



# Communities In Schools

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

### **Volume 2:**

### **Case Studies**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Communities In Schools

Communities In Schools is the nation's largest dropout prevention organization. For more than 30 years, CIS has connected needed community resources with schools. By bringing caring adults and a wide variety of services into schools to address children's unmet needs, CIS provides a link between educators and the community. The result: Teachers are free to teach, and students – many in jeopardy of dropping out – have the opportunity to focus on learning.

Communities In Schools has worked to ensure that every child has access to the "Five Basics":

- ❖ A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult
- ❖ A safe place to learn and grow
- ❖ A healthy start and a healthy future
- ❖ A marketable skill to use upon graduation
- ❖ A chance to give back to peers and community

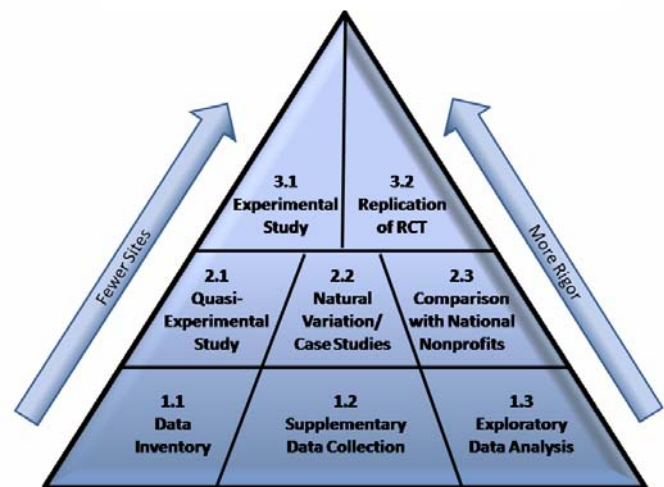
Each year, more than two million young people in 27 states and the District of Columbia have access to integrated student support services through Communities In Schools.

### 1.2 The CIS National Evaluation

In May 2005, The Atlantic Philanthropies funded the first three years of a comprehensive national evaluation of CIS. The evaluation, designed and conducted by ICF International can be envisioned as a three-level pyramid, as shown in Exhibit 1:

- **Base-level studies** provide for the identification of *Network-wide* findings. These studies will provide CIS National with a more in-depth understanding of the strategies used throughout the Network to help students in need. This component also provides for the development of strategies to ensure that CIS remains an organization dedicated to evidence-based practices.
- **Mid-level studies** provide for the identification of CIS's effects at the *school-level*. These studies will help discover not only how much of an impact CIS is having, but also how and why those impacts are being achieved.

Exhibit 1: National Evaluation



- **Top-level studies** provide for the identification of CIS’s effects at the *student-level*. Two experimental studies are currently underway in Austin, Texas and Jacksonville, Florida.

As depicted in Exhibit 1, as we move up the pyramid, fewer sites are involved in each study, but the studies become more rigorous. The power in this design lies in the fact that each level of the pyramid informs the other, and by bringing the results of all studies together, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of how CIS is impacting students, schools, and communities.

### 1.3 Case Studies

This report focuses on results from the final school-level study depicted in the mid-level of the evaluation design—the case studies. While the other school-level studies focused on *what* impact CIS is having at the school level, the case studies were conducted to gather information about *how* CIS is changing students’ lives.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Case Study Overview

In May 2008, the evaluation team conducted multi-day site visits to eight CIS affiliates and selected schools served by each affiliate in order to obtain in-depth, descriptive information from key stakeholders to help answer the following questions:

- **How do local CIS programs describe the CIS model? What are the processes and activities that characterize the CIS model as implemented at the local program level?**
- **What are best practices at the local program level for supporting effective programming intended to help youth learn, stay in school, and prepare for life?**
- **What are the best strategies for a national organization, state office, and local affiliate to promote and support effective local programming?**
- **What are important lessons learned (what works, what does not work, and why) from local affiliates and schools that can be shared with the field?**
- **How effective have the National Office and state offices been in conducting activities to support local affiliates and local programming?**

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the quasi-experimental, natural variation, and typology studies are presented in the *Communities In Schools National Evaluation School Level Report*.

- **What improvements are needed to the CIS Network at the national, state, and local levels?**

Findings from these case studies provide valuable information for CIS to encourage the adoption of common factors and strategies that have been identified to have a positive effect on schools and students.

## **2.2 Selection Process**

The case studies involved the study of eight affiliates and up to three schools served by each affiliate. The selection process proceeded according to the following steps and is shown in Exhibit 2:

1. First, CIS high schools included in the quasi-experimental study were targeted because of the focus of CIS as a dropout prevention program. It was important to “get into the high schools” to see how CIS was impacting dropout. Within the CIS high schools, those defined as high implementing sites were selected. According to the typology developed for the quasi-experimental study, high implementers were those sites that reported implementing 70 percent of identified processes that were determined to be central to the CIS model. These processes include: needs assessment, planning, service delivery, and monitoring and adjustment.<sup>2</sup>
2. Next, high performing high schools from among the high implementers were identified. High performers were defined as those CIS schools that showed improvements in relation to their comparison schools on the following measures: promotion power, graduation rates, and average effect size across multiple outcomes. Promotion power and graduation rates were selected given the focus of CIS on dropout prevention. Additionally, because CIS is a multi-faceted program, it was important to study schools or sites recording success on a number of dimensions (academic and behavioral).
3. Once the high implementing/high performing high schools were identified, we looked for high implementing/high performing middle and/or elementary schools within each affiliate. The same typology was applied to determine high implementers, when data were available. For high performers, emphasis was placed on academics and behavioral outcomes (where available).
4. With the high implementing/high performing schools identified, the next step was to ensure diversity across the sample. Specifically, we examined the urbanicity of the affiliates serving the schools (urban, rural, and suburban), the state’s represented by the affiliates (Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Washington), and the program focus of the

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<sup>2</sup> Adherence to the CIS model was gauged using responses to the Critical Processes Survey and the Site Coordinator Survey, and the core processes identified were aligned to CIS’s Total Quality System (TQS) whenever possible.

schools (academic, behavioral, and mix of whole-school and case-managed services).

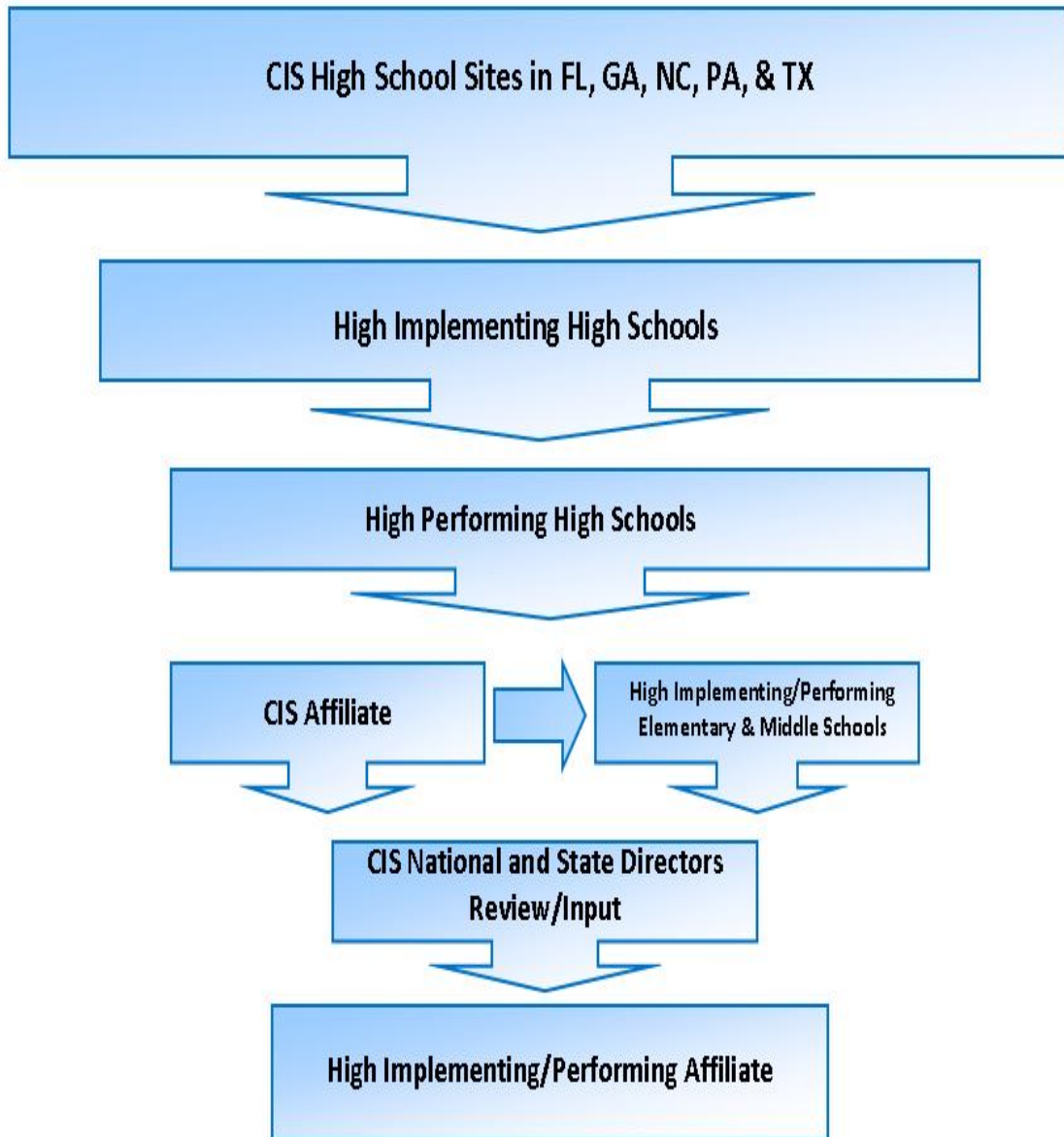
5. Next, the identified affiliates and schools were reviewed by each CIS State Director. A list of possible case study affiliates and identified high implementing/high performing schools (high, middle, and elementary, when available) was shared with each CIS State Director. In some cases, the affiliates identified by the evaluation team were approved by the State Directors for the study and in other cases changes were made based on input from the State Directors.<sup>3</sup>
6. Finally, once the affiliates were determined, the evaluation team then contacted each Executive Director to discuss the case studies. On a few occasions, the Executive Directors declined participation, primarily due to the timing of the case studies at the end of the school year and challenges with scheduling. In these cases, recommendations for a replacement affiliate were obtained from the Executive Director and once again, reviewed with the State Director before contacting the new affiliate. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, again primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. However, in selecting a replacement school, the same criteria were used. The primary difference was that not all schools included in the case studies were included in the quasi-experimental study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. Additionally, when multiple schools at the same level were identified, priority was given to selecting schools that represented a CIS feeder pattern from elementary to middle to high school.

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<sup>3</sup> Reasons State Directors recommended changes to the affiliates included: new Executive Directors, lack of support for the new TQS, and financial difficulties resulting in instability in programming.

**Exhibit 2:**

**CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



Once the schools were identified and it was determined that there were no scheduling conflicts, a member of the evaluation team worked closely with a point of contact from the affiliate to plan the site visit and ensure all interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders were scheduled. The final list of affiliates and selected schools is presented in Exhibit 3.

<b>Exhibit 3: Affiliates and Schools Selected for the Case Studies</b>			
<b>Affiliate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Urbanicity</b>
CIS of Cleveland County	North Carolina	Crest High School Crest Middle School Township Three Elementary School	Rural
CIS of Putnam County	Florida	James A. Long Elementary Riverbreeze Elementary	Rural
CIS of Hart County	Georgia	Hart County High School Hart County Middle School Hartwell Elementary School	Rural
CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Belle Vernon High School Yough Senior High School	Suburban
CIS of Corpus Christi	Texas	George Evans Elementary School South Park Middle School Miller High School	Urban
CIS of High Point	North Carolina	High Point Central High School Ferndale Middle School Oak Hill Elementary School	Urban
CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County	Pennsylvania	South Academy Oliver High School CIS East End Academy	Urban
CIS of San Antonio	Texas	John F. Kennedy High School Wrenn Junior High School Westwood Terrace Elementary School	Urban



Exhibit 4 presents the high schools ICF visited in the case studies and data regarding implementation, promoting power, dropout factory status, promoting power effect size, and graduation effect size. As previously discussed, we chose these schools in large part based on a combination of implementation fidelity and outcomes, although the selection of individual schools was oftentimes complicated by the availability of staff and scheduling conflicts. For example, Belle Vernon High School was not on our original list of proposed schools; however, affiliate staff thought it was a good example of the CIS model in action. Additionally, the promoting power figures indicate that we conducted the case studies in high-need schools.

