIS site coordinator at each school were identified by many stakeholders as critical element in the implementation of a CIS program.

But not all CIS schools are high implementers. Less than half (47.6%) of the CIS schools surveyed for the National Evaluation were designated as high implementers. This suggests room for improvement across the CIS network; a goal currently driven by TQS and a focus of the national office.

**Exhibit 8: School-Level Outcomes from the Implementation and Quasi-Experimental Studies:  
High vs. Partial Implementers<sup>16</sup>**

**Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Net Change: High Implementers Over Comparison</b>	<b>Net Change: Partial Implementers Over Comparison</b>
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	+3.6%	+1.5%
Graduation Rate	+4.8%	+2.5%
Attendance: Elementary	+0.2%	-0.4%
Attendance: Middle	+0.1%	+0.2%
Attendance: High	+0.3%	+0.1%
Grade 4 Math	+5.2%	-2.3%
Grade 4 Reading	+2.3%	-5.8%
Grade 8 Math	+6.0%	+0.7%
Grade 8 Reading	+5.1%	+0.3%
Grade 10 Math	+0.8%	-0.4%
Grade 10 Reading	-0.3%	+2.5%

### Intentionality of Service Provision

A key strength of the CIS model is the ability to implement it with intentionality. This begins with the decision of which schools to “enter.” It was clear from the case studies that the local affiliates work closely with the school superintendents,

*Communities In Schools is able to help students make progress relative to their peers during difficult transition periods, including from elementary to middle school (6<sup>th</sup> grade) and middle school to high school (9<sup>th</sup> grade).*

school boards, and principals to determine where Communities In Schools is most needed and can have the greatest impact for students. But once in a school, the intentionality of Communities In Schools continues. The RCTs in Jacksonville and Austin provide the best example of how this works. In both Jacksonville and Austin, the provision of targeted and sustained case-managed services was focused on the transition period between elementary and middle school and middle school and high school. For Jacksonville, they focused on providing services to incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders and in Austin, the majority of the caseloads represented incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders. While still serving other high-risk students, focusing on these transition grades allowed the greatest concentration of the most intensive services with limited resources for students demonstrated by the research to be most likely to fall behind and eventually drop out of school. The main impact results from both RCTs demonstrate that this intentionality and focus of providing case-managed services during the transition years did pay off for students with noticeable improvement in credit completion, retention, attendance, reading, and gpa. And in Austin, the dropout rate was less for CIS students than the control group (see Exhibit 5 and Appendix B).

<sup>16</sup> High Implementers are defined as CIS schools that scored 70% or higher in our implementation study, which assessed how thoroughly CIS schools employed the domains of planning, needs assessment (which includes site coordination), services, and monitoring and adjustment in their programs. High implementers are implementing the CIS model with a high degree of fidelity.



Interestingly, the intentionality of how the CIS model is implemented may also explain the similar trends in outcomes between treatment and control students in Jacksonville. Given the high-need of almost every student within the middle schools served by Communities In Schools of Jacksonville, the intensity of the Level One or whole-school services more closely resemble Level Two services as defined by TQS. That is, Jacksonville is providing intensive and sustained services, such as mentoring, tutoring, afterschool programming, etc. to the majority of students within the schools. Thus, the difference between treatment and control students may be less pronounced than in schools where Level One services are less intense. Future study of the different balances and types of Level One and Level Two services and the cost-effectiveness of these blended services is warranted.

### Continuity and Sustainability of Service Provision

During site visits and discussions with the national office, local affiliates, school leadership, and CIS staff, a recurring theme that emerged was the importance of sustained engagement in a child's life. The RCT in Austin provided an opportunity to investigate whether sustained engagement (i.e., multiple years of enrollment in CIS) did in fact make a difference for students.

Exhibit 9 presents outcomes for three groups of study participants in Austin:

1. Students who were enrolled in CIS and received services for two consecutive years (n=41)
2. Students who were enrolled in CIS and received services for one year, but did not receive services the second year (n=52)
3. Students in the control group (n=58).

Students who received CIS services for two consecutive years had more favorable outcomes than students who received a single year of CIS service on all outcomes, including grade point average, standardized tests in math and reading, attendance, credit completion, and disciplinary referrals. Students who received two consecutive years of CIS services had significantly fewer disciplinary referrals compared to students who received one year of CIS services. Moreover, second-year differences were marginally significant on grade point average and credits completed between the students who received two years of services and students who received one year of service. All differences favored the CIS treatment group that received two years of services.

