Communities In Schools

Achieving In Life: An Examination of Postsecondary Outcomes for Communities In Schools' Alumni

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Introduction

The mission of Communities In Schools (CIS) is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.[1] To date, much of the work of CIS has focused on supporting K-12 students and their families to address immediate needs, challenges, and barriers to school success. Although this work often includes creating circumstances and building skills that will help students succeed beyond high school graduation, the focus of studies to date has been on CIS' impact on student outcomes in primary and secondary education.[2,3] Research shows that the need for support does not end with high school. As students get older, they're likely to face more complex challenges. Yet, little to no attention has been given to research with CIS students beyond high school to determine how well CIS is preparing students to overcome such challenges and succeed in life after graduation. To fulfill our mission of empowering students to achieve in life, it is imperative that CIS engages in research to understand how former students are faring in life after high school and how CIS can better prepare and continue to support students to succeed beyond high school.

To that end, Communities In Schools began work in the spring of 2020 to explore postsecondary outcomes for former CIS students following high school, including trends in college enrollment and graduation, job attainment, and financial and subjective well-being. This study also sought to give CIS alumni the opportunity to define success in their own lives so that we might better understand how students served by CIS think about their own success and how CIS can support them in achieving success. This brief presents findings from the first year of this on-going research, including how CIS alumni define success, and shares key supports and services that CIS alumni stated were impactful in helping prepare them to succeed in life after high school.

Methods

Data for this study were collected from the National Student Clearinghouse and a survey of CIS alumni.

Postsecondary data for CIS students was collected from the National Student Clearinghouse during the spring of 2020. The National Student Clearinghouse collects data for approximately 99% of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States and is the leading source of information for students' postsecondary enrollment, degree verification, and other postsecondary outcomes, including graduation and major/field of study.[4] A total of 32,394 records of students who were case-managed by CIS during their senior year between 2013-14 and 2018-19 were pulled from the Communities In Schools Data Management system (CISDM) and prepared to be matched with National Student Clearinghouse data.[5] Of those student records, 13,182 (41%) were matched with postsecondary data from National Student Clearinghouse. CIS students who were not matched with records from the National Student Clearinghouse either did not (or have yet to) enroll in a postsecondary institution following high school graduation or enrolled at an institution that is not included in the National Student Clearinghouse database.

In addition, a 73-item survey was developed to gather information from alumni about the education level, employment, social capital, and financial, relational, and subjective well-being of CIS students after leaving high school. The survey also provided CIS alumni an opportunity to define success in their own lives, describe the supports that helped them achieve success, and highlight any supports needed to better prepare students to succeed in life after high school. The survey was designed to understand how CIS alumni are faring and how CIS can better prepare students to be college- and career-ready after graduation.

[1] Communities In Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved from Communities In Schools: https://www.communitiesinschools.org/
[2] Parise, L. M., Corrin, W., Granito, K., Haider, Z., Somers, M.-A., & Cerna, O. (2017). Two Years of Case Management Final Findings from Communities In Schools Random Assignment Evaluation. MDRC. Retrieved from https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-data/publications/publication/mdrc-evaluation-communities-schools-final-reports
[3] ICF International. (2010). Communities In Schools National Evaluation Five Year Summary Report. Retrieved from https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-data/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report
[4] National Student Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Retrieved from National Student Clearinghouse: https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/studenttracker/
[5] Records did not include data for CIS students served by Texas affiliates.

A link to the survey was distributed via email to CIS alumni in the spring of 2020. A total of 542 alumni completed the survey.[6,7] For alumni that completed the survey and for whom high school graduation year was available, 28% had left high school less than two years prior to the start of the study and 47% had left high school between two and four years prior to the start of the study.[8] The sample of respondents was predominately female (74% female, 25% male). Additionally, 48% of respondents were African/American, 39% Hispanic, 18% White, 4% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 3% Asian, 1% Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 1% other, which resembled the racial demographics of the student population served by CIS.[9] The average age of alumni who responded to the survey was 22. It should be noted that participation in the survey was voluntary and therefore the results and findings from the survey may have been impacted by self-selection bias in survey respondents.