Exhibit 4: High School Data						
State	High School Name	Implementation Score (0-100)	Promoting Power (2006)*	Dropout Factory <sup>4</sup> (2006)*?	Promoting Power Effect Size	Graduation Effect Size
GA	Hart County	43.08	57.53%	<b>Yes</b>	1.28	-0.16
NC	Crest	68.89	65.30%	No	0.56	n.a.
NC	High Point Central	n.a.	53.24%	<b>Yes</b>	n.a.	n.a.
PA	Belle Vernon	75.39	88.94%	No	-0.02	-0.20
PA	Elizabeth Forward	n.a.	82.50%	No	n.a.	n.a.
PA	Oliver	n.a.	44.06%	<b>Yes</b>	n.a.	n.a.
PA	Yough	78.46	91.55%	No	1.34	0.32
TX	John F. Kennedy	83.89	49.38%	<b>Yes</b>	-0.32	0.78
TX	Miller	n.a.	50.38%	<b>Yes</b>	n.a.	n.a.

\*Promoting power 2006 and dropout factory information from Alliance for Education website at: [http://www.all4ed.org/about\\_the\\_crisis/schools/state\\_and\\_local\\_info/promotingpower](http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/promotingpower)

### 2.3 Audiences Targeted for Interviews and Focus Groups

In order to understand how CIS works, it was important to gather information from a range of key stakeholders connected to CIS. Exhibit 5 below shows the audiences or key stakeholders targeted for interviews and focus groups across the eight affiliates and selected schools.<sup>5</sup> A total of 506 stakeholders participated in interviews or focus groups across the eight affiliates. This included: 70 CIS affiliate and school personnel, 91 school personnel, 23 community partners, 62 parents, and 160 students.

<sup>4</sup> For comparison, Robert Balfanz considers schools with promoting power below 60% to be “dropout factories.”

<sup>5</sup> It is recognized that the CIS titles/positions vary across affiliates and/or schools/sites. As part of the planning process, a member of the case study team worked with the CIS point of contact for each affiliate to determine the appropriate stakeholders to be approached for an interview or focus group. For smaller affiliates, a single person often represented multiple stakeholders needing to be interviewed. When this occurred, the protocols were tailored to reflect all appropriate questions for each respondent and his/her roles.

Exhibit 5: Targeted Audience		
CIS Affiliate Staff	School Staff	Other
Executive Director Board of Directors Members Chief Financial Officer Program Director Site Coordinators Data/Evaluation Lead Marketing/PR Lead	CIS Case Managers School Principal/Vice Principal Principal School Guidance Counselor Teachers	Community Partners CIS Students CIS Parents

**2.4 Topics Covered by the Interviews and Focus Groups with Key Stakeholders**

The following topics or content areas were addressed (as appropriate) for the key stakeholder interviews:

- **Demographics.** Information regarding level of education, length of time in current position, and years with CIS were captured.
- **Roles/Responsibilities.** Information regarding the specific roles and responsibilities of each position held by the key stakeholder (as it relates to CIS) were collected.
- **Relationships.** Information regarding key relationships among CIS staff, school personnel, partner organizations, and others were obtained through questions in this section. This included benefits/strengths of the relationships as well as challenges/limitations. Additionally, information on what makes for successful relationships was captured.
- **Implementation.** This section asked questions intended to solicit information regarding the implementation of CIS (at the local affiliate as well as school level). This included: a description of what CIS is; service offerings; resources/finances; training/technical assistance (delivered and needed); strengths/benefits; challenges/limitations; successes; and best practices in key areas such as planning, assessment, service delivery, securing funding/resources, hiring/retaining staff, and monitoring and evaluation.

Additionally, all key stakeholders were asked to explain in their own words what CIS meant to them, to describe their future vision for CIS in their community, to identify needed support to make this vision a reality, and finally, everyone was given the opportunity to provide advice for others involved in CIS.

In addition to the interviews, focus groups were conducted with students and parents, when possible. Questions for both groups were organized according to the following topic areas: 1) issues facing students; 2) availability of programs and services; 3)

effectiveness of programs and services in meeting student needs; 4) knowledge of CIS; 5) impact of CIS on students; and 6) other comments. The parent focus groups were consistent across elementary, middle, and high school. For the student focus groups, the protocols were tailored to ensure age-appropriate questions. A brief questionnaire accompanied the parent and student focus groups to help facilitate dialogue and provide an anchoring of responses on key questions. All protocols (and questionnaires) are included in Appendix A.

### 3. Findings

This section provides a synthesis of findings across the eight affiliates and 22 schools included in the case studies. Common themes and patterns in responses are presented, and where appropriate, different or unique findings are included. A summary of findings for each affiliate is provided in the Case Study Profiles in Appendix B.

#### 3.1 What is CIS?

All key stakeholders were asked to explain in their own words what CIS meant to them. While the responses ranged from a couple of words to lengthy sentences, the commonality in responses across all affiliates and schools was striking.

CIS was described as an organization that works in the schools with families to ensure obstacles blocking a student's progress were removed. CIS brings resources into the schools. It prepares students for the future by working with partners to improve academic progress, behavior, and attendance and provide students with skills to help them complete school, enter the workforce, and improve their lives. It also focuses on students that need additional help beyond what school personnel are able to provide during the school day. Common words or phrases used to characterize CIS included: dropout prevention; community resource; holistic services and support; advocate for children and families; necessary partner with schools and families; and a listening ear for students.

***“Kids and families have problems that act like roadblocks for kids’ learning. It’s CIS’s job at school to find a way around, over, under, or through that problem...With the help of school counselors and social workers, CIS works to find the way to help that family through that roadblock and make sure the kids are going to be successful.”***

*-CIS personnel*

#### 3.2 What are Common Components of the CIS Model across Affiliates?

##### Planning and Development

All affiliates described a formal planning process that involved the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, CIS staff, and other key stakeholders in the community. In particular, input from school boards, principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and in some cases, students was sought during the planning process. Most planning, in particular site planning, was conducted annually.

The development of school plans was driven primarily by the on-site CIS staff in collaboration with school personnel. A common element of all planning processes, whether at the affiliate- or school-level was ensuring decisions were aligned with the CIS mission. This included deciding where to implement CIS (i.e., which schools to go into), what funding opportunities to pursue, what services to offer/support, and what training/assistance to provide to staff.

***“CIS doesn’t just follow the money...but decides what programs are best for the county based on analyses of data.”***

*-CIS Personnel*

Other common by-products of the planning and development process included: establishment of short- and long-term goals and objectives, development of standard memorandum of understanding, and policies and procedures for interacting with external partners, including the media.

## **Marketing and Outreach**

Across the affiliates, there was some type of marketing and outreach occurring in the communities and schools. Larger affiliates often had a person designated to marketing and public relations of CIS to the community. For smaller affiliates, marketing often fell to the Executive Director. Most affiliates used the media to help market CIS through newspaper articles, radio advertisements, and public service announcements. Others explained that giving presentations at local events and hosting/sponsoring events made up their marketing strategy. What was consistent across affiliates was the power of “word-of-mouth” in educating the community about CIS. Most of the affiliates also reported that the state office was a good source of marketing materials.

### **Promising Practice** “Champions for Children”

One affiliate maintains a list of “Champions for Children” – a core group of more than 30 people they can rely on to provide resources for children and families when necessary. Through weekly e-mails, the “Champions” are kept abreast of CIS events, the accomplishments of students involved in CIS, and any needs the students and families may have.

Internal marketing of CIS was the responsibility of the CIS staff on site at each school. The most effective marketing identified was face-to-face interactions (high-touch strategies) with principals, teachers, guidance counselors, school social workers, parents, and students to share information regarding what CIS is and what it can do for students and families. Other methods of communication included flyers and attendance at school events (PTA meetings, orientation, etc.).

## **Needs Assessment**

Every affiliate conducted some type of community needs assessment. Some affiliates engaged in comprehensive assessments involving household surveys, student surveys,

and interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. Others reviewed local statistics (e.g., school data, crime statistics, unemployment rates, poverty rates) to help determine the needs of their communities and schools. Community needs assessments were conducted anywhere from every three years to annually. Additionally, the needs of each school were determined based on input from the school district, principals, teachers, guidance counselors, and on-site CIS staff. Together, this information helped determine where CIS needed to be and what support or gaps it needed to fill.

For students, individual assessments were made upon referral to the program. In some schools, CIS participated in team meetings that consisted of teachers, vice principals, school social workers, and guidance counselors at the start of the year and throughout to identify high-need students that could benefit from CIS. In addition, many CIS school personnel across the affiliates indicated that surveys to parents, students, and school personnel were administered on an ongoing basis to gauge needs.

### **Referrals**

Across the affiliates, the source of referrals to the CIS program were diverse. Most referrals came from teachers and guidance counselors. Other sources of referral included principals and vice principals, school social workers, community partners, parents, and students (self-referrals and referrals for other students and siblings). In fact, it was not uncommon for CIS to serve multiple children from the same family across grades. In addition to receiving referrals, CIS is also a significant referral source for its community partners.

### **Service Provision/Coordination**

The services provided and/or coordinated by CIS included whole-school and individual case-managed services and support. Whole-school activities, provided more often in elementary schools, included assemblies, guest speakers, and special events (e.g., Red Ribbon week, food drives, school supply drives). Case-managed support often included academic enrichment/tutoring, homework assistance, behavioral modification, support groups, and mentoring.

For elementary and middle schools, CIS often operated the after-school programs (e.g., 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers) offering tutoring, homework assistance, and enrichment activities (e.g., clubs, computers, athletics). In high school, support tended to focus on credit recovery, test preparation, college preparation, and job training. Additionally, CIS staff working with high school students (and some middle school students) emphasized time spent focusing on issues regarding

#### **Promising Practice**

Some affiliates encourage transition activities between CIS schools. For example, CIS staff from elementary schools take entering middle school students to the CIS middle schools to meet CIS staff, teachers, principals, and to tour the schools during the summer. This is also done for middle school students transitioning to a CIS high school. This ensures continuity of services once students transition.

relationships with friends, boyfriends/girlfriends, teachers, and family members. For several of the schools, CIS provided teen parent education programs, including conducting home visits.

It was clear that CIS supports more than just the student. In addition to providing or coordinating services for students, CIS helps link families to needed services. These included emergency support for shelter, food, and clothing; employment; child care; medical care; and legal assistance. CIS also provides opportunities for parent involvement in activities involving students. Many affiliates reported that CIS personnel act as a link between parents and school staff.

In order to meet the diverse needs of students and families, CIS must collaborate with other providers in the community. While some support is provided directly by CIS, other services are coordinated by CIS through referrals to other agencies and follow-up by CIS. Other community partners providing support services for students and families across the schools included: AmeriCorps VISTAs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Rotary/Lions Club, United Way, local colleges and universities, health department, and Department of Family and Children Services.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adjustment**

All affiliates and sites identified both formal and informal monitoring and evaluation of CIS operations. Some affiliates utilized the Global Network Campus for tracking and monitoring, others used systems developed by the state office, and still others had developed their own systems for monitoring and reporting. In most cases, formal reporting was done monthly. The Program or Project Director was often the person responsible for reviewing the reports and informing the Executive Director of progress toward annual site plan goals. These reports were also shared with the Board of Directors, along with financial reports. While information was often reported upward and used for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (in particular as part of funding requirements), it was not always the case that the information was used by CIS staff on-site to monitor and adjust services. Instead, input (both formal and informal) from students, parents, teachers, and principals was used most often by CIS staff on-site to evaluate performance and make corrections or adjustments as indicated by the feedback. Additionally, CIS staff monitored academic performance and behavior to assess student progress. Some affiliates conducted periodic observations of their on-site staff and provided immediate feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses observed.

While the services and support provided by CIS varied across schools (within and across affiliates) based on the needs of the school, students, and families, the process or model for providing the services and support was consistent. Every affiliate started with planning and development, engaged in marketing and outreach, conducted needs assessments of the community, schools, and students, identified (evidence-based)

***“CIS is a process of getting the community into schools, not a program.”***

*-CIS Board of Directors*



programs and services to address needs, provided support through direct service delivery, coordination, and referrals, and monitored and adjusted services as needed. It is this process, implemented by the type of dedicated staff and volunteers described previously that appears to contribute to the benefits of CIS for multiple stakeholders.

### 3.3 What are the Benefits of CIS?

#### For Students

There were a range of positive student outcomes attributed to CIS by multiple stakeholders. These included: increased self-esteem and self-confidence; better study habits; improved attendance; academic gains and progress toward graduation; better peer, teacher, and parent relationships; improved social skills; better decision making; and sense of future.

The responses from students themselves best demonstrate the benefits of CIS for them:

- *“I now know there is someone in my life who cares what happens to me.”*
- *“Without CIS I would have dropped out of school.”*
- *“CIS helped me stay in school. I didn’t want to come back to school [after I had my baby]. Now I want to graduate! Seems like every time I have a problem or something, she’s [CIS case manager] there.”*
- *“They [CIS staff] understand what you’re going through...they don’t judge. They can help you get through school and life.”*
- *“They [CIS staff] make you realize that just because your family won’t always be there, someone will. As long as you have someone standing behind you telling you they love you, you can accomplish anything.”*

#### For Schools

Many principals and other school personnel attributed CIS to helping them meet or make progress toward meeting their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Without CIS, 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

***“I think CIS should be part of every school. I could count the ways they’ve helped [us] but we’d be here forever...If there’s a need that I have, it’s not, ‘No, we can’t help you’, it’s ‘Let me see what I can do to find someone who can help.’”***

*-School Administrator*

academic assistance needed by some students and much of the behavioral intervention needed is provided by or through CIS.