*Sustained engagement in CIS case-managed services (i.e., over consecutive years) results in consistently positive outcomes for students compared to those receiving only one year or no years of service.*

The three columns on the right side of Exhibit 9 isolate the effects from the end of the first year to the beginning of the second year. These results also support the hypothesis that sustained engagement in Communities In Schools leads to better outcomes. Although all outcomes were still on the downturn in all groups (including the control group), the treatment group receiving two consecutive years of service had the most resilience.

Because there may be very different levels of motivation between the group of treatment students that received one year of case-managed services and the group that received two consecutive years of CIS case-managed services, caution should be exercised in interpreting these results. Nonetheless, the pattern demonstrating favorable outcomes for students who received sustained engagement was consistent and compelling.

**Exhibit 9: Effect of Sustained Services: Austin RCT**

	Total Change Over 2 Years			Change from End of First Year to End of Second Year		
	Treatment: 2 Years	Treatment: 1 Year	Control	Treatment: 2 Years	Treatment: 1 Year	Control
<b>AUSTIN</b>	<b>N=41</b>	<b>N=52</b>	<b>N=58</b>	<b>N=41</b>	<b>N=52</b>	<b>N=58</b>
Grade Point Average	-7.8	-9.7	-10.5	-0.5 <sup>+</sup>	-4.4	-2.0
Math Scale Score	+5.8	-9.3	-36.9	-0.8	-0.9	-3.2
Reading Scale Score	+48.0	-68.9	-5.3	-28.9	-65.3	-67.2
Attendance	-5.7%	-9.4%	-8.7%	-4.0%	-8.4%	-4.8%
Credits Completed	+11.1	+10.8	+10.9	+5.3 <sup>+</sup>	+4.5	+5.3
Disciplinary Referrals	-1.6*	-0.1	-1.7	-0.4	-0.4	-0.6

<sup>+</sup> difference between 2-year treatment group and 1-year treatment group significant at the p<.10 level

\*difference between 2-year treatment group and 1-year treatment group significant at the p<.05 level

In order to ensure that there were no other systematic explanations for these findings, the evaluation team investigated other demographic and risk factors for each subgroup. Exhibit 10 presents these data. There were no obvious or systematic differences in the risk profiles between students who received treatment for two years, students who received treatment for a single year, and the control group. In fact, students that received two consecutive years of service were slightly more at-risk and economically disadvantaged relative to the other two groups.

**Exhibit 10: Demographics of Each Subgroup: Austin RCT**

	Treatment: 2 Years	Treatment: 1 Year	Control
<b>AUSTIN</b>	<b>N=41</b>	<b>N=52</b>	<b>N=58</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	90.2%	84.6%	87.7%
At-Risk (Texas Education Agency Definition)	82.9%	78.9%	75.9%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	53.7%	48.1%	34.5%
Female	46.3%	51.9%	65.5%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African-American	26.8%	26.9%	20.7%
Hispanic/Latino	65.9%	63.5%	67.2%
White	7.3%	7.7%	12.1%

### Presence of a School-based Site Coordinator

Although staffing structures differ across CIS schools, CIS site coordinators typically coordinate all services for a given school, provide a positive adult presence within the school, and work directly with students to address their needs and problems. Because site coordinators fulfill such a critical role in implementing the CIS model, the National Evaluation team conducted an analysis to determine how the site coordinator's presence may affect outcomes. More specifically, due to budget constraints, site coordinators oftentimes have to be shared across two or more schools. Therefore, it was important to investigate whether CIS schools with more than a half-time presence of a site coordinator outperformed CIS schools that did not.

Data were available from the school-level quasi-experimental study, which included 602 CIS schools, as well as a Site Coordinator Survey which was administered and completed by 249 site coordinators. Overall average effect sizes were derived by comparing each CIS school with its matched comparison school, from baseline to three years after implementation. CIS schools with more than half-time presence of a site coordinator had an overall average effect size of .22 (n=140), while CIS schools with less than half-time site coordination had an overall average effect size of .15 (n=51). These findings suggest that a site coordinator's presence has a positive effect on school-level outcomes. Other factors such as the quality of engagement, impact on school climate, and intensity of site coordination were not investigated in this analysis; therefore, these results should be interpreted carefully. However, anecdotal evidence from the case studies suggest that the site coordinator position is viewed as critical to the success of Communities In Schools by principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students. The site coordinator "is CIS" in many schools and it is this individual that builds the relationships with the schools, the partner agencies, the parents, and most importantly, the students. For some students, the site coordinator is the only stable and caring adult in their lives and for others, the site coordinator serves as role model and mentor.