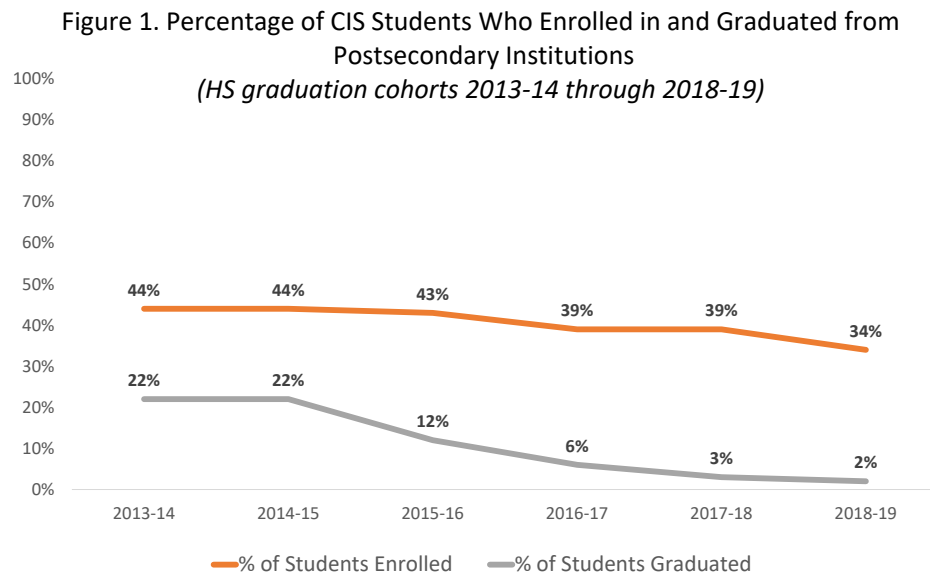| Survey Responses by High School Graduation Cohort		
High School Graduation Cohort	No. of Survey Responses	% of Survey Responses
18-19	54	9.96%
17-18	97	17.90%
16-17	129	23.80%
15-16	124	22.88%
Unknown	138	25.46%
Total Responses	542	

Results

National Student Clearinghouse - Postsecondary Enrollment, Persistence, and Graduation

Data from National Student Clearinghouse was analyzed to explore trends in postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and graduation among former CIS students. Based on the number of CIS students that were able to be matched to the National Student Clearinghouse database, approximately 41% of CIS students from high school cohorts of 2013-14 to 2018-19 enrolled in a postsecondary institution at some point after high school.[10] Unsurprisingly, the percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions declined over time, likely because students graduating more recently have had less time to enroll, if they did not do so immediately after graduation (see Figure 1). Of those students that enrolled in a postsecondary institution after high school, approximately 88% enrolled in a public institution and 21% enrolled in a private institution. Furthermore, 53.5% students enrolled in a two-year institution and 61.5% enrolled in a four-year institution.[11] Of the students that began their postsecondary journey by enrolling at a two-year postsecondary institution, approximately 15% transferred to a four-year institution.

CIS students that enrolled in two-year institutions after high school remained enrolled for an average of 2.75 semesters, ranging from 1.76 semesters for the 2018-19 high school cohort to 3.35 semesters for the 2013-14 high school graduating class. For CIS alumni who enrolled in four-year colleges and universities after high school, students were enrolled for an average of 4.37 semesters, ranging from 1.95 semesters for the 2018-19 high school cohort to 5.90 semesters for the 2013-14 high school cohort. We report these data in semesters rather than years due to the nature of enrollment records within the National Student Clearinghouse database, which precluded us from determining the number of semesters or enrollment periods per academic year for each institution.[12]

Figure 1 shows the percentage of CIS students that enrolled and graduated from a postsecondary institution for the six high school cohorts

Figure 1. Percentage of CIS Students Who Enrolled in and Graduated from Postsecondary Institutions
(HS graduation cohorts 2013-14 through 2018-19)

% of Students Enrolled: 2013-14: 44%, 2014-15: 44%, 2015-16: 43%, 2016-17: 39%, 2017-18: 39%, 2018-19: 34%
% of Students Graduated: 2013-14: 22%, 2014-15: 22%, 2015-16: 12%, 2016-17: 6%, 2017-18: 3%, 2018-19: 2%

Of the students that graduated, 45% graduated from a 2-year institution and 57% graduated from a 4-year institution.[13] The percentage of students who graduated from a postsecondary institution ranged from 22% for students enrolled in a postsecondary institution from 2013-14 high school class to 2% for 2018-19 high school cohort. Not surprisingly, the percentage of students that have graduated declined over time as students have had less time to complete their postsecondary degrees.