Several teachers and guidance counselors indicated that they would not still be in their current positions if it wasn't for CIS. That is, they attributed their retention to CIS. The additional support provided for students and families by CIS allowed teachers and guidance counselors to focus on their responsibilities.

### **For Families**

Many parents shared with the evaluation team that CIS helped them by helping their children. For some parents, they felt ill-equipped to assist their children with homework. CIS 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 CIS 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 CIS; which in turn meant better cooperation and behavior at home. Other parents reported receiving direct benefits from CIS through information and referral to needed services. Parents acknowledged that they would not have known certain services were available in their community if it was not for CIS.

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

### **For Communities**

While most of the benefits of CIS were realized by students, families, and the schools, a few stakeholders identified a long-term benefit of CIS 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 CIS is investing in the future of every community by investing in students and families today.

***"CIS can change the county, one kid at a time, one family at a time, one step at a time."***

*-Board of Directors*

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.



### 3.4 What are Challenges and Barriers to CIS Success?

#### Limited Funding

Limited resources were cited as the greatest barrier to CIS success. With budget cuts and shrinking funding for programs, like after-school enrichment, many affiliates were facing hard decisions regarding cutting staff and services. For many affiliates, plans to expand CIS to more schools needed to be put on hold until funding was available. For some, school districts, recognizing the value of CIS to their students, have found the resources to keep CIS in their schools. For other affiliates, maintaining their presence in existing schools is not the challenge but finding the resources to expand is. With growing demands by principals wanting a CIS staff person on site every day in their school and other schools wanting to know when they will get CIS, the need for more, diverse, and stable funding is evident across the affiliates.

#### Lack of Transportation

Funding is not the only resource limitation. In some communities, lack of transportation is a significant barrier to CIS success. In rural communities, public transportation is often nonexistent and in larger communities, public transportation is not always safe. Some schools provide access to buses for after-school programming, but this is limited. Additionally, providing access to services on weekends or during the summer is difficult.

#### Availability of Volunteers

Another resource limitation is the number of volunteers available to support students. Specifically, the lack of mentors for elementary and middle schools students was a problem across schools. And with limited time available, it is often difficult for CIS staff to support students and engage in the intensive process of recruiting and retaining mentors and other volunteers for their programs.

#### Promising Practice

The use of AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers and recruitment of retired persons to serve as mentors were proving effective in some communities. Other CIS staff have reached out to faith-based organizations for assistance with transportation and providing mentors for students.

#### Staff Turnover

While the retention of CIS staff within some affiliates was impressive, especially for a non-profit organization, others identify turnover as a challenge. According to CIS personnel, the work is intensive and can be emotionally draining. Not being able to pay higher salaries makes it difficult to keep staff. In fact, many affiliates report losing staff ironically to the school districts that they serve. For some affiliates, being able to offer strong health plans and benefits and demonstrating appreciation for employees through special outings, events, and celebrations has helped. But everyone, including school social workers and guidance counselors with comparable roles and responsibilities, indicate that CIS staff are underpaid.

## Access to Students

For on-site CIS staff, a challenge often experienced that inhibits their ability to assist students is gaining access to students. Teachers are not always able (or willing) to allow students to meet with their CIS Case Managers during instructional time. With very few “elective” classes still in existence, the time to meet with students is often limited to before school, during lunch, and after school. Before and after school access is further hindered by the transportation problems described previously in some communities. Accessing students during the school day, however, can work if, according to CIS Case Managers, the teachers understand how CIS is helping students and the teachers; there is advanced communication, when possible, before requesting students are removed from class; and there is ongoing feedback on a student’s progress with the teacher.

### 3.5 What Factors Contribute to CIS Success?

#### Leadership

In every affiliate, leadership was equated with the Executive Director. This individual was viewed as the driver of CIS and the glue that often held the program together. Executive Directors were characterized as energetic and dynamic, visionaries, proactive, compassionate, and dedicated. They were also seen as very capable in their position, having strong ties with the community, and someone who needed to be able to network and identify funding and other resources to sustain a non-profit organization.

*“She [Executive Director] really believes in CIS...she goes above and beyond. Working with someone like this is purely an honor”*

*- CIS Personnel*

Board members were also viewed as critical to the leadership of the CIS affiliates and often reflected the characteristics of the Executive Director. They were described as visionaries, leaders in the community, and “people who can make things happen.” Across the affiliates, the Board of Directors was seen as responsible for providing guidance to the Executive Director, monitoring the expenditures and performance of CIS, and serving as advocates and supporters of CIS in the community. As one individual described them, “Board members need to be believers, not just supporters.” Along with the Executive Director, in most affiliates the Board members were responsible for promoting the external visibility of CIS to the community at large and helping to gain buy-in for the mission of CIS among school boards, local businesses, and other community leaders. This was possible because the Board members came from the community (e.g., parents, clergy, businessmen and women, school principals, healthcare providers, etc.) and, in most cases, represented the diverse populations that CIS served. Board members also assisted with fundraising, including providing direct financial support in some cases, and supported CIS by volunteering as mentors.

Another characteristic that was seen as contributing to the success of CIS across affiliates was a sense of accountability among leadership and staff. CIS personnel recognize the

importance of the role they play for the schools, students, families; take their responsibilities seriously; and are accountable for their actions.

### **Staff/Volunteers**

Rarely was an interview or focus group conducted without CIS staff being recognized as the key to CIS success. While the affiliate and its leadership were important for providing an infrastructure for the program, support, and guidance, it was the on-site CIS staff, by whatever name (site coordinators, campus managers, case managers, youth coordinators, etc.) that were recognized and praised for their work with students and families. In rural communities, these positions were often filled by volunteers or part-time staff. Having a strong, active volunteer base, provided in some rural communities by AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, was essential to the operation of CIS. In suburban and urban communities, positions were often filled by full-time staff with diverse backgrounds ranging from education, social work, criminal justice, and child welfare. But regardless of their status and the length of time on-site at the schools (e.g., 2 – 3 days a week, weekly), their presence was known and appreciated. Staff were described as entrepreneurs who knew how to get things done and be creative, especially when working with tight budgets and limited resources. Staff also knew the students and families they were serving. This translated into connecting students and families with support services that they needed through coordination, referrals, and where appropriate, direct service provision by CIS. Much of the success of CIS was attributed to staff who were consistent, reliable, accessible, engaging, and perhaps most important, nonjudgmental. They established rapport with students and families and built trusting relationships with those they worked with. Several stakeholders described CIS staff as being able to reach the often hard-to-reach and underserved populations in their communities. For some staff, they attributed their success to their stability in their positions. Tenure ranged from two years (often limited by requirements of volunteer programs and turnover due to low salaries/compensation for staff) to 15 years.

### **Relationships**

Across every affiliate and school, the importance of relationships to the success of CIS was echoed by every stakeholder. This included relationships between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors; the Executive Director and the external community (e.g., local businesses, partner agencies, etc.); the Executive Director and the internal community (e.g., CIS staff; CIS state office personnel, CIS National Office personnel); CIS staff and school personnel; and CIS staff and students and families. Key to these relationships was open, frequent, and both formal and informal communication; trust; mutual respect; and honesty.

***“We are there to work with them [other organizations]; not compete with them.”***

*-CIS Personnel*

### *CIS and Schools*

Perhaps the most critical relationship was between CIS and the schools. This included the school district as well as the principals at each school. Without buy-in and support (often in the form of substantial financial support) from the schools, CIS could not succeed. Unique to this relationship was the fact that CIS operates as a non-profit organization separate from the schools. However, in many sites, CIS has office space provided by the schools and in some cases, staff who are funded by the school district. This separation was seen, in most cases, as an asset for students and families. Many reported that because CIS was not “part of” the school, staff were able to advocate for those they worked with and often times serve as an important and otherwise missing liaison between the student and family and the school. Yet, the success of CIS was

***“I will make provisions for CIS because I believe in the program and the purpose. And I believe that their ultimate goal is to help families and children.”***

*-School Administrator*

attributed to the perception that while separate, CIS was part of the school team or, as described by many, part of the “school family.” The relationships between CIS and the schools they served were often characterized as “collaborative, collegial, and supportive.”

### *CIS and Community Partners*

Relationships with community partners or other youth and family serving organizations was another common contributor to the success of CIS. In most cases, CIS translated into a single staff person (often volunteer or part-time) within a given school. With a caseload on average of 100 students, it was evident that the CIS staff person could not do everything. Community partners were essential in providing many of the services needed by students and families. These included:

clothing, emergency housing, financial assistance, transportation, medical services, job training, parenting classes, and financial planning. Community partners provided CIS

***“We are working together toward the same goal.”***

*-Community Partner*

staff with additional “tools for their toolbox.” CIS often serves as a significant referral source for community partners and community partners help CIS ensure they are able to connect students and families with needed support services. Additionally, the media was identified as an essential partner for many affiliates, helping to get the message out about CIS, promote special events and fundraisers, and increase awareness and visibility of CIS in general throughout the community through public service announcements, newspaper articles, and radio advertisements.

### *CIS, State Offices, and National Office*

The relationship between the affiliates and the state offices were driven primarily by the Executive Director and differed within and across states. In most cases, the state offices were described as supportive and available to the affiliates. Examples of support

provided included: funding (50% of an affiliates budget in some locations and very little in others) and the identification of funding opportunities; training; marketing (provision of materials that could be tailored by each affiliate); advocating for CIS with legislators; and providing guidance and tools for operating CIS (e.g., manuals, sample plans, data systems).

The relationships with the CIS National Office were described as more indirect. That is, most affiliates had very little contact with the National Office. To affiliates, the National Office provided the brand and standards for the Network. While some affiliates appreciated the new Total Quality System and movement toward standardized operations, others struggled with some of the requirements and indicated frustration with not having enough input into the development process. In general, affiliates requested more input into decisions made by the National Office in the future that would impact the Network. Another example included changing the CIS logo or brand. There were affiliates that wanted to keep the logo, others that were neutral about it, and still others that wanted to see it changed but wanted a chance to offer suggestions and have input into the final selection.

Affiliates also saw the National Office as responsible for providing opportunities for those across the Network to interact and share challenges and successes. The recent conference held by the National Office was described as a great opportunity to meet colleagues and learn from others and was something every affiliate felt should be continued by the National Office.

### **Vital Implementation Components of the CIS Model for Success**

Based on data across all the affiliates in the case studies (interviews, focus groups, observations), the evaluation team identified critical components of the CIS model that are necessary for the success of CIS. These components are explored below.

#### ***Affiliate-Level***

First, in order to be a successful CIS affiliate, there must be strong leadership from the Executive Director. As previously explained, the Executive Director is seen as the glue that holds the affiliate together. The Executive Director should have experience in the education field and with business management strategies; ties to the community; good networking skills (to be able to build solid relationships with community partners); excellent grant writing skills; and must be passionate, dedicated, and sincere.

Secondly, the affiliate must be able to build strong, positive relationships with its community partners and the schools it serves. To build these relationships, several qualities are necessary: trust, open communication, understanding that the relationship is mutually beneficial, and visibility in the community. It is also important for affiliate staff to attend local events with partners such as fundraisers, banquets, and community meetings. Additionally, affiliates should collaborate with community partners on grant opportunities if appropriate.

Thirdly, affiliate success centers around securing diverse funding to support CIS programming. Sources of funding include grants, fundraisers, and school resources. Grant writing is vitally important. Many affiliate staff warned that grants should only be pursued if they fit within the scope and mission of the CIS affiliate. They also noted that the state office is a good resource for identifying potential grant opportunities. Fundraising activities were conducted across all the affiliates to supplement existing funding streams. In addition, some affiliates were able to garner funds from the schools they served.

**Promising Practice**  
"Stuff the Bus" Initiative

In the summer, one affiliate has yellow school buses parked in the lots of all the local Wal-Mart stores and the community is challenged to "stuff the bus" with school supplies. The event has been extremely successful, raising over \$185,000 in supplies and generating significant media coverage.

Lastly, it is important for CIS affiliates to provide professional development and training to CIS staff. Every affiliate indicated that training was available to CIS staff in order to keep current. Some affiliates even surveyed their staff to identify areas of professional development that were needed. Training topics ranged from specific content areas, how to manage mentors, and computer skills.

***School-Level***

First, it is critical to conduct a needs assessment at each school to identify areas that need to be addressed through CIS services and programs. Needs are identified through a variety of methods, including surveys to school staff, students, and parents; informal discussions with school staff, students, parents, and community partners; community partner referrals; standardized test scores; behavioral data; attendance records; and report cards.

Secondly, CIS staff must have good relationships with the school personnel and students they serve. Each affiliate in the case studies indicated that they had good/strong relationships with the school staff and students. The qualities that facilitated these relationships included: trust, open communication (not only about student progress, but about scheduling, etc.), and information sharing.

Lastly, monitoring student progress and CIS services are necessary for successful implementation. It is important to monitor and adjust CIS programming to align with emerging needs to remain relevant to students and the school. Monitoring occurred in many ways across the affiliates, including: surveys to students, parents, and teachers; informal discussions with students, parents, and school staff; and tracking students by grades, standardized test scores, behavior, attendance, and attitudes.