In both Jacksonville and Austin, when schools were being reconstituted, there was turnover among school principals and teachers, and for some students, there was instability in their home environments, the site coordinators were able to help maintain stability for students. That is, even during unstable times, Communities In Schools through the site coordinators serves as the "constant" in the lives of students.

*Even within unstable school environments (principal transition, school reconstitution), CIS site coordinators are able to stabilize students and help them achieve positive outcomes.*

The importance of the consistent presence of the site coordinator is perhaps best illustrated by the RCT in Wichita. The high school included in the Wichita RCT had a stable site coordinator prior to the evaluation. Unfortunately, during the first year of the study, the site coordinator was less present in the school and not as available to serve students. As a result, the site coordinator was replaced. This disruption in the site coordinator position is a plausible explanation for the negative findings from the first year of the Wichita RCT presented in Exhibit 11. This explanation is even more plausible when we examine the second year results. On almost every outcome, there was a reversal in results with CIS case- managed students outperforming the control group.

Because data for the second cohort of students were not available at the time of the report, these results need to be interpreted with caution. Continued data collection during the 2010-2011 school year will allow for a more complete examination of the results in Wichita.

Exhibit 11: Trends in Outcomes for Wichita			
Outcome	RCT: Wichita		
	Year 1 (Baseline-Post1)	Year 1 to Year 2 (Post1 to Post2)	Year 2 (Baseline-Post2)
<b>Dropout and Completion</b>			
Credit Completion	-.22	.47	.15
<b>Attendance</b>			
Attendance: High	-.40	.72*	.20
<b>Academics</b>			
High School Math	-.29	.55*	.11 <sup>a</sup>
High School Reading	-.05	-.20	-.09
Grade Point Average	-.42	.45	.04
<b>Behavioral Problems</b>			
Discipline	-.34	.49	-.27 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Student Attitudes and Behaviors*</b>			
Personal Responsibility	.21	-.22	.45
Self Worth	-.25	.23	.13
School-Community Involvement	.16	-.03	.00
Family Relationships/ Parent Involvement	.09	.02	.29
Negative Behaviors	-.26	-.01	.38
Future Aspirations	.05	.41	.08

<sup>a</sup> Comparison was based on posttest only

\* Difference between CIS and non-CIS group statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

## Strong Business Practices and Support Across the CIS Network

The National and State Office Support Study provided information from all state offices and a representative sample (81%) of the local affiliate offices. Based on the results, it is clear that the

sound business practices defined by TQS for nonprofit organizations are being practices across the CIS network. In fact, the core functions defined by the state directors aligned with those defined by TQS, including: statewide partnership and resource development; statewide advocacy and productive government relationships; marketing and communications; state network management and development; training and technical assistance; and data collection, management, and reporting. For local affiliates, the core functions include: community partnerships; resource development/fundraising; marketing and public relations; managing and developing sites; providing/brokering quality youth programming and services; and data collection, evaluation, and reporting). For both state offices and

*The implementation of sound business practices and the delivery of needed support across the CIS network (national, state, and affiliate offices) translate into stable and sustained delivery of integrated student support services by a CIS site coordinator within a school.*

local affiliate offices, these functions were viewed as essential to their overall success. But it was the support provided across the network; which aligns with the core functions, that was most important. From the national office, it is both the reactive and proactive support to the Network, primarily through the national field directors, that is viewed as invaluable. The support provided by the national field directors includes assistance with: financial support and resource development; partnership development; Board development and strategic planning, TQS support; information sharing; public relations; marketing; and advocacy. And given the size of the CIS network, having national field directors assigned to specific state offices and local affiliates in states without state offices is seen as helping to facilitate and streamline communication and the ability for national to provide the needed support to the network.

For state offices, the support provided to local affiliates includes: incorporation process for a new affiliates, strategic planning; board recruitment and development; data collection; assistance with TQS; staff professional development; and public relations and marketing. Another important support provided by the state offices is assistance with resource development and fundraising. Finally, a critical activity of the state office to the development and enhancement of the CIS network within a state is to provide networking opportunities for their local affiliate executive directors, board members, program directors, and site coordinators. This fosters information sharing (e.g. best practices), collaboration (especially related to pursuing funding), and a sense of connection to the network. Networking along with the other supports provided by the state office are all viewed as essential to the overall strength and effectiveness of affiliate and site operations.