We also calculated the percentage of students that had graduated from two and four-year institutions from all students who would have been expected to have graduated from those institutions based on their date of enrollment. Of the students included in this study who enrolled in a two-year institution, 59% had first enrolled at least two-years ago. Approximately 17% of students who had enrolled in two-year institutions at least two years prior to the study had graduated. Among students enrolled in four-year institutions, 25% had enrolled four or more years prior to the start of the study. Of those students who had enrolled four or more years earlier, 44% had graduated at the time of this study. For comparison, recent data from NCES showed that 48% of postsecondary students completed a bachelor's or an associate's degree within 6 years.[14]

Alumni Survey – Education, Employment, and Defining Success

Analysis of data from the survey of CIS alumni also provided useful insights into educational outcomes of former CIS students beyond high school. Importantly, the survey provided an opportunity to collect information from students who did not or have not yet enrolled in postsecondary institutions or who enrolled in institutions not included in the National Student Clearinghouse database.[15] Results from the survey found that approximately 30% of CIS alumni indicated high school diploma/GED as their highest level of education obtained and 5% indicated attending trade school or receiving vocational training or certification. Additionally, 37% of CIS alumni surveyed indicated completing some college (no degree) and 24% of alumni reported having graduated from a postsecondary institution with a bachelor's or associate's degree. Most CIS alumni (65%) who reported attending a postsecondary institution were first-generation college-going students. A vast majority of alumni who reported attending a postsecondary institution applied for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (92%) and scholarships (77%) to pay for college.

In addition to level of education, the survey addressed former CIS students' employment and job attainment after high school. Findings showed that a majority of CIS alumni (62%) were employed either full-time or part-time and 41% of those alumni reported working in their preferred field. Of the alumni who indicated that they were currently employed either full-time or part-time, 57.4% reported also being enrolled in a post-secondary institution while working.

Based on the personal history, circumstances, and interests of each student, the way that students define success in their lives will differ. A key goal of this study was to determine how CIS alumni define success in their own lives. We hoped that this insight would allow us to better understand how students served by CIS think about their own success and how CIS can more effectively support and prepare students for achieving success in life.

Choose the highest level of education you have obtained to date (n = 527):

- Some college (No degree) (37%)
- High school graduate (GED/Diploma) (30%)
- Bachelor's degree (16%)
- Associate's degree (8%)
- Trade school/Vocational training (5%)
- Master's degree (2%)
- Some high school (No diploma) (1.7%)
- Doctoral degree (0.2%)

Which of the following categories best describe your current occupation (n = 327)? *

- Other (please specify) (25%) **
- Food preparation and serving related (16%)
- Sales (11%)
- Education, training, and library (9%)
- Office and administrative support (6%)
- Community and social services (6%)
- Healthcare support (5%)

*Only includes top indicated occupations.

**Responses in other category included employment in hospitality industry, government, retail, call center, warehouse etc.

Alumni responded to two questions addressing the definition of "success" in life. Results showed that students differed in their definitions of success. First, respondents were asked to select all response options that reflected "success" after high school. More than 75% of alumni indicated that having good mental health, good physical health, finding employment, and being financially secure were indicative of having been successful in life after high school. Although still identified as a marker of success by most alumni, academic indicators of success were selected slightly less often. Specifically, 67% of alumni indicated that getting accepted to a college/university represented success and 62% identified graduating from a college/university as an indicator of success in life after high school. More traditional and relational indicators were chosen with less frequency with 42% of alumni selecting starting a family as an indicator of success in life.

An additional open-ended question was included to give students the opportunity to provide definitions of success in their own words. Overall, students' definitions of success aligned with their choices to the closed-ended question about success. Specifically, CIS alumni stated that they will know they have achieved success in life when they are financially stable, feel content and happy, have graduated from college, and are employed in their career of choice. Interestingly, from these definitions, feeling that oneself and family are safe and being able to give back to the community emerged as two additional indicators of success that were not included in the multiple-choice responses.

[13] Students' postsecondary journies may include graduation from more than one type of postsecondary institution (this includes two-year vs four-year vs one-year institutions).