## 4. CIS Moving Forward

### 4.1 Future Vision

A common vision across all stakeholders was to see CIS in every school, every day, serving every student in need. Many affiliates expressed a desire to be able to serve more than just students needing learning support and those falling into the low income category.

***“CIS needs to be available to every student in need across the country.”***

*- School Administrator*

### 4.2 Making the CIS Vision a Reality

The two most commonly referenced needs for carrying out future plans for CIS across all affiliates were greater recognition of CIS and increased funding. The need to increase the awareness and recognition of CIS within local communities and schools varied across affiliates. In most cases, CIS was known to the schools and had adequate visibility within the local community. However, affiliates identified the need to increase understanding of the benefits of CIS for students, schools, families, and the community at large by sharing hard data. Some affiliates plan to increase their marketing of CIS by demonstrating to the community where they would be *without CIS*. Being able to demonstrate the cost to a community of not having CIS was seen as important and an area where affiliates could use assistance from state offices and the National Office to provide this evidence.

While affiliates can address the visibility of CIS within their own communities, State Offices and the National Office were identified as the entities needing to promote CIS and increase brand recognition at the state- and national-levels. To do this, it was suggested by several affiliates that the Network move away from using the acronym CIS; which to most had no inherent meaning. “We are Communities In Schools. We need to promote ourselves as just that.” “You don’t hear people talking about BBBS. They refer to the program as Big Brothers Big Sisters and people know who they are.” Additionally, affiliates suggested using social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook and other medium, such as television commercials, billboards, and national newspapers to market CIS on a larger scale than what the affiliates and state offices can do.

The need for greater diversity in funding sources and more stable funding were acknowledged by all affiliates. Securing a line-item in the state’s education budget was a goal for many affiliates; requiring assistance from the state office. Additionally, assistance from the state office regarding local fundraising strategies was another need expressed by some affiliates. Affiliates also suggested the National Office could help identify opportunities nationally that could benefit local affiliates across the Network. For some affiliates, collaborating with community partners was becoming essential for securing funding and reducing duplication of efforts.

### 4.3 Advice to Others Implementing CIS

CIS personnel were asked to share a word of advice for others implementing or considering the implementation of CIS in their communities. Common themes in this advice included: maintain open communication with all parties; remain flexible, consistent, persistent, and open to new ideas; ensure you are immersed in the community; and ground all decisions, including what funding to go after, in what is best for students and in line with the CIS mission. For new Executive Directors and other CIS staff, finding an opportunity to shadow other Executive Directors and staff in similar positions was seen as an invaluable strategy to helping ensure success on the job. And finally, creating opportunities to share ideas and best practices across the Network was strongly encouraged by everyone.

#### Promising Practice

To help encourage and make it easier for stakeholders to contribute to CIS, one affiliate arranged for payroll deduction contributions to CIS through the school district.



## **Appendix A: Protocols and Questionnaires**

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been on the Board of Directors?
3. How long have you been involved with CIS? In what capacity, other than a board member, have you been involved with CIS?

### Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as a member of the Board of Directors?
5. How would you describe the role of the Board of Directors?
  - a. What are the strengths/benefits of the board?
  - b. What are the challenges/limitations of the board?
6. How does the Board of Directors contribute to the success of CIS?

### Relationship with Community

7. How would you characterize the relationship between CIS [insert name of affiliate] and the local community?
  - a. What are the benefits of working with the local community?
  - b. What are the challenges/limitations to working with the local community?
8. In what ways do you represent CIS [insert name of affiliate] within your community (e.g., presentations, attend events, fundraisers, etc.)?

### Implementation

9. Based on your experience, how would you describe CIS to someone new to the board? What does CIS mean to you?
10. What does it take to be a successful CIS affiliate?
11. What do you consider to be your best practices in relation to:
  - a. Planning and development
  - b. Developing community contacts/partners
  - c. Securing funding/resources
  - d. Marketing
  - e. Monitoring and reporting on success

### Summary

12. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you in your role as a board member?

13. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
14. What advice would you give to a member of the board at a new CIS affiliate office?
15. Other comments.

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
CASE MANAGER (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been a Case Manager (or equivalent)?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

## Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as a Case Manager (or equivalent)?

## Implementation

5. Based on your experience, how would you describe CIS to someone new to CIS (student and/or professional)? What does CIS mean to you?
6. What does it take to successfully implement CIS? What are your best practices regarding:
  - a. Building relationships with school personnel? Partner organizations? (what relationships or support need to be in place)?
  - b. Securing resources (money, supplies, etc. – what are needed)?
  - c. Establishing policies and procedures (CIS and school policies – what are needed)?
  - d. Hiring and retaining staff
  - e. Delivering/coordinating services (what services are provided? How are they best delivered?)
7. What training, technical assistance, and resources are available to support you?
  - a. Who provides these services?
  - b. In what ways are these services of value to your role as Case Manager (or equivalent)?
  - c. What additional support do you need?
8. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to students at your school?
  - a. How do you identify the needs of students at your school? What data do you collect?
  - b. How is this information used? What is the value of this information to case management?
9. How are students referred to CIS for Level 2 services (services provided on a targeted and sustained basis to those with identified need) at your school?
10. What Level 2 services (services provided on a targeted and sustained basis to those with identified need) are offered at your school?
  - a. How are these services identified?
  - b. Who provides these services?
  - c. What are the strengths/limitations to these services?

11. What Level 1 services (services for the whole school regardless of need) are offered at your school?
  - a. How are these services identified?
  - b. Who provides these services?
  - c. What are the strengths/limitations to these services?
12. How do you adjust services to ensure that the desired outcomes are met?
13. How do you assess/monitor the success of CIS?
  - a. What do you use to measure success? What data do you collect?
  - b. How is this information used?

### Relationships

14. How would you describe your relationship with the students you serve?
  - a. What are the strengths/challenges to these relationships?
  - b. How do they contribute to the success of CIS?
15. How would you describe your relationship with the personnel at your school (i.e. principal, administrators, teachers, etc.)?
  - a. What are some of the benefits/challenges of working with the school personnel?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship with school personnel?
  - c. How do these relationships contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?
16. How would you describe your relationship with other CIS staff (specify other staff)?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with other staff?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship with other staff?
  - c. How does this relationship contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?
17. What interactions do you have with the local community and businesses?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the local community and businesses?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with the local community and businesses?
  - c. How do these relationships contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?

### Summary

18. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you as a Case Manager (or equivalent)?
19. What is your vision for the future of CIS at your school?
20. What advice would you give to a Case Manager at a new school offering CIS?
21. Other comments.



**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
  
2. How long have you been the Chief Financial Officer?
  
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

### Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as Chief Financial Officer?

### Affiliate Finances

5. What is the current annual revenue for CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
6. What are the average annual expenses for CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
7. Where does your funding originate? What are your primary sources of funding?
  - a. How do you solicit funds?
  - b. What challenges/barriers have you encountered regarding funding for CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
  - c. What are our best practices related to securing funding/resources?

### Summary

8. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you as the CFO with CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
9. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
10. What advice would you give to a Chief Financial Officer at a new CIS affiliate office?
11. Other comments.

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
COMMUNITY PARTNER**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate/School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. How long have you been a partner with CIS of [insert name of affiliate]?
2. What is your position within your business/organization? How long have you held that position?
3. What is your role or level of involvement in CIS?

### CIS Implementation

4. What is your business/organization's role within CIS? In other words, what services do you offer CIS?
5. How did your business/organization become involved with CIS?
6. What factors contribute to your decision to remain involved with CIS?
7. How does your business/organization contribute to the success of CIS?
8. What are the benefits of being involved with CIS?
9. What are the challenges of being involved with CIS?

### Relationships

10. How would you describe the relationship between your business/organization and the CIS staff (strengths and limitations of relationships)?
11. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and the schools they serve (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

### Summary

12. What is the most important (valuable) type of support you could receive to help you remain involved with CIS?
13. What is your vision for working with CIS in the future?
14. Other comments.

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
DATA/EVALUATION LEAD (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

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Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been the data/evaluation lead (or equivalent)?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

### Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as data/evaluation lead (or equivalent)?

### Affiliate Level

5. What type of information is collected/tracked as part of the school/site needs assessment? The student needs assessments?
6. How do you assess/monitor the success of CIS (how often, by whom)?
  - a. What information is collected/tracked?
  - b. How is this information used (e.g., adjust services, secure resources, etc.)?
  - c. What challenges/limitations do you experience with your monitoring activities? Evaluation activities?
  - d. What are your best practices with respect to monitoring progress?  
Evaluating and reporting results?

### Summary

7. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you in your role as data/evaluation lead (or equivalent) with CIS?
8. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
9. What advice would you give to a data/evaluation lead at a new CIS affiliate office?
10. Other comments.

**Case Study Focus Group Guide**  
**ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Welcome. My name is [insert name of facilitator] and this is [insert name of note-taker]. We want to thank you for taking the time today to meet with us to discuss Communities In Schools at [insert name of middle/high school]. Your participation in this focus group is part of a larger evaluation of CIS. We are very interested in your experiences with CIS and your feedback will help inform the overall evaluation. Before we begin we want to remind each of you that your participation in this focus group is voluntary and the information you share with us will be kept confidential. That means we will not report or present the information you share with us in any way that will identify you. We ask that each member of the group today respect the confidentiality of others and that you do not discuss the contents of what you hear today outside of this group.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this focus group so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Males: \_\_\_\_\_

Females: \_\_\_\_\_

## **AVAILABLE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

1. First, what type of things do you like to do outside of the classroom (e.g., sports, clubs, study, etc.)?
- 2a. What type of programs/activities are there at your school that you and your friends participate in? (LIST ON TEAR SHEETS or WHITE BOARD)
- 2b. What type of things do you do as part of CIS?

## **KNOWLEDGE OF PROGRAMS/SERVICES AND CIS**

- 3a. How did you learn about CIS? What were you told about CIS?
- 3b. How and why did you start participating in CIS?

## **IMPACT OF CIS ON STUDENTS**

- 2b. What do you like about CIS?
- 2a. What don't you like about CIS?
3. What have you learned from CIS? How has CIS helped you in school? With your friends? At home/with your family?
- 4a. How many of you would like to continue to participate in CIS? Why or why not?
- 4b. How many of you would tell a friend about CIS?

## **SUMMARY**

5. If you could change one thing about the CIS program, what would it be? Why?



## **OTHER COMMENTS**

Is there anything else you think we should know about the CIS program at [insert name of school]?

**We want to thank you for participating in this focus group and for contributing to the evaluation of CIS.**

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been the Executive Director?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

## Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as Executive Director?

## Relationship with CIS State and National Offices

### State Office:

5. How would you describe the role of the CIS State Office?
6. How would you characterize your relationship with the CIS State Office?
  - a. What are the strengths of this relationship?
  - b. What are the limitations/challenges?
7. How has your relationship with the CIS State Office evolved over time?
8. How does the State Office contribute to the success of CIS [insert name of affiliate]? What value does the CIS State Office add to CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
9. What, if anything, would you like the CIS State Office to do differently/change?

### National Office:

10. How would you describe the role of the CIS National Office?
11. How would you characterize your relationship with the CIS National Office?
  - a. What are the strengths of this relationship?
  - b. What are the limitations/challenges?
12. How does the CIS National Office contribute to the success of CIS [insert name of affiliate]? What value does the CIS State Office add to CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
13. What, if anything, would you like the CIS National Office to do differently/change?

## Relationships within Affiliate

### Board of Directors:

14. How would you describe the role of your Board of Directors?
  - a. What are the strengths/benefits of working with the Board of Directors?
  - b. What are the challenges/limitations of working with the Board of Directors?
  
15. How does the Board of Directors contribute to the success of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?

### Partner Organizations:

16. Does your CIS affiliate partner with any other organizations to deliver CIS services to schools (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters)? (This does not include brokered/referral services from community organizations.)
  - a. How was this organization(s) identified as a partner?
  - b. How are they engaged in CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
  
17. How would you characterize your relationship with your partner organization(s)?
  - a. What are the benefits of working with partner organization(s)?
  - b. What are the challenges/limitations to working with partner organization(s)?
  - c. How do these partner organizations contribute to the success of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?

## Implementation

18. Based on your experience, how would you describe CIS to someone new to CIS? What does CIS mean to you?
  
19. What does it take to be a successful CIS affiliate?
  
20. What is your planning process?
  - a. How do you determine what sites/schools you go to?
  - b. How do you determine where to invest resources?

21. What do you consider to be your best practices in relation to:
  - a. Securing funding/resources
  - b. Attracting/retaining qualified staff
  - c. Providing effective programming (needs assessment, service type/delivery)
  - d. Monitoring and evaluation
  - e. Marketing

Summary

22. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you sustain the work of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
23. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
24. What advice would you give to an Executive Director at a new CIS affiliate office?
25. Other comments.

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide**  
**SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate/School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been a guidance counselor at (insert school name)?
3. How long has your school implemented CIS?
4. What is your role or level of involvement in CIS?

### CIS Implementation

5. What are currently your goals for the students you serve?
  - a. In what ways does CIS help you achieve these goals?
  
6. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to students at your school (all programs, not just CIS)?
  - a. How do you identify the needs of students at your school?
  
7. What value or benefit does CIS bring to your students?
  
8. What are the challenges or limitations of CIS for your students?
  
9. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from students or parents? What were their reactions?
  
10. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from teachers or other school personnel? What were their reactions?
  
11. What changes – positive or negative – have you noticed in your students that participate in CIS?
  - a. Would you attribute this change to CIS? Why or why not?

### Relationships

12. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and your students (strengths and limitations of relationships)?
  
13. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and the personnel at your school (i.e. principal, administrators, teachers, etc.) (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

### Summary

14. What additional information/support do you need to help you continue your involvement with CIS?
15. What is your vision for the future of CIS in your school?
16. Other comments.



***Communities In Schools (CIS) Evaluation***  
**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. List the three greatest challenges or issues currently facing you and your friends at your school:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning very well, **how well** do you think programs/services offered within the school have done at addressing your problems/issues (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

3. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning very well, **how well** do you think programs/services offered outside of school have done at addressing your problems/issues (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

4. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all familiar and 5 meaning very familiar, **how familiar** are you with the CIS program at your school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

5. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning a significant impact, **how much of an impact** has CIS had on you (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning very important, **how important** do you think CIS is to you and the other students at your school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

7. How long have you been involved with CIS? \_\_\_\_\_(years)

**CIS Case Study**  
**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

Welcome. My name is [insert name of facilitator] and this is [insert name of note-taker]. We want to thank you for taking the time today to meet with us to discuss Communities In Schools at [insert name of high school]. Your participation in this focus group is part of a larger evaluation of CIS. We are very interested in your experiences with CIS and your feedback will help inform the overall evaluation. Before we begin we want to remind each of you that your participation in this focus group is voluntary and the information you share with us will be kept confidential. That means we will not report or present the information you share with us in any way that will identify you. We ask that each member of the group today respect the confidentiality of others and that you do not discuss the contents of what you hear today outside of this group.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this focus group so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records.

Are there any questions before we begin?

To help get us started, we would like each of you to complete a brief questionnaire containing questions related to the CIS program. Please use the rating scale provided to respond to each question. If you are unclear about a questions meaning, please ask for assistance. If you do not know the answer to a question, please mark DK for don't know or if a question does not apply to you, please mark NA for not applicable.

*Hand out questionnaire and allow 5 minutes for completion.*

We will use your answers to these questions to help facilitate our discussion.

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Males: \_\_\_\_\_

Females: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ISSUES FACING STUDENTS (risk factors/problem behaviors)**

1. First, what did you identify as the greatest challenges or issues facing you and your friends at [insert name of high school]. Why did you pick these?

## **AVAILABLE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- 2a. What programs and services are available in the school to help you and your friends with your problems or issues? Do you participate in them (other than CIS)? If so, what have been your experiences with them?
- 2b. How did you learn about these programs/services?
- 3a. What programs/services are available in the community? Do you participate in them? If so, what have been your experiences with them?
- 3b. How did you learn about these programs/services?

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- 4a. Looking at your ratings of these programs, how successful do you think the programs/services within the school have been at addressing your problems?
- 4b. What do you think makes them successful? What do you think makes them unsuccessful?
- 5a. Looking at your ratings, how successful do you think the programs/services outside of the school have been in addressing your problems?
- 5b. What do you think makes them successful? What do you think makes them unsuccessful?
6. What programs/services do you think are missing? That is, what programs/services do you need or would you like to participate in that are currently not available to you?

## **KNOWLEDGE OF CIS**

- 7a. What rating did you give for your knowledge of CIS? That is how familiar are you with CIS at [insert name of high school]?
- 7b. How did you learn about CIS at [insert name of high school]?
- 8a. What information have you received on CIS? What have you been told about CIS?
- 8b. How did you rate the usefulness of the information you have received on CIS? How informative has the information been?
- 9. How would you describe CIS to someone who is not familiar with the program?

## **IMPACT OF CIS ON STUDENTS**

- 10a. What rating did you give for the impact/influence of CIS on you? Why did you choose that rating?
- 10b. What have been some of the positive changes you have seen in yourself as a result of participating in CIS?
- 10c. How will participating in CIS impact/influence your future?
- 11a. What do you think are the strengths of CIS?
- 11b. What are the weaknesses? What can be done to improve CIS at [insert name of high school]?
- 12. Overall, how important do you think CIS is to you and other students at [insert name of high school]? Why?

13a. How many of you would like to continue to participate in CIS? Why or why not?

13b. How many of you would recommend CIS to a friend?

**OTHER COMMENTS**

Are there other comments you would like to share with us regarding CIS at [insert name of high school]?

**We want to thank you for participating in this focus group and for contributing to the evaluation of CIS.**

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide**  
**MARKETING/PUBLIC RELATIONS LEAD (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been the marketing/public relations lead (or equivalent)?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

### Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as marketing/public relations lead (or equivalent)?

### Affiliate Level

5. What does your marketing plan/strategies for CIS [insert name of affiliate] look like?
  - a. How do you identify potential markets?
  - b. What materials do you use? Where do you get your materials?
  - c. How important is the brand name CIS to your marketing strategy?
  - d. How do you tailor marketing materials for different audiences?
6. What “lessons learned” can you share with us (what has worked and what hasn’t worked)?
7. What do you consider your best practices in regards to marketing of CIS [insert name of affiliate]? What has been most effective? How do you measure the success of your marketing efforts?

### Summary

8. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you as marketing/public relations lead with CIS?
9. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
10. What advice would you give to a marketing/public relations lead at a brand new CIS affiliate office?
11. Other comments.

**Communities In Schools (CIS) Evaluation**  
**PARENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. List the three greatest challenges or issues currently facing your child and his/her friends at school:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning very well, **how well** do you think programs/services offered within the school have done at addressing the problems/issues faced by your child and his/her friends (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

3. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning very well, **how well** do you think programs/services offered outside of school have done at addressing the problems/issues faced by your child and his/her friends (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

4. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all familiar and 5 meaning very familiar, **how familiar** are you with the CIS program at your child's school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

5. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all informative and 5 meaning very informative, **how informative** was the information you received about the CIS program at your child's school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning very well, **how well** do you think CIS has done at addressing your child's problems/issues (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5



7. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning no impact and 5 meaning a significant impact, **how much of an impact** has CIS had on your child (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

8. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning no involvement and 5 meaning significant involvement, **how involved** have you been with CIS at your child's school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

9. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning very important, **how important** do you think CIS is to your child and the other students at their school (circle your response)?

1      2      3      4      5

10. How long has your child been involved with CIS? \_\_\_\_\_(years)

**CIS Case Study**  
**PARENT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

Welcome. My name is [insert name of facilitator] and this is [insert name of note-taker]. We want to thank you for taking the time today to meet with us to discuss Communities In Schools at [insert name of school]. Your participation in this focus group is part of a larger evaluation of CIS. We are very interested in your experiences with CIS and your feedback will help inform the evaluation. Before we begin we want to remind each of you that your participation in this focus group is voluntary and the information you share with us will be kept confidential. That means we will not report or present the information you share with us in any way that will identify you or your child. We ask that each member of the group today respect the confidentiality of others and that you do not discuss the contents of what you hear today outside of this group.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this focus group so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records.

Are there any questions before we begin?

To help get us started, we would like each of you to complete a brief questionnaire containing questions about CIS. Please use the rating scale provided to respond to each question. If you are unclear about a questions meaning, please ask for assistance. If you do not know the answer to a question, please mark DK for don't know or if a question does not apply to you, please mark NA for not applicable.

*Hand out questionnaire and allow 5 minutes for completion.*

We will use your answers to these questions to help facilitate our discussion.

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: Parent/Step-Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Legal Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
Grandparent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other family member \_\_\_\_\_

### **ISSUES FACING STUDENTS (risk factors/problem behaviors)**

1. First, what did you identify as the greatest challenge or issue facing your child and other students at [insert name of school]. Why did you pick these?

### **AVAILABLE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- 2a. Based on your responses, what programs and services are available in the school to help students with these problems? Does your child participate in them (other than CIS)? If so, what have been your experiences with them?
- 2b. How did you learn about these programs/services?
- 3a. What programs/services are available in the community? Does your child participate in them? If so, what have been your experiences with them?
- 3b. How did you learn about these programs/services?

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- 4a. Looking at your ratings of these programs, how successful do you think the programs/services within the school have been at addressing these problems?
- 4b. What do you think makes them successful? What do you think makes them unsuccessful?
- 5a. Looking at your ratings, how successful do you think the programs/services outside of the school have been in addressing these problems?
- 5b. What do you think makes them successful? What do you think makes them unsuccessful?

6. What programs/services do you think are missing? That is, what programs/services does your child or do you think other students need but currently are not available for them?

### **KNOWLEDGE OF CIS**

- 7a. What rating did you give for your knowledge of CIS? That is how familiar are you with CIS at [insert name of school]?
- 7b. How did you learn about CIS at [insert name of school]?
- 8a. What information have you received on CIS?
- 8b. How did you rate the usefulness of the information you have received on CIS? How informative has the information been?
9. How would you describe CIS to someone who is not familiar with the program?

### **IMPACT OF CIS ON STUDENTS**

- 10a. What rating did you give for the impact/influence of CIS on your child? Why did you choose that rating?
- 10b. What have been some of the positive changes you have seen in your child as a result of participating in CIS? Have you seen any negative changes as a result of participating in CIS?
- 10c. How will participating in CIS impact/influence your child's future?
- 11a. What do you think are the strengths of CIS?
- 11b. What are the weaknesses? What can be done to improve CIS at [insert name of school]?

12. Overall, how important do you think CIS is to the students at [insert name of school]? Why?

13a. How many of you would like to see your child continue to participate in CIS? Why or why not?

13b. How many of you would recommend CIS to other parents/guardians?

### **OTHER COMMENTS**

Are there other comments you would like to share with us regarding CIS at [insert name of school]?

**We want to thank you for participating in this focus group and for contributing to the evaluation of CIS.**

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide**  
**SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/VICE PRINCIPAL**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate/School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been the principal/vice principal at (insert school name)?
3. How long has your school implemented CIS?

4. What is your role or level of involvement in CIS?

### CIS Implementation

5. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to students at your school (all programs, not just CIS)?
  - a. How do you identify the needs of students at your school?
  - b. In what ways does CIS help meet the needs of students at your school?
6. What has your role been in bringing in/keeping CIS at your school?
7. What value or benefit does CIS bring to your school? In what ways does CIS help you achieve your educational goals for the school/students?
8. What are the challenges or limitations of CIS for your school/students?
9. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from students or parents? What were their reactions?
10. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from teachers or other school personnel? What were their reactions?
11. How do you determine the success of CIS at your school? How is CIS assessed/monitored? What do you use as measures of success (e.g., academics, behavior, etc.)?

### Relationships

12. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and your students (strengths and limitations of relationships)?
13. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and the personnel at your school (i.e. vice principal, administrators, teachers, etc.) (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

### Summary

14. What does it/will it take to ensure you are able to continue to offer CIS at your school?
15. What is your vision for the future of CIS in your school?
16. Other comments.



**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been the Program Director (or equivalent)?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

## Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as Program Director?

## Implementation

5. Based on your experience, how would you describe CIS to someone new to CIS?  
What does CIS mean to you?
6. What does it take to successfully implement CIS? What are your best practices regarding:
  - a. Building relationships with schools? Community? Partner organizations? (what relationships or support need to be in place)?
  - b. Securing resources (money, supplies, etc. – what are needed)?
  - c. Establishing policies and procedures (what are needed)?
  - d. Hiring and retaining staffing?
7. What is your planning process?
  - a. How do you determine what sites/schools you go to?
  - b. How do you determine where to invest resources?
8. How do you assess the training and resource needs of CIS site coordinators (staff that coordinate services for the sites/schools you serve) and other staff?
9. What training, technical assistance, and resources are available to support staff?
  - a. Who provides these services?
  - b. How do you assess/monitor the effectiveness of these support services/resources?
10. How do you identify the services/programs you offer at CIS schools/sites?
  - a. What type of needs assessment is done? How often? By whom?
  - b. If you use evidence-based practices, what are examples of these and how are they selected?
11. How do you adjust services to ensure that the desired outcomes are met?

12. How do you assess/monitor the success of CIS [insert name of affiliate] (how often, by whom?)
  - a. How is this information used?
13. Do you feel you have adequate staff to provide the needed services for each of your sites (probe for available services, caseloads)?
14. What are the characteristics of an effective site coordinator (staff that coordinate services for the sites/schools you serve) regarding:
  - a. Education?
  - b. Experience?
  - c. Responsibilities (someone who can...)?

### Relationships

15. In what ways do you work with the CIS site coordinators (staff that coordinate services for the sites/schools you serve)?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the site coordinators?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship with the site coordinator(s)?
  - c. How do the site coordinators contribute to/hinder the success of the CIS program?
16. How would you describe the relationship between the site coordinators and the schools they serve (strengths and limitations to these relationships)?
17. What interactions do you have with the local community and businesses?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the local community and businesses?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with the local community and businesses?
  - c. How do relationships with local community and businesses contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?
18. What interactions do you have with the schools and school boards?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the schools and school boards?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with the schools and school boards?
  - c. How do relationships with schools/school boards contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?