**The Value of a State Office**

- 88% of affiliates with a state office view the support they receive as critical to their overall success
- 94% of affiliates describe their relationship with their state office as good to excellent; positive relationships are attributed to strong leadership, shared goals, good communication, accessibility/responsiveness, regular meetings/visits, and technical support
- 89% of affiliates with a state office felt connected to other affiliates in the network compared to only 61% of affiliates in states without a state office
- On average, affiliates in states without a state office believed having a state office would be helpful to very helpful, especially with respect to fundraising and resource development, marketing and public relations, and meeting TQS standards
- Affiliates with a state office rated themselves as slightly more effective in carrying out most of their core functions and activities compared to affiliates without a state office

Finally, it is the support from the local affiliates to the site coordinators within the schools that has the most direct impact on the success of Communities in Schools. Based on analysis of data from the Natural Variation Study, high implementers are characterized by greater levels of satisfaction with their local affiliates compared to partial implementers with regards to support received related to: providing/brokering quality youth services; managing and expanding CIS sites; resource development and fundraising; and data collection and reporting.

**Strong CIS Leadership and School Support for Communities In Schools**

A common theme from the case studies and External Comparison Study was the importance of strong leadership across the CIS network and from the schools served by Communities In Schools. State directors and local affiliate executive directors

*When site coordinators receive strong leadership and strategic direction from their local affiliates the effects on dropout, graduation, and attendance for schools are positive.*

acknowledged the importance of leadership from the national office and the credibility the leadership brought to Communities In Schools as a recognized dropout prevention initiative in this country. The leadership of the state directors and executive directors was also echoed as an important contributing factor to the success of Communities in Schools. Leadership, specifically from the executive director and within the composition of the CIS affiliate-level board, was identified as the key indicator of a successful CIS affiliate. Leadership is described as mission-focused and accountable for both fiduciary responsibilities and staff and program needs. While anecdotal evidence was consistent, it is the evidence from the analysis of data from the Natural Variation Study that begins to empirically link local affiliate leadership and the strategic direction provided by the executive director to positive school outcomes. Specifically, site coordinators reporting greater satisfaction with their local affiliate represent stronger effects on dropout (ES=1.13), graduation (ES=.51), and attendance (ES=.16) when compared to schools experiencing less satisfaction.

In addition to strong CIS leadership, the importance of support from the school principal and teachers to the success of Communities In Schools was echoed across the CIS network. High implementers are characterized by greater levels of support compared to partial implementers by not only school principals ( $p < .01$ ) and teachers ( $p < .01$ ), but by local school boards, school counselors ( $p < .05$ ), parents, partner organizations, and students ( $p < .01$ ). Additionally, the support in particular from school principals in elementary schools has a significant effect on students' math (ES=.79;  $p < .01$ ) and reading (ES=.60;  $p < .05$ ) scores compared to CIS schools with less support. Likewise, support from teachers has positive effects on attendance (ES=.23), Grade 8 math (ES=.31), and Grade 10 math (ES=.25) and reading (ES=.49).

*Support for Communities In Schools from school principals and teachers is associated with stronger outcomes for schools. The support from principals is particularly important for elementary schools.*

## In What Situations Does Communities In Schools Work?

Once again, knowing whether Communities In Schools does or does not work is really only the first step. Understanding how and why it works provides much of the information needed to validate and replicate the results in the field. Yet one question still remains—in what situations does Communities In Schools Work? The National Evaluation provides answers to this important question. To this point, the consistency of positive outcomes among all CIS schools – and especially high implementing schools– is striking. The impact of CIS case-managed services on students is compelling. But taken a step further, it is apparent from the results that consistently positive outcomes remain no matter the context or setting or population. CIS schools outperformed their comparison schools across urban, rural, and suburban locations; across elementary, middle, and high schools; and across the primary demographic make-up of the school (i.e., race/ethnicity). In other words, Communities In Schools appears to work no matter where it is located.

*Communities In Schools effectively addresses risk factors along the education continuum that make it difficult for students to stay in school and be successful.*

### Grade Level

Overall, the results of the school-level quasi-experimental study show that CIS schools reported gains in math scores at the elementary, middle, and high school levels – but gains in reading were mixed (Exhibit 12). Consider, however, what happens when schools fully implemented the CIS model with fidelity: academic improvements were strong,

especially at the elementary and middle school levels. This finding underscores the importance of reaching students early to maximize their chances of future success.

