



Communities
In Schools®

CIS 2021 Strategic Plan Refresh

Responding in a Time of Crisis



Executive Summary

Mission

A U.S. education system where every student receives the integrated student supports they need to achieve in school and life, regardless of race, zip-code, and historical marginalization.

Ambition

To achieve organizational sustainability, continually improve the quality of our work, innovate to deliver positive outcomes for students, and grow with quality—so that every school district and national charter management organization in the highest-need communities in America will have access to integrated student supports.

Strengthened Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We will accelerate and expand our work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our policies and practices on behalf of our students and alumni.

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A Time of Crisis

Understanding the implications for school systems, students, families, and Communities In Schools

Public Health Crisis

COVID-19 caused more than 50 million school children to lose access to school buildings during Spring and into the Fall of 2020. While all students suffered, impacts were most severe for Black and Brown students, Indigenous students, and students living in poverty. After the 2020-2021 school year, students of color could be six to twelve months behind, compared with four to eight months for white students.¹

Implications

- Continued disruption of the norms and practices of the U.S. public education system
- Increased risk of disengagement and dropout for the students most in need
- Sharp and urgent increase in the need for school systems to develop new capacities and provide new supports to ensure successful reengagement of all students

Racial Injustice

Students, families, and communities across the country have experienced a time of extraordinary turmoil and uncertainty. The death of Black Americans, including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, and more at the hands of police generated waves of protest and violence. The country continues to struggle with how to effectively respond to the stark evidence of entrenched, systemic injustice for communities of color.

Implications

- The emergence of a deeper, more widely held understanding and acknowledgment of the existence and impacts of structural inequality and systemic racism
- Growing sense of urgency for the need to act; to take the meaningful, effective actions that will result in a more equitable education system for all students
- Organizations and institutions are increasingly focusing their attention on the systems in which they operate and working to improve existing systemic inequities. For Communities In Schools (CIS™), this translates to a renewed focus on inequities inside schools and strengthening our efforts to help drive change from both the inside and outside

Economic Instability

In addition to a public health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic crisis for America's businesses, municipalities, and families. In the second quarter of 2020, the U.S. economy recorded its steepest quarterly drop on record, a decrease of 9.1 percent.² Low-income families with children were most likely to experience negative impacts of the crisis.³ From 2018 to 2020, the rate of food insecurity doubled for households with children.⁴

Implications

- Intense pressure on school budgets and resources to deliver impact
- Increased demand for proven and efficient investments
- Heightened interest in and appetite for proven, measurable, data-informed results

¹ COVID-19 and Learning Loss - Disparities grow and students need help, McKinsey 12/8/20

² Brookings Institute, Ten Facts about COVID-19 and the US Economy, Sept. 17, 2020

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

A Plan to Respond

A Need to Focus, an Opportunity to Strengthen

While the context in which Communities In Schools now operates is dramatically new and different, the refreshed plan is not. This plan carries forward much of what the original strategic plan laid out three years ago. The focus on Sustain, Deepen, and Grow is still present and key initiatives in progress will continue—some at a different level of intensity and emphasis.

However, there is a clear need and rationale to refresh the plan. The combined effects of the crises in public health, racial injustice, and the economy create a level of upheaval for school systems, students, and families that cannot be ignored. Business as usual is not an option.

A key difference in the refreshed plan is its emphasis on focus and flexibility. Our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is now an even more important, more central focus across the network. The plan also identifies where and how CIS will best serve students during this crisis and outlines a more flexible approach in these areas to help ensure success.

In addition, with CIS alumnus Rey Saldaña joining as CEO, there is an opportunity to energize the alumni network and strengthen its contribution to our mission and success at a critical moment. The refreshed plan defines the strategy and actions to act on this unique opportunity.

“As we embark on our nationwide effort to re-enter school buildings, we must determine not just how far apart desks need to be, whether attendance should be staggered, and how often to sanitize facilities. We must also ask how we can build an education system that gives every child in every U.S. community the opportunity to learn and succeed. A system better than the one we left behind ... ”

Rey Saldaña and Arne Duncan, *USA Today*, June 2020

Ambition

To achieve organizational sustainability, continually improve the quality of our work, innovate to deliver positive outcomes for students, and grow with quality—so that every school district and national charter management organization in the highest-need communities in America will have access to integrated student supports (ISS).