19. Does your CIS affiliate partner with any other organizations to deliver CIS services to schools (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters)? (This does not include brokered/referral services from community organizations.)
  - a. How was this organization(s) identified as a partner?
  - b. How are they engaged in CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
  - c. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with this organization?
  - d. How does this relationship contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?

Summary

20. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you as a Program Director?
21. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?
22. What advice would you give to a Program Director at a new CIS affiliate office?
23. Other comments.

**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
SITE COORDINATOR (OR EQUIVALENT)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been a Site Coordinator (or equivalent)?
3. How long have you been with CIS? What was your previous position(s)?

## Your Role

4. What are your primary responsibilities as a Site Coordinator (or equivalent)?

## Implementation

5. Based on your experience, how would you describe CIS to someone new to the program? What does CIS mean to you?
6. What does it take to successfully implement CIS? What are your best practices regarding:
  - a. Building relationships with schools? Community? Partner organizations? (what relationships or support need to be in place)?
  - b. Securing resources (money, supplies, etc. – what are needed)?
  - c. Establishing policies and procedures (what are needed)?
  - d. Hiring and retaining staffing?
7. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to CIS schools/sites?
  - a. What type of needs assessment is done? How often? By whom?
  - b. If you use evidence-based practices, what are examples of these and how are they selected?
8. How do you adjust services to ensure that the desired outcomes are met?
9. How do you assess/monitor the success of CIS (how often, by whom?)
  - a. How is this information used?
10. What other agencies/organizations are providing services to CIS sites/schools that are not part of CIS?
  - a. What services do they provide?
  - b. Why isn't CIS providing these services (why aren't they a CIS partner)?
11. What training, technical assistance, and resources are available to support staff and programming?
  - a. Who provides these services?
  - b. How do you assess/monitor the effectiveness of these services?

12. What are the characteristics of an effective Case Manager (staff that provide case managed services to students at a CIS site/school) regarding:
  - a. Education?
  - b. Experience?
  - c. Responsibilities (someone who can...)?

### Relationships

13. Explain your relationship with the CIS case managers (staff that provide case managed services to students at a CIS site/school).
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the case managers?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship with the case managers?
  - c. How do the case managers contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?
14. How would you describe the relationship between the case managers and the students they serve (strengths and limitations to these relationships)?
15. What interactions do you have with the local community and businesses?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the local community and businesses?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with the local community and businesses?
  - c. How do relationships with local community and businesses contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?
16. What interactions do you have with the schools and school boards?
  - a. What are some benefits/challenges of working with the schools and school boards?
  - b. What makes for a successful relationship/partnership with the schools and school boards?
  - c. How do relationships with schools/school boards contribute to/hinder the success of CIS?

### Summary

17. What is the most valuable type of support you can receive to help you as a Site Coordinator (or equivalent)?
18. What is your vision for the future of CIS [insert name of affiliate]?

19. What advice would you give to a Site Coordinator at a new CIS affiliate office?

20. Other comments.



**CIS Case Study Interview Guide  
TEACHER**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliate/School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name is (introduce self and note-taker). Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview regarding Communities In Schools of [insert name of affiliate]. We greatly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to assist with the national CIS evaluation that Caliber, an ICF International company, is conducting. You were selected to participate in an interview because your individual perspective represents important issues relevant to this evaluation. We are conducting case studies with eight affiliates nationwide to gather information about the implementation of CIS, relationships within CIS, training and support, best practices, and much more. Please feel free to be open and candid in your responses to our questions, as we will keep this information strictly confidential.

With your permission, we would like to record the audio of this interview so that we can transcribe the conversation for accuracy in the analysis and interpretation of your comments along with comments of other staff. CIS National will not have access to this audio recording. Upon transcription of these recordings as appropriate to the evaluation, we will destroy the recordings themselves, maintaining only written records. Only de-identified transcripts of recordings will be the property of CIS National at any time during or after the contract period.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your level of education? What degrees do you hold?
2. How long have you been a teacher at (insert school name)?
3. How long has your school implemented CIS?

4. What is your role or level of involvement in CIS?

#### CIS Implementation

5. What are currently your goals for the students you teach?
  - a. In what ways does CIS help you achieve these goals?
6. How do you identify the needs of the students you teach?
  - a. In what ways does CIS help address the needs of the students you teach?
  - b. What value or benefit does CIS bring to your students?
7. What changes – positive or negative – have you noticed in your students that participate in CIS?
  - a. Would you attribute this change to CIS? Why or why not?
8. What are the challenges or limitations of CIS for you/your students?
9. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from students or parents? What were their reactions?
10. What kind of feedback have you received about CIS from other teachers or other school personnel? What were their reactions?

#### Relationships

11. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and your students (strengths and limitations of relationships)?
12. How would you describe the relationship between CIS staff and the personnel at your school (i.e. principal, administrators, teachers, etc.) (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

### Summary

13. What additional information/support do you need to help you continue your involvement with CIS?
14. What one thing would you change about CIS? What suggestions/recommendations do you have for CIS?
15. What is your vision for the future of CIS in your school?
16. Other comments.

## **Appendix B: Individual Case Study Reports**

**Communities In Schools  
National Evaluation**

**Case Study Profile:  
CIS of Cleveland County, North Carolina**

## Table of Contents

### **1. Description of Affiliate**

- 1.1. Demographics – Cleveland County, North Carolina
- 1.2. Affiliate Information

### **2. Methodology**

- 2.1. Site Selection
- 2.2. Site Visits

### **3. Findings**

- 3.1. Affiliate
- 3.2. School-Level Implementation

### **4. Future Direction**

- 4.1. Vision/Plans
- 4.2. Recommendations

## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – Cleveland County, North Carolina

#### Communities In Schools of North Carolina

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including North Carolina.

CIS of North Carolina, the state CIS organization, assists North Carolina communities in coordinating service delivery, supports the 31 local CIS organizations across the state, and advocates for children, youth, and their families. Specifically, CIS of North Carolina provides regional and on-site training and technical assistance, builds partnerships with state agencies and organizations to benefit young people, and serves as a resource and information center for local communities concerned about youth at risk of school failure.

<b>Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for Cleveland County, North Carolina<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b><u>Population (2006)</u></b>	
County Population	96,287
<b><u>Ethnicity % (2006)</u></b>	
White	76.9%
African-American	20.6%
Asian or Pac Other	1.0%
<b><u>Age Composition % (2006)</u></b>	
0-19	26.8%
20-24	5.8%
25-44	26.7%
45-64	26.5%
65 +	14.2%
Median Age	39.1
<b><u>Gender Composition % (2006)</u></b>	
Male	48.2%
Female	51.8%
<b><u>Median Income</u></b>	
per household (2006)	\$36,582
<b><u>Unemployment Rate</u></b>	
2006	8.1%
<b><u>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2007)</u></b>	
Total	37
Violent Crimes	3
Property Crimes	34

#### Profile of Cleveland County, North Carolina

The geographic status of Cleveland County is Rural,<sup>2</sup> with a population of 96,287 as of 2006.<sup>3</sup> More information regarding Cleveland County’s demographics is presented in Exhibit 1.

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2006 American Community Survey.

## 1.2 Affiliate Information

Founded in 1992, CIS of Cleveland County offers Level 1 and 2 services in nine elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools. The core programs of CIS of Cleveland County include after-school programs, a Parents As Teachers program for pregnant and parenting teens, and a Governor's One-on-One Mentoring program that places mentors with at-risk youth across Cleveland County. Recently, new small group and academically focused projects, Club ACE and Mad Science, funded by Hope Foundation and DPI Dropout Prevention, have been implemented.

## 2. Methodology

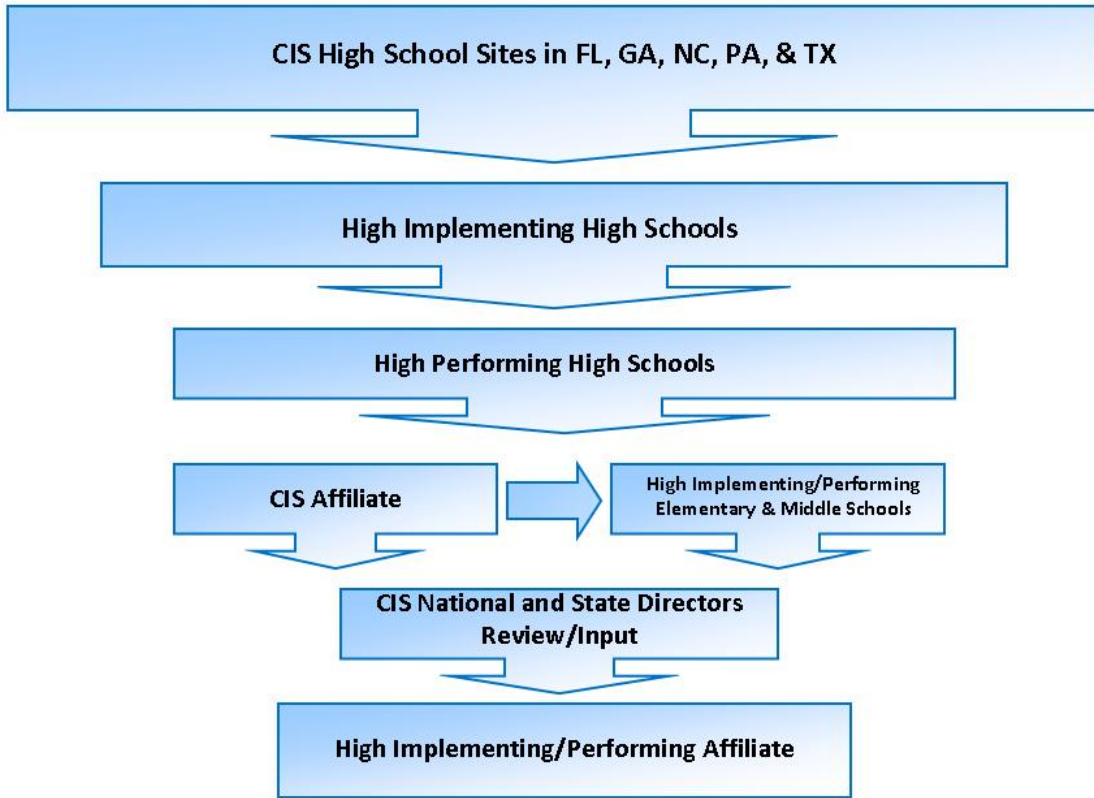
As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Cleveland County was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.



**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

The case study was conducted in three schools located in Cleveland County (Township #3 Elementary, Crest Middle School, and Crest High School; see Attachment A for individual school demographics and descriptions). Cleveland County schools have a total student population of 17,389 attending 28 schools (Exhibit 3). About 46.6 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Cleveland County public schools average a student teacher ratio of 14.4:1. Almost 79 percent of the schools met the 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The annual high school dropout rate was 4 percent in 2007. Public schools spent an average of \$7,044 per student in 2005.<sup>6</sup>

### **Exhibit 3: School System Information<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Student Population (2006)</b>	
Total	17,389
Limited English Proficient	1.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	46.6%
<b>Average Cost per Student</b>	
Cleveland County	\$7,044
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Cleveland County	14.4:1
<b>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)<sup>5</sup></b>	
Schools Meeting AYP	78.6%
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Cleveland County	88.1%
<b>Math Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Cleveland County	71.0%
<b>Annual Dropout (Gr9-12) (2007)</b>	
Cleveland County	4.0%
<b>Graduation Rate (2006)</b>	
Cleveland County	65.7%

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Between May 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 25 interviews were conducted at CIS of Cleveland County. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary, middle, and high school participating in CIS. In addition, community partners of these schools were also interviewed. Two student focus

groups were also conducted—one at the middle school and one at the high school—with a total participation of 13 students. Focus groups were conducted with 6 parents of elementary students and 8 middle school parents (see Exhibit 4).

### **Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups**

CIS Affiliate/School Staff	6
School Personnel	16
Community Partners	3
Parents	14
Students	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

<sup>4</sup> Source: Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org; North Carolina Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Source: North Carolina Department of Education.

<sup>6</sup> Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

Communities In Schools of Cleveland County is led by a newly hired Executive Director, who, although he has been on the job for a very brief period of time (i.e., about 7 weeks at the time of the site visit), is already establishing a very active agenda for the organization. This agenda includes working closely with the school system to bring resources to needy students, increasing an already active volunteer base and further motivating already supportive CIS Board members.

He has been involved as a school principal with CIS since its inception. His leadership style as a school principal produced a national award-winning school ranked in the top 25 elementary schools in North Carolina and a designation as a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) school of excellence for the last eight years. He credits Communities In Schools as a significant contributor to these achievements, noting that he has realized first-hand what CIS can do at the school level.

Communities In Schools of Cleveland County offers Level 1 and 2 services in elementary, middle, and high school public schools. The core administrative staff for CIS of Cleveland County is composed of the Executive Director; the Program Director, who administers the financial aspects of the organization; and the Project Director, who manages the implementation of the school programs, conducts community outreach, and oversees volunteers. The organization's annual operating budget is in excess of \$900,000.

