



Communities
In Schools

Communities In Schools and the Five Basics

At Communities In Schools, everything we do is guided by the “Five Basics.” Developed by our founder Bill Milliken, the Five Basics are a set of essentials that every child needs and deserves.

The First Basic: A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult.

Millions of young people in this country don’t have “traditional” families that include a mother and father who live together. In many cases, children are not part of a larger extended family or religious community – two entities which have characteristically served as mediating structures to provide a safety net for young people. It’s up to the entire community to make sure someone cares about these children. Communities In Schools provides the first Basic by connecting students with mentors and other caring adults. Nearly 90 percent of Communities In Schools affiliates provide mentors who offer encouragement and academic support. Communities In Schools staff members also serve as positive role models for students.

The Second Basic: A safe place to learn and grow.

In today’s world, a child’s neighborhood is not necessarily a safe or nurturing place. Schools, too, may not be as safe and secure as we would hope. The extended family is much less common than in previous generations, and young people may feel like they live in a community where few people know or care about them. For many children, it’s much worse than that. They *know* they’re living in a bad, unhealthy place, where violence, drugs, gangs, unemployment and multigenerational poverty are commonplace. Whether through after-school programs or nontraditional school models, Communities In Schools is dedicated to ensuring that all students have a safe, appropriate environment in which to learn and achieve their potential.

The Third Basic: A healthy start and a healthy future.

Children can't concentrate on school work if they are hungry, cold, in need of medical or dental care, or have trouble seeing the teacher. Basic health and human services are essential for every child. When families are themselves in need (and often unsure about how to get help from the labyrinth of public agencies), it's up to the community to step in. Communities In Schools affiliates provide the third Basic by connecting students and families with health care, vision and dental exams, food programs, child care, teen pregnancy prevention programs and teen parenting resources, mental health services, substance abuse prevention and intervention, sports and recreation programs, and much more.

The Fourth Basic: A marketable skill to use upon graduation.

Our children must acquire the knowledge, self-respect and discipline they'll need in order to secure a future for themselves and their families. As the American economy has shifted from an industrial-based model to one based on knowledge, young people need a different set of skills to be successful after they complete school – whether they enter college or the world of work. In addition to basic literacy and computer skills, today's labor force requires workers to have problem-solving skills, analytical ability and personal qualities like adaptability and self-management. Our affiliates provide the fourth Basic through tutoring, literacy programs, career planning, employment training and job shadowing, leadership skills training, and college readiness and access programs.

The Fifth Basic: A chance to give back to peers and community.

Our founder Bill Milliken was once asked at a Congressional hearing, "What is the difference between the kids you've seen who made it and ones who didn't?" He replied, "The children I have seen succeed are the children we allowed to succeed. We allowed them to give something to us. We need to listen to them, and then get them involved in feeding people, tutoring other children – that's how they feel part of a community." Every child ought to have a chance to give back. The community must create environments for young people in which everyone's gifts are nurtured, and service to others is expected and rewarded. Communities In Schools affiliates provide the fifth Basic to students by strengthening involvement in community service and service-learning, mentoring and tutoring younger children, volunteering with senior citizens, special community arts projects and more.

Communities In Schools surrounds students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Through a school-based coordinator, Communities In Schools connects students and their families to critical community resources tailored to local needs. Working in nearly 2,700 schools in the most challenged communities, in 24 states and the District of Columbia, Communities In Schools serves nearly 1.26 million young people and their families. It has become the nation's leading dropout prevention organization, and the only one proven to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.