	2 Year Strategies	2 Year Goals	10 Year Goals
<p>Achieve a financially sustainable CIS network</p> <p>Deepen understanding of what drives positive outcomes for students</p> <p>Grow with quality to serve more students</p>		<p>Build on growth achieved in plan years 1-3</p> <p>Serve 1.87 million students with our school-wide approach</p> <p>Serve 165,500 students with case management support</p> <p>Continue to partner with at least 2,964 schools</p> <p>Develop new alumni support and engagement tools and resources</p>	<p>Serve more students in more geographies</p> <p>Serve through an efficient mix of highly effective affiliates and licensed partners</p> <p>Prioritize traditionally marginalized students and schools for ISS</p> <p>Build an inclusive, robust, alumni network that strengthens local engagement</p>
<p>PROGRAM Impact</p> <p>Impact of National Office and network of affiliates and licensed partners</p>	<p>Reconnect/reengage with students</p> <p>Prioritize students of color and students living in poverty</p> <p>Help schools and communities create equitable conditions for learning</p> <p>Support consistent, increased impact in every affiliate and licensed site</p> <p>Continue strategic, smart growth and partnerships</p> <p>Fulfill CIS lifelong commitment to students as they move across community roles</p>		
<p>SYSTEM Impact</p> <p>Impact of CIS influencing education and policy through data/evidence and advocacy efforts</p>	<p>Support schools, communities, students, and alumni in efforts to accelerate social justice</p> <p>Use data and evidence to make the case for ISS and drive systemic change</p>	<p>Change mindsets on how to ensure equitable learning conditions for all students</p> <p>Demonstrate the impact of ISS on students’ recovery and reengagement in learning</p> <p>Help state/federal policymakers, funders, and influencers recognize ISS as essential for equitable education</p>	<p>Ensure state/federal policymakers prioritize and fund ISS as a critical component of all schools</p> <p>Create ISS proof points that ensure strong, equitable student outcomes</p>

One Fundamental Commitment

Unchanged commitment to integrated student supports: a proven, evidence-based model for effective change

The severe shocks of 2020 have altered our environment, but have not shaken us from our mission or our fundamental belief in the importance of integrated student supports.

Over the last three years, CIS accomplished many of the goals we set in 2017 to help us assess progress toward integrated student supports, including

477
New schools served (2,900 total)

224K
New students served

96%
CIS case-managed students graduated or received GED



Six Strategies for Impact

Key Initiatives to Meet the Moment

Program Impact Strategies

Impact of National Office and network of affiliates and licensed partners

- 1. Reengagement**
Reconnect and reengage with students, particularly students of color and students living in poverty, by helping schools and communities create equitable conditions for learning
- 2. Consistent Impact**
Support consistent and increased impact in every affiliate and every licensed site
- 3. Quality Growth**
Continue strategic, smart growth and partnerships
- 4. Lifelong Commitment**
Strengthen and fulfill our lifelong commitment to students as they move across community roles and achieve in life

System Impact Strategies

Impact of CIS influencing education and policy through data/evidence and advocacy efforts

- 5. Social Justice**
Support schools, communities, students, and alumni in their efforts to accelerate social justice
- 6. Data and Evidence**
Use data and evidence to make the case for why integrated student supports are essential to decision makers, communities, and stakeholders as they pursue systemic change

Our Belief

Communities In Schools believes that transformative relationships are key to unlocking a student's potential. We will succeed by including in our strategies, ingraining in our culture, and reflecting in our behaviors, principles and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a result, we break down immediate and systemic barriers to create and sustain equitable outcomes.



Reengagement

Reconnect and reengage with students, particularly students of color and students living in poverty, by helping schools and communities create equitable conditions for learning

During this time of crisis, a renewed focus and enhanced strategic response are essential to meet the unprecedented challenges facing school systems, students, parents, and communities working to create new conditions for success for all students. Now more than ever, the CIS model of integrated student supports can help schools address the local factors that contribute to disengagement and inequitable learning.

Key Initiatives

Amplify messaging and thought leadership on equitable conditions for learning (External)

Make targeted investments in local affiliates for implementing reengagement supports (Internal)

Continue diversity, equity, and inclusion focus and supports

Definition of Success

A dozen of affiliates produce promising practices for improving student engagement and creating equitable conditions for learning, as determined by a third-party case study and outcome evaluation. All affiliates have access to training and support on the new engagement tools, measures, and practices and understand how to align with existing practices as part of their CIS model implementation.

Metrics

- Network-wide rate of utilization of CIS reengagement tools and practices
- Levels of student engagement in learning (High/Moderate/Low)
- Third-party case study and outcome evaluation



Consistent Impact

Support consistent and increased impact in every affiliate and every licensed site



As an organization, CIS must respond to this moment rapidly, effectively, and consistently. The national organization, local affiliates, and licensed partners will collaborate to build the health and capacity of the CIS network to ensure sustained delivery of our model and achieve consistent impacts. This refreshed plan is designed to help local affiliates and licensed partners in key areas, including increasing local visibility and relevance, organizing and equipping staff to execute shared priorities, supporting peers in areas of expertise and experience, and surfacing opportunities for national, state, and local advocacy efforts.