[14] Chen, X., Elliott, B. G., Kinney, S. K., Cooney, D., Pretlow, J., Bryan, M., ... & Campbell, T. (2019). Persistence, Retention, and Attainment of 2011-12 First-Time Beginning Postsecondary Students as of Spring 2017. First Look. NCES 2019-401. National Center for Education Statistics.

[15] Data from National Student Clearinghouse could not be matched with CIS alumni survey data. Therefore, a determination could not be made whether there is an overlap between student data from National Student Clearinghouse and CIS alumni survey.

In describing what success looks like to them one respondent stated, "[I know I will have achieved success in life when] I have total comfort in my life, in my skin, and with the people I have made family with." Another former CIS student offered a similar sentiment, "[I know I will have achieved success in life when] I feel truly happy and at a good place in my life."

Lastly, many alumni indicated that "achieving personal goals" was important to feeling successful in life after high school. Although somewhat broad, this speaks to the importance of recognizing students' individuality in their goals and pursuits and providing flexible supports and guidance to prepare students to achieve success in their lives according to their personal definitions of success. Overall, findings from the survey showed students' definitions of success to be varied and multifaceted. These results highlight the need for student support staff to work closely with students to understand their interests, goals, and ambitions, and provide supports to create opportunities, build knowledge, and develop skills necessary to succeed in terms defined by the student. Hopefully, many CIS staff are already taking this individualized approach to supporting students and preparing them for success after high school. Although there are always ways in which CIS can improve our work with students, it was both promising and heartening to find that many of the alumni that completed the survey (77%) indicated that they feel they have achieved success in life after high school.[16]

What does success look like after high school? In life? Check all that apply. (n = 401)
- Having good mental health (85%)
- Having good physical health (81%)
- Finding employment (78%)
- Being financially secure (78%)
- Getting accepted to a college/university (67%)
- Graduating from a college/university (62%)
- Starting a family (42%)

Current Key Supports and Services

Understanding former CIS students' post-secondary outcomes and definitions of success was one goal of this study. Crucial to improving the likelihood of student success is identifying supports and services that are or were being provided (including which of those supports are useful and which are not) and what supports may be impactful but are not currently being provided. To address this, the survey of alumni asked former CIS students to identify the supports they received during their time with CIS that empowered them to achieve success in life after high school.

Top among those supports were college and career readiness support and services. The majority of the alumni (greater than 60%) indicated receiving college and career readiness supports, including college application assistance, FAFSA assistance, scholarship application assistance, community service projects, college tours, standardized test/college application fee assistance, resume writing, tutoring or academic assistance, and standardized test preparation. Of the alumni who received these college and career readiness supports, more than 70% indicated that these supports were helpful or very helpful for their success after high school.

"[CIS] provided me with the knowledge to pursue college if I chose to. They also give me the confidence to follow [my] own path."

- CIS Alum

Other key college and career readiness supports included career interest assessments or workshops, group academic projects, interview training workshops, financial planning/management, and job shadowing or internship opportunities. In addition to CIS alumni reporting these college and career readiness supports to be helpful in their success after high school, extant research highlights the effectiveness of these interventions on student outcomes. Supports and interventions that focus on standardized test preparation, such as SAT and ACT tests, have been found to have positively impact the academic achievement of high school students.[17] Research also points to limited but promising evidence about the effect of supports focused on eliminating small financial obstacles such as standardized test fees and college application fees, which has been shown to influence college application submissions.[18]

Supports and services such as career exploration activities, informational interviews, workplace tours, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, etc., often defined as work-based learning, have been found to be positively associated with students' educational outcomes. Specifically, participation in work-based learning approaches in secondary education has been found to have positive effects on student outcomes such as attendance, course-taking, and graduation.[19,20] Research suggests that the combination of providing overall information about FAFSA and assistance with FAFSA applications positively affects outcomes such as FAFSA submissions and receipt of need-based grant aid, which in turn increases the likelihood of college attendance and persistence.[21]

Lastly, the importance of providing overall coaching and guidance to students throughout the college application process cannot be overstated, especially for first-generation college-going students. Supports that focus on guiding and coaching students through the college application process and the transition from high school to college have been shown to influence outcomes such as college enrollment and college match.[22]

[16] As mentioned earlier, it should be noted that the results and findings from the alumni survey may have been impacted by self-selection bias in survey respondents.