**Exhibit 12: School-Level Outcomes from the Quasi-Experimental Study**  
**Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Four-Year Period**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Net Change: All CIS Schools Over Comparison</b>	<b>Net Change: CIS High Implementer Over Comparison</b>
<b><i>Elementary Schools</i></b>		
Grade 4 Math	+2.2%	+5.2%
Grade 4 Reading	-0.1%	+2.3%
Attendance: Elementary	+0.1%	+0.2%
<b><i>Middle Schools</i></b>		
Grade 8 Math	+2.0%	+6.0%
Grade 8 Reading	-0.1%	+5.1%
Attendance: Middle	+0.3%	+0.1%
<b><i>High Schools</i></b>		
Grade 10 Math	+0.4%	+0.8%
Grade 10 Reading	-0.3%	-0.3%
Attendance: High	+0.3%	+0.3%
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	+2.0%	+3.6%
Graduation Rate	+1.7%	+4.8%

## Geographic Settings

As shown in Exhibit 13, when we separate the school-level outcomes of urban, suburban, and rural schools, some interesting patterns emerge. Most importantly, CIS schools – regardless of their location – outperformed their comparison schools on most outcomes. However, we found that greatest improvement varied by setting across the outcomes of interest as follows:

- Suburban schools had the most success in lowering dropout rates, while urban schools had the most success in improving graduation rates. Compared to their rural counterparts, urban and suburban schools employed relatively more intensive site coordination, needs assessment processes, and monitoring of student progress.
- Rural schools performed best on academic outcomes, which is not surprising considering that they offered more targeted and sustained academic assistance to students in need than did urban and suburban schools.

Once again, the intentionality of the CIS model is demonstrated by these results. Different focuses in service provision, presumably based on different local needs and context, drove different outcomes.

**Exhibit 13: Quasi-Experimental Study Outcomes: Urban vs. Suburban vs. Rural Schools**  
**Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period**

Outcome	Urban Schools: Net Change	Suburban Schools: Net Change	Rural Schools: Net Change
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	0.6%	4.9%	0.4%
Graduation Rate	2.8%	1.8%	-0.2%
Attendance	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
Math (All Grades)	2.5%	-0.6%	3.3%
Reading (All Grades)	-1.0%	0.8%	1.4%

### Student Populations

The National Evaluation team broke down the results of the quasi-experimental study by the predominant race/ethnicity at a school. Using a 60 percent cutoff, we categorized each school. For example, if 62 percent of the students in the school were African-American, we categorized the school as “African-American”.

The results of this analysis are presented in Exhibit 14. Predominantly Hispanic/Latino and Diverse schools (i.e., schools without a 60 percent majority of any race/ethnicity) showed the most positive change in most outcomes. These schools also had the strongest implementation of the CIS model. Still, schools that were predominantly African-American posted gains in increasing graduation and reducing dropout. Schools that were predominantly white had, on average, the least positive change above their comparison schools.

**Exhibit 14: Quasi-Experimental Study Outcomes:**  
**By Predominant (60%+) Race of Students in School**  
**Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period**

Outcome	African-American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Diverse
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	1.8%	0.9%	1.7%	1.8%
Graduation Rate	2.1%	2.8%	-1.6%	4.6%
Attendance	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Math (All Grades)	0.6%	2.6%	-0.7%	4.0%
Reading (All Grades)	-2.2%	0.3%	1.0%	0.3%

The results from the RCTs can also be used to demonstrate the impact of Communities In Schools on students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, the RCTs provide evidence to suggest that CIS case-managed services have positive effects on African-American (Jacksonville), Hispanic/Latino (Austin), and white (Wichita) students (see Exhibit 5 and Appendix B). The RCTs also provide information on the impact of CIS case-managed services for males and females. In Jacksonville, females did better on grade point average, were less likely to be retained, and had fewer disciplinary referrals than males. In Austin, males fared better than females on attendance, grade point average, and credit



completion. However, in Austin, it was also the case that males received more services than females. It is not clear whether the difference in outcomes is due to gender or service dosage. But in both Jacksonville and Austin, there was an emphasis on providing gender-specific services (e.g., XY Zone for boys in Austin and Mother/Daughter and Girl's Groups in Jacksonville). Again, the focus and intentionality of CIS service provision appears to be making a difference regardless of the population served.

*The focus of the CIS model on delivering integrated student support services makes it a viable solution for achieving academic success within a variety of settings and with various student populations. Communities In Schools can work regardless of grade level, geography, and student demographics.*

## What Remains to be Studied?

Although we are now at the end of a five-year comprehensive evaluation, there is still much more to learn that can benefit the CIS network as well as other practitioners, policymakers, and researchers working to understand the dropout epidemic in our country and searching for real world solutions to this problem.