*"I really believe in CIS because I've seen what it can do."*

*-CIS of Cleveland County Staff*

##### Planning and Development

Planning processes focus on selecting sites for programs and resources, establishing policies and procedures, and determining funding strategies. Program services and resources are allocated based on schools with the greatest need (e.g., free and reduced lunch participants, low performance on state tests). Once a school is identified for a potential CIS program or

service, the school administration has the opportunity to accept or reject participation offered by CIS. This ensures the highest level of support and buy-in from the school’s administration and staff. CIS policy manuals are provided to each participating school to maintain uniform and high quality protocols and procedures for school and CIS staff.

CIS administrators emphasized the importance of determining funding strategies. Their guiding principle is to accept funding only for projects in line with the CIS mission. CIS staff indicated that this principle derived from unsuccessful past experiences with accepting any funding regardless of whether it fit the mission. Staff also indicated that they work closely with the local assistant superintendent, school principals, and parents to understand their funding priorities and needs. CIS staff solicit stakeholders’ advice and support in these matters.

### **Board of Directors**

The CIS of Cleveland County Board of Directors consists of 25 members from throughout the community including parents, clergy, businessmen, a school principal, and healthcare system representatives. Members are appointed by, and report to, the county commissioners, keeping them apprised of what is going on with CIS. The Board is varied in ethnicity, race, and culture in an effort to reflect community membership. Board members assist in fundraising, serve as mentors to students and serve as “lunch buddies” in the schools. While the Board has been active, it was generally agreed that more could be done by Board members particularly with respect to fundraising and volunteering in the schools.

### **Resources/Funding**

Support for CIS of Cleveland County comes from multiple sources including foundation grants and community partners. Glaxo-Smith Kline funds the dropout prevention program. Funding also comes from the United Way, the juvenile crime prevention council, and the Sisters of Mercy. CIS sponsors annual fundraisers including a golf tournament and an “education ball.”

CIS staff indicate that there are still many unmet needs in the county which require additional funding in order to be able to address these needs. There are several strategies for securing funding, including targeting teachers and other educators who are most aware of the benefits of CIS programs for students and families. Board members will also be asked to build and foster relationships with potential funders.

#### **CIS of Cleveland County Partner Organizations/Programs**

- United Way
- Wal-Mart
- Glaxo-Smith Kline
- Junior League of Shelby
- Kiwanis
- Boy Scouts
- Shelby Police and Sheriff’s department
- AmeriCorps
- YMCA
- WSOC-TV

An annual audit of organizational operations is conducted by an external accounting firm. These data are shared with the Board of Directors and used to plan for future program activities.

## Marketing

Perceptions are that the work of CIS of Cleveland County is not well known. The school community knows the programs but people outside of the school system do not. A new Board priority will be to increase the visibility of CIS in the community at-large. Other strategies towards this end, however, are in the process of being developed.

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

CIS of Cleveland County works closely—as a team—with school personnel to carry out program goals and deliver services. They attribute communication and trust as key facilitators of the strong relationships they have developed with their school partners. Partners are developed “one relationship at a time.” Efforts are made to personalize the interactions between CIS and their partners.

***“...keeping everybody informed is extremely important. Letting people know what you’re doing, letting them know the reason you’re there is to help the kids.”***

*-CIS of Cleveland County Staff*

Partners provide a wide range of services. For example, the Shelby Junior League provides a clothing room for needy children and their families. Individual churches provide financial resources and supplement much needed transportation for after-school programs. Community members volunteer for job shadowing, provide medical services and work on annual drives to provide school supplies. CIS has a regional connection with a local television station that helps with the annual drive. The Post Office serves as a collection point and the National Guard provides the manpower to gather donated materials and supplies. The annual drive is an example of the type of community-wide effort that supports the success of CIS: tapping into partners’ passion to help children and families in need. Community partners indicate that seeing the excitement and hope that CIS brings to kids who never thought they had any options is what keeps them inspired to stay involved.

## Recruitment/Retention

CIS of Cleveland County staff members are well educated and generally have had experience with a school system. Staff members are recruited not only for the specific skill needed to fill the position, but also for the passion they bring to their work. Prior to being offered a job, the potential staff member is provided an opportunity to spend time in the school observing and experiencing what it would be like to work with school students and personnel. Newly hired staff are required to commit to stay with CIS for at least one year. People skills and the ability to work with the core values of CIS are key factors in the final decision to hire a potential individual.

The diversity of backgrounds from which staff members are drawn includes public health, motivational speaking, marketing, and family resource center management. Staff retention is high, ranging from 2 years to 15 years tenure with CIS. When a staff member leaves CIS it is usually to take a full-time position in the school system.

## Training

Staff training is specified by the grant that funds a particular program. For example, for the after-school program, staff members must be able to perform CPR and first-aid. Each year, CIS conducts an assessment of training needs at the new staff orientation. The physical facility in which CIS of Cleveland County operates has a large room where training is provided. The space is also used by the school district and other social service agencies at no cost to them. As an in-kind benefit, CIS staff can attend any of these trainings without having to pay to participate.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

Data are collected using the CIS GNC database for tracking student and program information. The Project Director, who serves as the data/evaluation manager is responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reports. She has developed program- and organization-specific data collection tools. Site Coordinators are required to track students and program outcomes using these tools. Monthly summary reports are collected from each program school to monitor enrollment, services provided, interactions with parents, home visits, and volunteers. These data are used to both track program performance and to identify unmet needs.

***“Kids and families have problems that act like roadblocks for kids’ learning. It’s CIS’s job at school to find a way around, over, under, or through that problem...With the help of school counselors and social workers, CIS works to find the way to help that family through that roadblock and make sure the kids are going to be successful.”***

*-CIS of Cleveland County Staff*

Schools are continually visited by the Project Director who observes program operations and interactions with students, school staff, and parents. Information regarding the site visit is recorded on a site visit form and maintained in a database.

Performance reviews of staff are conducted annually. Processes for the review are based on the Five CIS Basics. The review consists of a self evaluation, the supervisor’s evaluation, and an overall assessment conducted by the Project Director.

## Relationship with State Office

The relationship with the CIS state office is described by CIS of Cleveland County staff members as supportive and helpful. The state office “gets the word out” in the community, advocates with state legislators, and helps to identify funding opportunities and grants. The advocacy and branding activities conducted by the state office are viewed as adding value to the work that CIS of Cleveland County is doing at the local level. CIS staff also indicated that the technical assistance for non-profit management the state office provides is of great benefit, especially for the new Executive Director.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

A range of methods and risk factors for assessing both individual and school-wide needs are used by CIS of Cleveland County. These include standardized test scores, low grades, attendance, and “the home situation.” Teachers, principals, and CIS Site Coordinators work together to identify need and determine what program will best address the need.

### Identification and Referral

Students in need of services are referred to CIS by either the school guidance counselor or school social worker. These referrals usually are made by teachers, except in the case of the Parents As Teachers program, where individual students may be aware of the needs of another student who is pregnant and connect her to the parent educator/case manager for this program.

*“It’s great being in this program. [The parent educator] doesn’t reward us for being mothers, but she helps you accept that it’s okay.”*

*-Student*

Referrals to after-school programs are based on risk factors including low grades, poor attendance, or identification as an underachieving student. Students at the middle school level showing promise in math are also identified and referred to the after-school program to participate in advanced math classes in preparation for advanced placement in high school.

### Programs and Services

CIS staff, teachers, and principals work together to determine programs for students. Information about CIS programs and services are communicated to the community via Curriculum Night activities, flyers to homes in the student backpacks, and word-of-mouth. Many CIS students are actually “CIS families” in which several children in a family have participated in CIS programs or benefited from CIS services.

#### **Major Programs of CIS of Cleveland County:<sup>7</sup>**

*Elementary:* CIS, through Site Coordinators, coordinates activities of volunteers and operates Community Learning Centers. Services are offered to the whole school and to targeted students. Approximately 600 students participate in these programs at six CIS/Family Resource Center schools in elementary schools in Cleveland County. Activities provided include Homework Club, Make It-Take It, Math Superstars, Great Leaps, and Jump Start Reading. English as a Second Language and parent workshops are

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<sup>7</sup> Descriptions of Major Programs are taken from the Communities in Schools of Cleveland County, Inc Financial Report, June 30, 2007.



provided, reinforcing the connection between CIS and the Family Resource Center's family support model. Summer enrichment is also provided to students. Transitioning from elementary school to middle school is facilitated for CIS students during the summer. Transitioning students are taken to the middle school prior to the beginning of school and introduced to CIS staff, teachers, the principal and administrative staff.

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers.* CIS staff operate after-school academic enrichment programs at five elementary and four middle schools in Cleveland County. The centers serve Level 1 and Level 2 students providing homework assistance, remediation, and enrichment activities aligned with the NC Standard Course of Study for math, science, social studies, and language arts.

*Middle School.* CIS of Cleveland County coordinates additional services to middle school students through after-school and before-school academic enrichment programs at four middle schools. They serve Level 1 and Level 2 students who are in free/reduced lunch programs and need homework assistance, remediation, and enrichment activities to improve study skills, grades, and attendance.

*High School.* CIS operates a Teen Parent Educators program which serves pregnant/parenting teens age 11-18 throughout Cleveland County. The program provides home visits, referrals to needed resources, group meetings (during the school day), and advocacy at the home school so that these teens can successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Faith-based partners are affiliated with each of the programs that are offered at four of the high schools. These partners provide emergency support (food, clothing, health access).

*Community Based Programs.* In addition to school-based programs CIS also operates a Hands Need HANDS program, participate in the Governor's One-on-One Mentoring project, develop mentoring relationships between youth aged 6-19 who are at risk of criminal behavior deriving from prior risky behaviors (e.g., school failure, gang involvement, poor social skills, or living in poverty), and provide positive adult role models to increase access to protective factors for youth. A full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, assigned by CIS of North Carolina, works with the community to develop in-kind donations, identify volunteers, and find resources to enhance CIS of Cleveland County programs.

### ***Parents and Students***

School staff, students, and community partners all support and value the programs and services CIS provides students and their families. One principal wants to "clone" their Site Coordinator.

Students at all three schools visited indicated that the program provides them with needed academic support, provides structure to their after-school activities, and allows them to



participate in activities (e.g., computers, math club) that they would not ordinarily be available. There is a balance between academic work and enrichment activities that results in students “feeling good” about themselves.

Parents are especially appreciative of the improvements in both academic performance and behaviors that have resulted from their child’s participation in CIS. Most parents indicated that their son or daughter is under a great deal of pressure because of state testing. Prior to their child’s involvement in CIS, they expressed feelings of helplessness realizing that they did not possess the tools needed to help their child. They note the remarkable change in the self confidence resulting from participating in CIS programs and credit increased self confidence with their child’s improved academic performance.

***“[CIS] has been great for [my son]. I saw him starting to lose confidence in himself and this has helped a whole lot”***

*-Parent*

### **Successes and Challenges**

***“[CIS] helped me stay in school. I didn’t want to come back to school [after I had my baby]. Now I want to graduate! Seems like every time I have a problem or something, she’s always there, the program is always there and helps me with it.”***

*-Student*

CIS of Cleveland County aims to reach every at-risk and needy child and family in Cleveland County. They know from evaluation data, feedback from students and parents, and from the overwhelming support of school administrators and teachers that the programs and services being provided are making a substantial contribution to the success of individual students and the schools as a whole. This dual approach, to improve both individuals and the school as a whole, is the basis of their mission to “champion the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life.”

While CIS staff recognize the successes they have generated, they also indicate the need to do more. CIS staff report that additional resources are needed to support transportation for students to participate in after-school programs. Currently, parents must provide this service. Cleveland County is quite large and many parents of students who would benefit from participation in CIS after-school programs cannot provide transportation for their children. CIS staff plan to engage faith-based organizations and other groups to help in this area.

### **Monitoring and Adjustment**

Site Coordinators develop individual student plans that track participation and change in academic and behavioral outcomes for students. Both action steps and grades are recorded for each student and maintained in a student folder. Parent surveys are conducted (both pre-and post participation) and entered into a database at Gardner Webb University—the evaluator for the after-school programs. These data are used to make adjustments to both individual student plans and overall program improvement.

## Relationships with Key Stakeholders

CIS staff work to develop strong relationships with students, parents, and school staff. By connecting with the passion that the community feels for the work that they do, CIS is able to find resources and support for its work. Although funding for the after-school program ended a year ago, resources from school funds and other community partnerships have kept the program going.

***“When you can see something causing [kids] to think and act in a positive manner, that’s worth every dime of what you’ve invested in it. It’s given them a hope that sometimes far too many of them have lost—a sense of hope and pride of what they will be able to accomplish.”***

*-Community Partner*

The Parents as Teachers program is an example of the strength of relationships that Site Coordinators are able to develop with students and their families. The parent educator is welcomed into the homes of these teens and is like a member of the family, providing advice not only to the teen parent but also to other family members. The trust and confidence the program provides teen mothers is such that the teens recommend the program to other girls who find out they are pregnant and even “tell” the Site Coordinator about someone in need of these services.

***“I will make provisions for CIS because I believe in the program and the purpose. And I believe that their ultimate goal is to help families and children.”***

*-School Administrator*

School staff, particularly school principals, are enthusiastic about CIS and rely on the program as a critical facilitator to their school meeting AYP. The working relationship between CIS Site Coordinators and administrative staff is open and trusting. CIS staff members are viewed as part of the school rather than an add-on. Relationships between CIS and schools are described as collegial—CIS says what it can do and works collaboratively with the school. As one school

administrator stated, “CIS is the most powerful tool we have!”