[17] U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. (2016, October). Transition to College intervention report: ACT/SAT Test Preparation and Coaching Programs. Retrieved from http://what-works.ed.gov

[18] Ideas42 and Nudge4 (undated). "Nudges, norms, and new solutions: Evidence-based strategies to get students to and through college" (nudge4.ideas42.org/wp-content/themes/nudge4/resources/downloads/NudgesNormsNewSolutions.pdf)

[19] Wonacott, M. E. (2002). The impact of work-based learning on students. ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education.

[20] "Typically, studies of approaches to career and technical education integrating WBL (work-based learning) with traditional academics do not attempt to isolate the effects of different components of the approach on the outcomes examined; consequently, conclusions are not and cannot be drawn on the impact of WBL activities per se." (Wonacott, 2002).

[21] Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). The role of application assistance and information in college decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA experiment. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 127(3), 1205-1242.

[22] Ideas42 and Nudge4 (undated). "Nudges, norms, and new solutions: Evidence-based strategies to get students to and through college" (nudge4.ideas42.org/wp-content/themes/nudge4/resources/downloads/NudgesNormsNewSolutions.pdf)

In addition to college and career readiness supports, CIS alumni also mentioned that a strong and positive relationship with their site coordinators played a key role in helping them find success after high school. Research shows that "young people are most likely to do well when they have at least one well-rounded, strong, and sustained relationship in their lives, as well as a broader web of many positive relationships across the places they spend time and the people with whom they interact."[23] CIS site coordinators supporting students, having one on one conversations with students, listening to them, advising them, and providing overall support and motivation is an asset and resource. An overwhelming majority of CIS alumni (over 80%) indicated that their site coordinator connected them with new ideas, people, or places in their communities, listened to their ideas and took them seriously, helped them get things done, pushed them to be their best, and showed them that they mattered.

"The relationship with my [site coordinator] was really the thing that made me successful. She was always there when I was spiraling with my anxiety and helped me calm down. She pushed me to apply to college even though I was in the middle of a quarter life crisis with the intention of not going and now I'm happy I did."

- CIS Alum

Lastly, the importance of social-emotional skills and mentorship cannot be overstated in empowering students to find success beyond high school. Results from a nationally representative survey of high school students found that "students and young adults in schools that place a strong emphasis on developing social-emotional skills report a more positive social climate and learning environment, doing better academically, and being better prepared for life than those in schools with a weak focus on building social-emotional skills."[24] The same study also found that "students – particularly some of the most vulnerable – cite social and emotional problems as significant barriers to learning, doing their best, and fulfilling their potential."[25] School-based interventions focused on fostering social-emotional learning in students have a long-term positive effect on outcomes, including but not limited to, social and emotional skills, attitudes towards self, others, and school, academic performance, high school graduation, and college attendance.[26] Research also supports the effectiveness of mentoring for improving behavioral, social, emotional, and academic outcomes for young people's development.[27] Overall, 74% of CIS alumni surveyed mentioned receiving social/life skills training and mentoring supports during high school and of those alumni, over 75% indicated social/life skills training and mentoring supports to be helpful or very helpful for their success after high school. Most CIS alumni surveyed (70%) also indicated that CIS helped them develop the social and emotional skills needed to be successful after high school. Over 70% of alumni indicated feeling confident advocating for themselves overall, and with their teachers, professors, and employers.

"The aspect of being social and able to collaborate with others well helped me be successful."

- CIS Alum

"The advice from my mentors made me feel like I could acquire anything that I set my mind to."

- CIS Alum

Supporting Students Beyond High School

Results from 2013 Gallup Student Poll found that "among more than 600,000 Gallup Student Poll participants, only one-third were found to be success-ready."[28] Similarly, even though most of the CIS alumni (77%) indicated that they feel they have achieved success in life after high school, only 47% of alumni felt that they left high school prepared to succeed. While this speaks to the resilience, grit, and determination of students in achieving success after high school despite feeling unprepared, it also highlights the need for a more concerted and intentional effort to prepare students for life after high school.