### For the CIS Network

While much has been learned about the effects of the CIS model and the importance of the functions and operations at all levels of the CIS network, with the rollout of TQS, changes are expected and the ability of the network to implement and maintain fidelity to TQS and to the CIS model remains a question. To that end, the following are areas for continued study:

1. Assessment of TQS adoption and implementation fidelity and ongoing need for assistance.
2. Validation of implementation (typology) scores under TQS and assessing specific aspects of implementation that may be more sensitive to outcomes than others.
3. Identification and collection of standardized measures of state office and affiliate outcomes, thus allowing for the connection between TQS and the effectiveness of the network at all levels. This includes an empirical examination of the direct and indirect impact of national, state office and affiliate functions (national to state, state to affiliate, affiliate to site).
4. Assessment of the growth of the network in conjunction with TQS compliance and the barriers and facilitators of such growth.

### For the Education Field

As with any research study, in addition to answering the key questions you set out to address, the results always lead us in new directions or point to additional areas worthy of investigation. The results from the National Evaluation of Communities In School have uncovered several areas of interest that if explored, are likely to provide important insights into our understanding of why some students drop out and others do not. Possible areas of continued study include:

1. Identifying an optimal balance of Level One (whole-school) and Level Two (targeted and sustained) services, including an examination of optimal dosage of service necessary to achieve positive change in key academic outcomes for students with different risk profiles.
2. Exploring Level One services and the impact on school climate. Whole-school services are generally thought of as low-intensity and low-cost offerings, yet it is clear from our research that they have implications for the improvement of school climate and school reform. The specific linkage between whole-school services and graduation rates is particularly worthy of further investigation and will require better documentation of frequency and dosage of Level One services.
3. Further understanding of the trajectories of student outcomes. Sustained engagement in CIS case-managed services appears to accrue particularly positive benefits beyond the first year. While Communities In Schools and other dropout prevention and intervention programs are essentially tasked with preventing or reversing downward trajectories in students' academic and social indicators, more work is needed to understand how long it takes for specific services to take effect and whether "feeder patterns" (elementary to middle to high school) are effective in keeping students in school and progressing academically. Of course, trajectories of outcomes differ for individual students, so any work in this area will need to be grounded with detailed information, including qualitative interviews and case notes, describing student characteristics and tendencies, including measures of resiliency. Additionally, information will need to be tracked regarding student level of risk. The collection of more specific service data (e.g., informal contacts, leveraged services) also needs to be explored.

## What Have We Learned?

Time and time again, CIS stakeholders attribute their success to relationships – with students, schools, parents, and communities. As is often said by CIS leadership, "Programs don't change people – relationships do." Although we cannot expect that all CIS affiliates and schools will produce positive, fruitful relationships with everyone involved, we can at least expect that the Total Quality System will delineate *what* kinds of relationships need to be developed, and *how*.

But regardless of how Communities In Schools is developing relationships, it appears to be working. Through a comprehensive, rigorous, mixed-method evaluation that included three randomized controlled trials, the National Evaluation team has been able to establishing an empirical link between the CIS model and positive outcomes (on dropout, graduation, attendance, and academics), and has been able to systematically investigate whether and how Communities In Schools can lead to successful students and schools. Through Level One services, a large number of students are receiving prevention and early intervention services that promote positive behaviors, provide academic enrichment, and promote the importance of staying in school and getting an education. Additionally, many of these services provide students with the essentials for meeting their basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, healthcare). For those at greatest risk for social and academic failure, Level Two or case-managed services provide a safety net to keep these students from falling through the cracks. For some students, these targeted, sustained services result in positive changes in academic performance and other outcomes; and for others, these services may be the only thing keeping these students in school and their "head above water". At a minimum, most of these students are able to perform on par with their

peers. Regardless of the needs of the students, Communities In Schools is addressing their needs to some degree and with some success.

And the ability of Communities In Schools to impact the lives of students is possible as a result of the functions and activities of the local affiliates, the state offices, and the national office. It is the strong business practices of these nonprofit organizations that provide the necessary infrastructure and support to be able to effectively serve students, schools, and communities. It is through strong leadership, partnership development, strategic planning, fundraising, marketing and communication, monitoring and evaluation, and continuous improvement at all levels of the network that Communities In Schools can continue to grow and achieve success. Additionally, it is the support of school leadership and the involvement of principals, teachers, guidance counselors, partner organizations, parents, and students that makes it possible for Communities In Schools to operate in the schools and improve the lives of students.