Key Initiatives

Execute on strengthening and sustaining our network through shared services, strategic alliances, and consolidation

Prepare to implement lessons learned from early restructuring

Continue Leadership Town Hall and Student Support Institute

Definition of Success

CIS provides a clear and successfully traveled path to a restructured network that improves affiliate “health,” overall portfolio strength/performance, and consistency of impact across affiliates.

Metrics

- Affiliate organizational health/strength ratings (High/Moderate/Low)
- Network connectedness scores
- Size of the CIS network (affiliates and licensed partners)
- Sustained number of schools/students served
- Growth in schools/students served



Quality Growth

Continue strategic, smart growth
and partnerships

We believe CIS has a moral obligation to serve more students in need. That same moral obligation holds us to a standard of growth that does not compromise on the quality of our impact. To help CIS meet this obligation, a key strategy will ensure a focus on consistency in applying the CIS model with fidelity across the network, partnering with proven, effective local resources, and ensuring we achieve growth with quality.

Key Initiatives

Support organic growth for affiliates and provide incentives for targeted growth with strategic investments

Provide a continuum of offerings to potential partners (e.g., turnaround, post-secondary integrated student supports)

Reach new target geographies via licensed partnerships

Increase visibility and interest in integrated student supports and professional development offerings amongst partners

Definition of Success

CIS maintains a consistent level of excellence in student impact as it grows to reach more students, establishes a presence in new states, and launches a pilot(s) of integrated student supports in post-secondary learning environments.

Metrics

By September 30, 2022, CIS will

- Serve 1.87 million students in 2,964 schools
- Serve schools in two new states through licensed or RampUp partnerships
- Deliver training on integrated student supports with two post-secondary partners



Lifelong Commitment

Strengthen and fulfill our lifelong commitment to students as they move across community roles and achieve in life



A trained, caring adult can change students and schools. Our belief in this idea is central to the CIS model for change. This strategy is designed to help us fulfill our mission to empower students to stay in school and “achieve in life.” Creating a pathway for continued support, we will extend this idea beyond students and schools to include systematic support for CIS alumni to help them become engaged, productive members of their communities.

Key Initiatives

Develop a platform for capturing and engaging alumni

Define a strategy for post-secondary, workforce success and community leadership

Support alums through partnerships

Definition of Success

CIS provides new supports that help alumni be active, visible, and effective in working to improve education at the local, national, and policy levels. These supports include partnerships with credible, innovative organizations that help alumni “achieve in life”. As a result, CIS alumni are energized and mobilized at new, higher levels.

Metrics

By September 30, 2022, CIS will

- Engage 2,300 CIS alumni
- Launch “Achieve in Life” agenda with one partnership



Social Justice

Support schools, communities, students, and alumni in their efforts to accelerate social justice



The present moment has made the systemic inequities facing Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities plainly visible and undeniable. This plan refresh calls for renewed focus and deliberate actions by CIS to help break down institutional barriers and build more equitable systems. We will enact a new strategy to support schools and communities and to engage CIS alumni into our work in more concrete ways at the local and national levels.

Key Initiatives

Amplify voices of CIS students

Identify, engage, and support partners and coalitions working on social justice

Increase inclusion of student and alumni voices in local CIS programming and governance

Definition of Success

CIS establishes baselines for more systematic and effective efforts to support social justice efforts at the local and national levels. These efforts will include network leadership and participation in “local equity coalitions” as well as affiliates effectively facilitating and amplifying student voices and helping give students’ agency in their communities. In addition, CIS trains and mobilizes its alumni network to act in support of social justice on local boards and engages at the affiliate and state office level.

Metrics

- 300 CIS alumni actively engaged at local level, including roles at affiliates, boards, and state offices
- Baseline for participation and leadership in “Local Equity Coalitions”
- Baseline for number of affiliates supporting student agency and voices in support of social justice in their communities



Data and Evidence for Integrated Student Supports

Use data and evidence to make the case to decision makers, communities, and other stakeholders as to why integrated student supports are essential to systemic change

School budgets are facing sharp reductions and constraints as a result of the economic impacts of COVID-19. As administrators struggle to respond, only those programs that can show clear, solid evidence of student impact will compete effectively for increasingly scarce resources. Data and evidence are at the core of CIS's success and this plan refresh outlines a strategy to elevate that core with key audiences through new, compelling stories of success and a research agenda that reinforces CIS's position as a leader in advancing education.

Key Initiatives

Accelerate research and innovation agenda

Support state/federal level advocacy

Elevate examples of success (including student/alumni voices)

Execute thought leadership agenda

Definition of Success

State and federal policy-makers, funders, and thought leaders have awareness and knowledge of the essential role of integrated student supports in an effective post-COVID-19 approach in schools, and provide meaningful support for integrated student supports funding and implementation.