Although CIS alumni highlighted several supports and services received during high school that empowered them to succeed in life after graduation, they also emphasized the need for more intentional supports to help students prepare for their postsecondary lives. Alumni specifically mentioned the need for more intentional college and career readiness supports to help them better prepare for postsecondary education, to enter the workforce, and for life after high school. The most common were college and career readiness supports focused on raising general awareness regarding college, college applications, college tours, financial aid information, scholarships, and FAFSA. To successfully navigate college, it is critical for students to have an overall understanding of the college environment, including requirements, expectations, and processes. Postsecondary research highlights the importance of cultural capital in postsecondary success. Within postsecondary education, cultural capital "includes knowing how to ask for help, how to participate in class appropriately, and how to navigate bureaucratic systems to access resources, such as financial aid."[29] The lack of such knowledge and capital can negatively affect students' academic performance as well as result in discomfort and uncertainty in postsecondary settings, all of which may lead to disengagement and dropout from postsecondary education.

Given that a majority of the CIS alumni that completed this survey and attended postsecondary institutions were first-generation college-going students (65%), it is even more critical that CIS works to ensure that students are equipped with general college know-how and cultural capital during high school and as they transition to life after high school. The importance of this is re-enforced by research that

[23] Roehlkepartain, E. C., Pekel, K., Syvertsen, A. K., Sethi, J., Sullivan, T. K., & Scales, P. C. (2017). Relationships first: Creating connections that help young people thrive. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1-20.
[24] DePaoli, J. L., Atwell, M. N., Bridgeland, J. M., & Shriver, T. P. (2018). Respected: Perspectives of youth on high school and social and emotional learning. Civic with Hart Research Associates.
[25] DePaoli, J. L., Atwell, M. N., Bridgeland, J. M., & Shriver, T. P. (2018). Respected: Perspectives of youth on high school and social and emotional learning. Civic with Hart Research Associates.
[26] Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. Child development, 88(4), 1156-1171.
[27] DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 12(2), 57-91.
[28] Gallup. (2014). State of America's schools: The path to winning again in education.
[29] Karp, M. M. (2011). How Non-Academic Supports Work: Four Mechanisms for Improving Student Outcomes. CCRC Brief. Number 54. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

points to the evidence that guidance and counseling services in colleges are overburdened and underfunded, and efforts to disseminate information are often not well-coordinated, which may decrease the likelihood of students' postsecondary success.[30] As such, continuing to provide integrated student supports to students beyond high school and throughout their postsecondary education could increase the likelihood of students' postsecondary success. A recently completed case study of the work of CIS of Houston in local community colleges highlights similarities and differences in working within secondary and postsecondary environments and offers a preliminary look at the implementation of the CIS model in postsecondary contexts.[31]

In addition to college readiness supports, alumni also mentioned the need for supports that would help them prepare for different career opportunities after high school. These supports included resume writing, job and internship searches, job shadowing and internship opportunities, networking, and public speaking. Just over half of CIS alumni (56%) indicated that they did not receive or were not able to access any job shadowing and internship opportunities. It is worth noting that in addition to college and career readiness supports, alumni mentioned the importance of educating students about different pathways after high school other than the traditional college pathway. This could include, but is not limited to, community colleges, certifications, trade schools, and the military.

Although alumni mentioned finding employment and being financially secure as one of the top indicators of success, less than one-third of alumni (29%) indicated that they feel financially secure in life after high school and an even smaller percentage (21%) indicated that they feel they left high school prepared for the financial demands of life after high school. Family expenses, rent, mortgage, utilities, and student loans were listed as some of the more pressing financial obligations for alumni. It is not surprising then that financial literacy emerged as one of the key areas of support identified by CIS alumni as necessary to achieve success in life after high school. Findings from a recent survey of college students done by EVERFI showed that only 53% of students reported feeling prepared to manage their money and only 35% reported having ever taken a personal finance course in high school.[32] According to the Champlain College Center for Financial Literacy's "National Report Card on State Efforts to Improve Financial Literacy in High Schools," 54% of states (27 states) received grades C, D, or F, meaning that there is little to zero oversight and no requirements from states for financial literacy education.[33] Approximately half of the CIS alumni surveyed (52%) indicated that they received some form of support or service related to financial planning and management during high school. Given how little emphasis is placed on financial literacy in schools, it becomes critical that student support providers work with students to equip them with necessary information and resources to navigate the financial demands of life after high school.