After five years of data collection and across all of the studies undertaken as part of the National Evaluation, we have generated solid evidence that Communities In Schools works and it works best when it is implemented with fidelity to the CIS model and with intentionality. Additionally, the assistance needed to support effective implementation of Communities In Schools across the network and to maintain healthy operations at the state, affiliate, and site level is being provided. The next step is to use the results of the evaluation to help bring the CIS network to scale and ensure adherence to TQS, “high” implementation of the CIS model, consistency and sustainability of site coordinators, and the delivery of integrated student support within every school across the nation.

- ✓ The CIS model of integrated services, when implemented with fidelity yields substantive improvements in school and student level outcomes. Compared to non-CIS schools and students, the CIS model and case-managed services have a mix of significant impacts and substantively important positive effects on credit completion, academics and attendance, and is unique among other dropout prevention programs in both reducing dropout and increasing on-time graduation rates for high schools.
- ✓ Services and resources intentionally targeted to students to address specific school leadership priorities result in positive student impacts. For example, students targeted to receive case-managed services by a CIS site coordinator during the critical 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition years, successfully navigated this transition better than those who did not receive these services.
- ✓ Students’ outcomes were significantly better after receiving two years of CIS case-managed services compared with just one year of service and school-level outcomes improved continuously over a three year period, proving the long term effects of sustained engagement and implementation of the CIS model.
- ✓ The implementation of sound business practices, the delivery of needed support across the CIS network (from national, state, and local affiliate offices), strong leadership within Communities In Schools, and the support of school leadership and teachers are necessary for stable and sustained implementation of the CIS model; which in turn results in greater outcomes for schools and students alike.

**Appendix A:**  
**Evaluation Questions by Domains by Study Component**

DETAILED EVALUATION QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY CIS EVALUATION						
EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Base Level	Middle Level			Top Level	
	Descriptive Study	Natural Variation Study: Within CIS Comparison*	QED: CIS/Non-CIS Comparison Group Design	Case Studies of Schools Participating in the QED	External Comparison Study	RCT: 3 Experimental Studies
<b>Domain #1: Strengthening the CIS Network at the State and National Level</b>						
<b>What are the critical characteristics and relative contributions of the national office and state offices to CIS program operations? What are the implications of these findings for strengthening the operations of CIS at the national and state levels?</b>						
What is the need for support from national and state offices? To what extent are these needs being met currently?	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		x	x	
How effective has the national office been in promoting new local affiliates (in locations without state offices) and new state offices?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x		x	x	
How effective have the state offices been in promoting new local affiliates?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x		x		
How effective have the national office and state offices been in conducting key network activities (e.g., developing partnerships and resources, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, marketing, and public relations)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x		x	x	x
How can these CIS mechanisms to carry out network activities be strengthened?		x		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x
<b>Domain #2: Key Processes at the Affiliate and Site Levels</b>						
<b>How successfully are CIS local affiliates and schools engaging in activities to maintain their operational health and more effectively serve students?</b>						
How successfully are CIS local affiliates engaging in long-term program improvement (such as the Q&S chartering process)?	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
How successfully are CIS local affiliates conducting marketing and public relations efforts? Do these efforts help affiliates establish partnerships, develop resources, and increase awareness of the local program?	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		x		
How successfully are CIS local affiliates assessing the need for and receiving training and technical assistance?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			x		
How successfully are CIS local affiliates expanding services to more schools or to more students in existing schools?	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x	x		x
How successfully are CIS local affiliates involving local boards of directors in oversight and strategic planning?	x	x		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