Metrics

By September 30, 2022, CIS will

- Increase state-level integrated student supports funding in four states where CIS invests advocacy/lobbying grants
- Introduce Communities Serving Schools Act in one Congressional chamber with bi-partisan support of key committee leadership
- Develop at least 10 new strategic relationships with elected officials and new administration (relationships defined as in-person meetings between board members, CEO, affiliate meetings, or visits to our schools)
- Publish four opinion pieces in nationally recognized media about the importance of integrated student supports in every Title I School in America

In Schools and Beyond

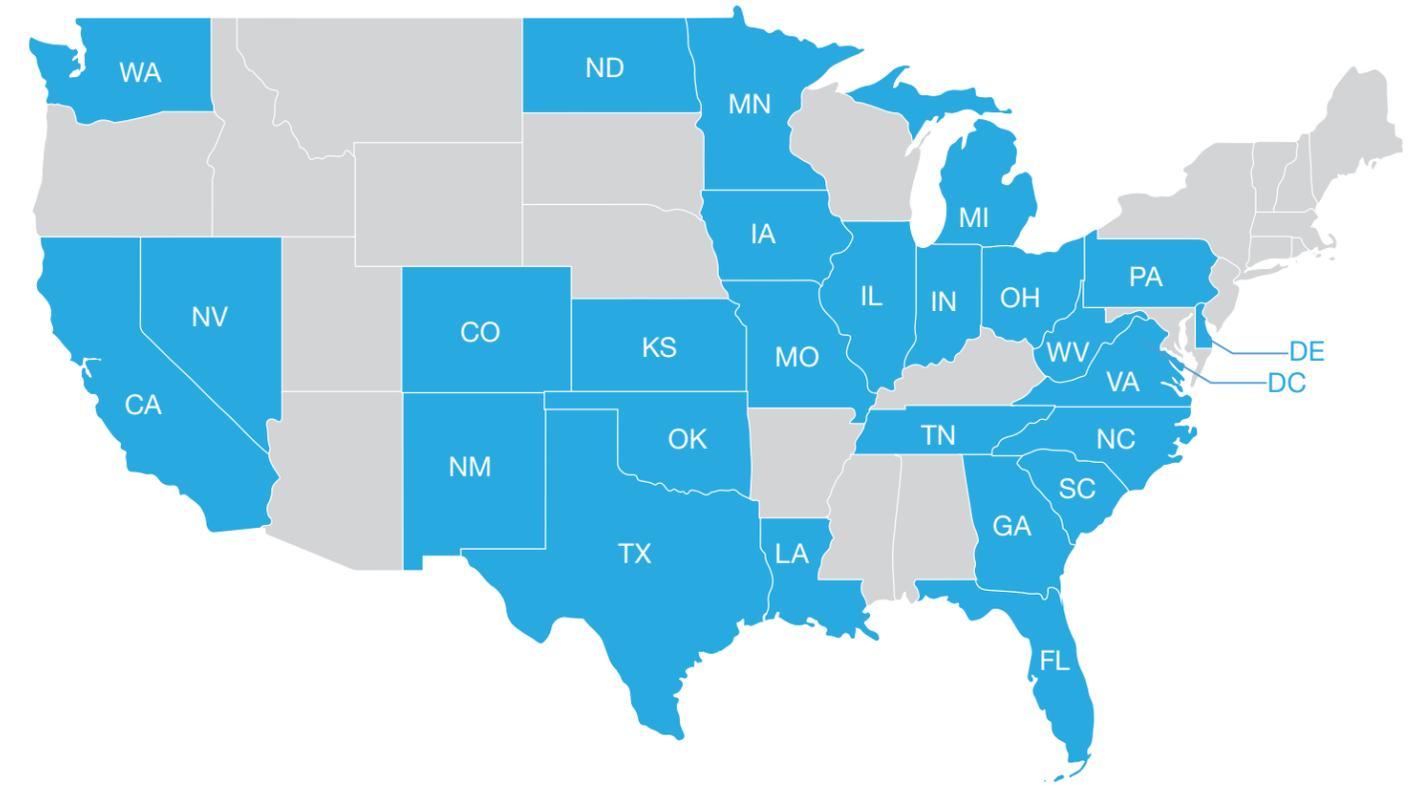
This year, there are more students like Alina who need extra support whether they are learning in school or at home. At Communities In Schools, our trained professionals help ensure all kids have the same opportunity to succeed. We go wherever we're needed to connect them with resources like supplies, technology, mentoring and counseling.



Learn how you can support students like Alina:
[CommunitiesInSchools.org](https://www.CommunitiesInSchools.org)



121 Communities In Schools organizations and licensees operated in 26 states and the District of Columbia in SY19-20.



 **2,900**
schools and community sites
were served.

 **1.7 million**
students were reached with
CIS™ supports and resources.



[CommunitiesInSchools.org](https://www.CommunitiesInSchools.org)