Lastly, CIS alumni mentioned the need to build and cultivate life skills for a successful transition to life after high school. According to the World Health Organization, life skills are defined as "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" and can be categorized into the following three categories:[34]

• Critical thinking/decision-making skills;

• Interpersonal/communication skills; and

• Coping and self-management skills.

Research shows that cultivating these life skills and developing social and emotional competencies has an influence on lifelong outcomes such as educational attainment, employment, and earnings.[35] CIS alumni specifically emphasized the importance of learning more about life after high school overall, developing skills necessary to navigate different life circumstances, living independently, budgeting, and managing finances to name a few.

[30] Karp, M. M. (2011). How Non-Academic Supports Work: Four Mechanisms for Improving Student Outcomes. CCRC Brief. Number 54. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

[31] Communities In Schools. (2021). Integrated Student Supports in Postsecondary Contexts: A Case Study of Implementation of the CIS Model in Community College Campuses.

[32] Zapp, D. (2019). 2019 Money Matters On Campus. Everfi. Retrieved from https://everfi.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MoneyMatters-2019.pdf

[33] Pelletier, J. (2017). Is Your State Making the Grade? 2017 National Report Card on State Efforts to Improve Financial Literacy in High Schools. Champlain College. Retrieved from https://www.champlain.edu/centers-of-experience/center-for-financial-literacy/report-national-high-school-financial-literacy

[34] World Health Organization. (2003). Skills for health: Skills-based health education including life skills: An important component of a child-friendly/health-promoting school.

[35] AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity. (2015). Opportunity, responsibility, and security: A consensus plan for reducing poverty and restoring the American dream. AEI.

Conclusion

Empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life is central to the mission of Communities In Schools. This brief summarizes preliminary research exploring the postsecondary outcomes and perceptions of success for students served by CIS. Students' definitions of success are varied and multifaceted and range from getting accepted to and graduating from college, finding employment, and becoming financially secure and independent to having good mental and physical health, feeling content in life, and being able to give back to the community. Results from this study also highlight areas where CIS can step in and provide more intentional supports to prepare students for success after high school. These supports include college and career readiness supports with an emphasis on overall college and career awareness, internship and job shadowing opportunities, financial literacy, and life skills development to successfully navigate life after high school. In addition, many CIS alumni were interested in learning about and pursuing pathways other than enrollment in four-year postsecondary institutions after high school, including military, trade school, vocational training, and community college. Overall, these results highlight the need for intentional, focused, and individualized supports starting before high school graduation, through the transition to a postsecondary pathway, and beyond to ensure that students are prepared for life after high school. Understanding that life success is defined differently by everyone, it is imperative that student support staff work closely with individual students to understand their interests, abilities, and goals and provide supports and services to build the knowledge, skills, and resources to empower students to achieve success in life. As one CIS alum stated, "implement [supports and services] with achievable goals/objectives for each student based on the strength and/or weaknesses of the student - no one size fits all."
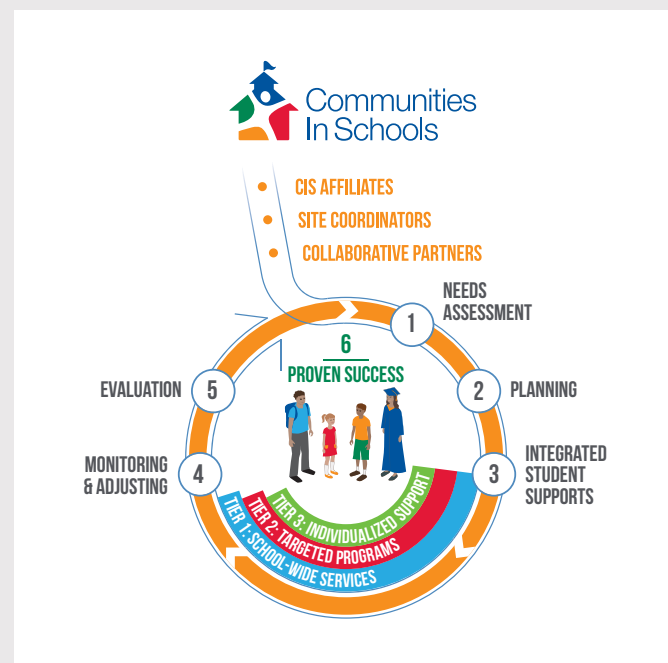
Communities In Schools Model

Figure 2. Source:https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/