DETAILED EVALUATION QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY CIS EVALUATION						
EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Base Level	Middle Level			Top Level	
	Descriptive Study	Natural Variation Study: Within CIS Comparison*	QED: CIS/Non-CIS Comparison Group Design	Case Studies of Schools Participating in the QED	External Comparison Study	RCT: 3 Experimental Studies
To what extent is CIS bringing in the community (partners, resources) into the schools? How effective are these partnerships in addressing need and creating positive outcomes?	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x	x		x
To what extent does CIS presence enable school personnel (teachers, administrators) to spend more time and focus on academics, as compared to non-CIS schools?			x	x		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can any conclusions be drawn about optimal proportions of Level 1 and Level 2 services in a site/school?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	x	x		x
How successfully are student needs assessed and resources coordinated to meet those needs?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
What is the most effective strategy for coordinating services within a site/school (i.e., full-time site coordinator vs. other strategies)?		x	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
To what extent do interventions address risk and/or protective factors?	x			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
To what extent does CIS engage families of youth? In what forms does this engagement take place?		x	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		x
<b>Domain #3: Key Outcomes for CIS Students and Schools</b> <b>What inferences can be drawn about CIS model effectiveness for served youth, schools, and communities? What are the implications of these findings for providing support at the national, state, and local levels that will improve student outcomes?</b>						
What are the rates of attendance, discipline, dropout, promotion, and graduation and the mean GPAs at CIS schools/sites?		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How do these rates vary by location, funding levels, state office presence, or other factors?		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
How do these rates compare to non-CIS schools, or to state or national averages?	x	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
What are the ranges of rates of individual attendance, discipline, dropout, and promotion?		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How do these rates differ by type and frequency of services offered?		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How have these outcomes changed over time?		x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DETAILED EVALUATION QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY CIS EVALUATION						
EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Base Level	Middle Level			Top Level	
	Descriptive Study	Natural Variation Study: Within CIS Comparison*	QED: CIS/Non-CIS Comparison Group Design	Case Studies of Schools Participating in the QED	External Comparison Study	RCT: 3 Experimental Studies
What impact does CIS have on the overall school climate, including family involvement? How do these findings differ when comparing groups of students by level of involvement or by involvement/non-involvement in CIS?		✖	✖			☒
What is the impact of school climate on student outcomes?		✖	✖			☒
What site strategies and services are most effective in accomplishing these outcomes?		✖	✖			☒

☒: Primary study that will answer this research question.

✖: Secondary study that will add context to our findings on this question

**Appendix B: Effect Size Tables**



**Exhibit XX: Summary of Effects From the CIS  
School-level Quasi-Experimental Study  
Effectiveness of the CIS Model**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>High Implementers</b>	<b>All CIS Schools</b>
<b>Dropout and Completion</b>		
Dropout Rate	.36	.21
Graduation Rate	.31	.08
<b>Attendance</b>		
Attendance: Elementary	.42	.10
Attendance: Middle	.12	.24
Attendance: High	.19	.18
<b>Academics</b>		
Elementary School Math	.21	.09
Elementary School Reading	.08	.00
Middle School Math	.53	.16
Middle School Reading	.36	-.01
High School Math	.07	.03
High School Reading	-.02	-.04

**Exhibit 5: Trajectories of Impacts in RCTs  
Effectiveness of Case Managed Services at the Student Level**

Outcome	RCT: Jacksonville			RCT: Austin			RCT: Wichita		
	Year 1 (Baseline-Post1) (Main Impact)	Year 1 to Year 2 (Post1 to Post2)	Year 2 (Baseline-Post2)	Year 1 (Baseline-Post1) (Main Impact)	Year 1 to Year 2 (Post1 to Post2)	Year 2 (Baseline-Post2)	Year 1 (Baseline-Post1) (Main Impact)	Year 1 to Year 2 (Post1 to Post2)	Year 2 (Baseline-Post2)
<b>Dropout and Completion</b>									
Dropout Rate				.70 <sup>a</sup>		-.90 <sup>a</sup>			
Credit Completion				.38*	-.11	.02	-.22	.47	.15
Grade Retention	.50 <sup>a</sup>		.14 <sup>a</sup>						
<b>Attendance</b>									
Attendance: Middle	-.11	.12	.00						
Attendance: High				.45*	-.11	.08	-.40	.72*	.20
<b>Academics</b>									
Middle School Math	.06	.13	.18						
Middle School Reading	.26	-.04	.13						
High School Math				.18	.01	.21	-.29	.55*	.11 <sup>a</sup>
High School Reading				-.11	.10	.03	-.05	-.20	-.09
Grade Point Average	.04 <sup>a</sup>	-.08	.00 <sup>a</sup>	.38*	-.03	.16	-.42	.45	.04
<b>Behavioral Problems</b>									
Out-of-School Suspensions	.15	.10	-.13						
Discipline	.09	-.06	.13	-.21	-.09	-.24	-.34	.49	-.27 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Student Attitudes and Behaviors*</b>									
Personal Responsibility	.33	.07	-.02	-.11	.16	-.15	.21	-.22	.45
Self Worth	-.05	.34	.03	.06	-.13	-.19	-.25	.23	.13
School-Community Involvement	.24	.15	.03	-.31	.36	-.08	.16	-.03	.00
Family Relationships/ Parent Involvement	.18	-.04	.01	-.35	-.13	-.43	.09	.02	.29
Negative Behaviors	.00	-.13	.02	-.28	-.53	.04	-.26	-.01	.38
Future Aspirations	-.09	-.28	.00	-.25	-.17	.14	.05	.41	.08

<sup>a</sup> Comparison was based on posttest only

\* Difference between CIS and non-CIS group statistically significant at the p<.05 level.