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Cleveland County was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Cleveland County and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

CIS of Cleveland County describes itself as an organization working *in* the school *with* families to ensure that the obstacles blocking a child’s progress are eliminated. CIS has the ability to target the children and families it works with unlike other community agencies and schools.

Students describe CIS staff as the adults who help them make it through school and help them understand what choices they have.

### Future Vision for CIS

CIS staff have high aspirations for the future of their program. They link continued success to involving the CIS Board in helping to generate a “buzz” about Communities In Schools in the county, particularly among potential funders and partners. CIS staff members indicate that they are working to sustain their current growth and focus efforts on slow, premeditated expansion in areas where a new program can be sustained. Strategies to sustain the positive direction of growth include expanding community partnerships and further engaging parents. Their future vision centers on establishing a stable financial base and having full-time CIS case managers in every school in Cleveland County—goals also shared by all CIS partners and the schools.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

Consistent funding, especially non-grant-based funding is essential for maintaining sustained growth according to CIS staff. Identifying and obtaining this support would allow CIS of Cleveland County to meet its stated vision of a CIS employee and program in every school in Cleveland County.

*“If my classes behaved as well as the [CIS] program, I’d be breezing through the year.”*

*-Teacher*

Site Coordinators point to a need for transportation for students in after-school programs. This would increase attendance, particularly for those students who are most in need of after-school help.

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

Practical approaches for working with schools and communities were provided by CIS staff—their perspective throughout the site visit was outwardly focused. Site Coordinators emphasized the importance of keeping communication open with students. CIS administrative staff members stressed the importance of organizing and understanding the financial system—especially for a new administrator. Flexibility is critical to successful programs, as well as having excellent people skills such as being caring, understanding, and a good listener. Finally, the most targeted advice from CIS staff members was to “make decisions based on what’s best for kids!”

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	Crest High School	Crest Middle School Of Technology	Township Three Elementary
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2006</b>			
Reading Proficiency (%)	83.1	91.2	87.7
Math Proficiency (%)	88.6	71.4	66.3
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	85.8	81.0	77.0
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	83.1	91.2	87.7
White	86.8	93.4	90.9
Black	74.2	86.2	82.7
Hispanic	n.a.	81.7	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	58.8	39.6
Female	91.3	93.6	92.9
Male	73.9	88.6	82.3
Economically Disadvantaged	73.4	86.2	83.3
Non-Disadvantaged	89.2	94.3	93.1
English Language Learners	n.a.	50.0	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	83.2	91.2	87.5
Students with Disabilities	35.1	53.5	58.2
Non-Disabled Students	89.9	94.2	92.2
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	83.1	91.2	87.7
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	88.6	71.4	66.3
White	91.4	78.5	72.9
Black	83.0	51.8	54.9
Hispanic	66.7	60.5	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	44.4	33.3
Female	92.4	74.6	65.3
Male	84.4	68.5	67.2
Economically Disadvantaged	81.5	55.9	61.2
Non-Disadvantaged	93.0	82.6	74.2
English Language Learners	83.3	25.0	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	88.7	71.5	65.8
Students with Disabilities	57.0	18.2	41.8
Non-Disabled Students	92.9	76.4	70.6
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	88.6	71.4	66.3
<b>College Prep - 2005</b>			

## Individual School Demographics

	Crest High School	Crest Middle School Of Technology	Township Three Elementary
SAT Reasoning Test - Average Score	1,012	n.a.	n.a.
SAT Reasoning Test - Participation Rate (%)	56.1	n.a.	n.a.
PSAT/NMSQT - Average Score	133	n.a.	n.a.
PSAT/NMSQT - Participation Rate (%)	85.3	n.a.	n.a.
AP - Scores 3 or Above (%)	52.6	n.a.	n.a.
AP - Participation Rate (%)	32.7	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>			
Enrollment	1,477	1,130	778
Students Per Teacher	16.1	15.9	14.4
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>			
White	73.1	71.5	57.8
Black	25.3	26.6	39.7
Hispanic	1.3	1.7	2.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.3	0.0	0.1
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1	0.2	0.3
Economically Disadvantaged	30.9	42.4	64.1
<b>School Facts</b>			
Address	800 Old Boiling Springs	315 Beaverdam Church Road	526 Davis Road
City or Town	Shelby	Shelby	Shelby
County	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland
District	Cleveland County Schools	Cleveland County Schools	Cleveland County Schools
Telephone Number	(704)482-5354	(704)482-0343	(704)487-7809
Urban Status	Rural, Outside CBSA	Rural, Outside CBSA	Rural, Outside CBSA
Grade Levels Served	9-12	6-8	PreK-5

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

**Case Study Profile:  
CIS of Corpus Christi, Texas**

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- 4.2. Recommendations

## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – Corpus Christi, Texas

#### Communities In Schools of Texas

Communities In Schools champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970’s, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including Texas.

Communities In Schools of Texas helps young Texans successfully learn and prepare for life by coordinating community resources in local schools. The Texas CIS program (CIS State Office) is managed by the Texas Education Agency. Through 26 local affiliates across the state, including CIS of Corpus Christi, CIS Texas provides services in more than 600 schools in 100 school districts, serving more than 330,000 students.<sup>4</sup>

#### Profile of Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi, which is classified as a “Large City”, is a coastal city in Southeast Texas. The county seat of Nueces County, it also extends into Aransas and San Patricio counties. More demographic information about Corpus Christi is presented in Exhibit 1.

### 1.2 Affiliate Information

Communities In Schools (CIS) of Corpus Christi is located in Corpus Christi, Texas. Its mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and their families through community collaboration, advocacy, and programs. Since its founding in 1986, Communities In Schools of Corpus Christi has initiated many different programs for at-risk youth, including tutoring and mentoring,

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports.

<sup>4</sup> Data are for Fiscal Year 2002.

<b>Exhibit 1: Demographic Information – Corpus Christi<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Population</b>	
2000 census	277,454
2006 estimate	285,175
<b>Ethnicity Composition (2000)</b>	
White	75.1%
African-American	4.3%
American Indian	0.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.6%
Hispanic or Latino origin <sup>2</sup>	54.3%
<b>Age Composition (2006)</b>	
0-19	30.4%
20-24	7.6%
25-44	26.5%
45-64	23.7%
65 +	11.8%
Median Age	34.2
<b>Gender Composition (2006)</b>	
Male	48.3%
Female	51.7%
<b>Median Income</b>	
per household (2006)	\$30,771
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	
2006	8.5%
<b>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2006)<sup>3</sup></b>	
All Crimes	73
Violent crimes	7
Property crimes	66



technical skills training, cultural enrichment, family involvement, and after school programs. Today, students at eight school districts are benefiting from CIS of Corpus Christi's programs and services.

CIS of Corpus Christi offers a wide variety of Level 1 and Level 2 programs and services to the students and families in their area. CIS of Corpus Christi addresses needs by offering tutoring, mentoring, a summer reading program, drug and alcohol prevention classes, crisis intervention, and postsecondary education/employment preparation, among other programs.

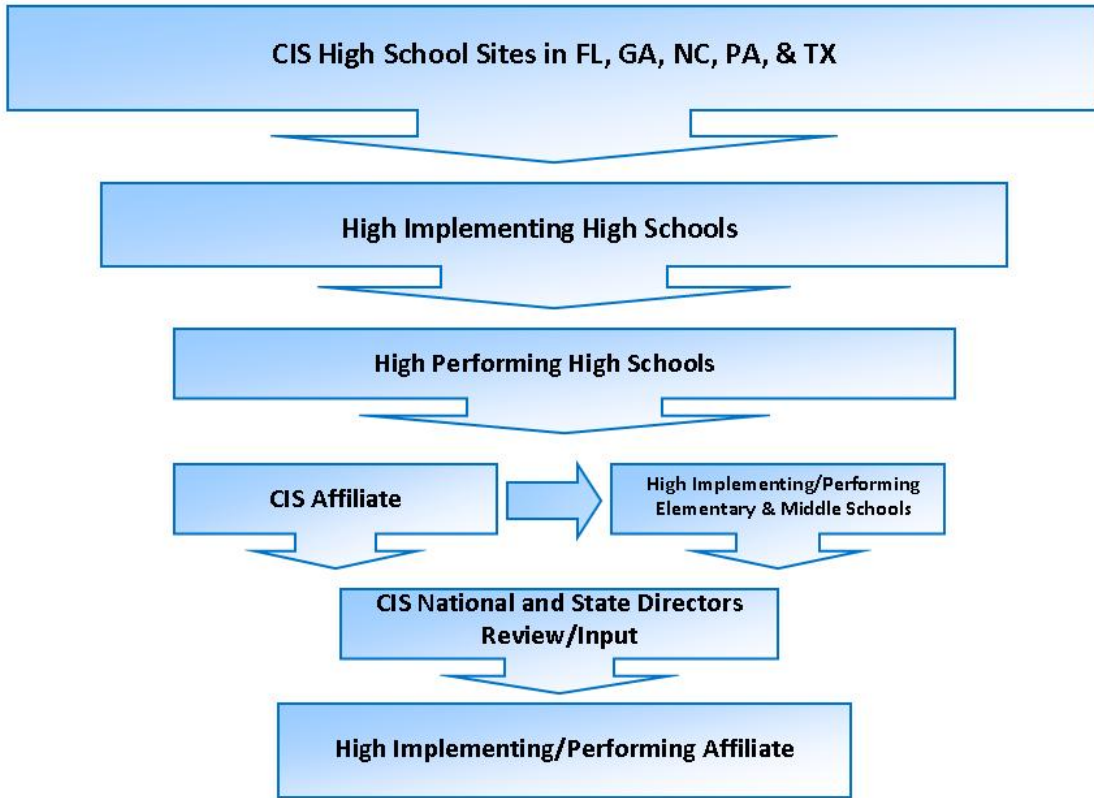
## 2. Methodology

As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Corpus Christi was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

The case study was conducted in three schools located in Corpus Christi, TX (George Evans Elementary School, South Park Middle School, and Miller High School; see Attachment A for individual school demographics and descriptions). Corpus Christi schools report a total student population of 39, 213. About 62.6 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Corpus Christi schools average a student teacher ratio of 16.4:1. Seventy-three percent of regular schools met the 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The high schools annual dropout rate was 4.2 percent in 2006. More information regarding the Corpus Christi School System is presented in Exhibit 3.

<b>Exhibit 3: School System Information – Corpus Christi</b>	
<b><u>Student Population (2006)</u></b>	
Total Enrollment	39,213
Limited English Proficient	8.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	62.6%
<b><u>Student /Teacher Ratio</u></b>	
Corpus Christi School District	16.4:1
<b><u>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</u></b>	
Schools Meeting AYP	46 (73%)
<b><u>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (%) (2006)</u></b>	
Corpus Christi School District	86.7%
<b><u>Math Proficiency (%) (2006)</u></b>	
Corpus Christi School District	68.5%
<b><u>Annual Dropout (High School) (2006)</u></b>	
Corpus Christi School District	4.2%
<b><u>Graduation Rate (2002)</u><sup>5</sup></b>	
Corpus Christi School District	60.4%

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Between May 20<sup>th</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, a total of 27 interviews were conducted at CIS of Corpus Christi. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), and the administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary, middle, and high school participating in CIS. Three student and three parent focus groups were also conducted at these schools, with a combined total participation of 34 students and parents. A breakdown of interview participants by their role is presented in Exhibit 4.

<b>Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	
CIS Affiliate/School Staff	10
School Personnel	17
Students and Parents	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

<sup>5</sup> Cumulative Promotion Index (Urban Inst.). Source: www. SchoolDataDirect.org.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

Strong leadership is a crucial factor in successfully implementing Communities In Schools (CIS) at the Corpus Christi affiliate. One characteristic that facilitates strong leadership is knowledge of the community being served. CIS of Corpus Christi's Executive Director was born and raised in Corpus Christi, TX, and is uniquely familiar with the issues facing children and families there. After graduating from college with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, she worked as a probation officer and a deputy sheriff before joining CIS as a Case Manager in 1987 (one year after the affiliate was formed). After rising through the ranks she was promoted to the Executive Director position in 1993.

***"The glue of the organization is [the Executive Director] and her team. That's what it all boils down to...That's how we achieve our results."***

*- Board of Directors*

Her lengthy term as Executive Director has been a welcome respite from the turnover that occurred early in the affiliate's inception. She believes the turnover was a result of different factors, including the extensive need for grant writing and the challenge of leading a relatively new non-profit organization. She feels that the reason she has continued to serve as Executive Director, when others were unable, was because she "really grasped the concept of what we needed to do for [these] kids." In her words, she was "born and raised here, so I knew the situations that kids were coming from."

The Board of Directors also plays an integral role in leading CIS of Corpus Christi. As guides for the affiliate, Board members help to make informed decisions on policies and practices. They maintain an open line of communication with CIS staff members, which they feel largely contributes to the success of the affiliate. Most important, however, is being able to place their trust in the Executive Director. The Executive Director takes this role very seriously, acknowledging that her job is to protect the Board of Directors by making sure staff members abide by those policies. She feels it's important that the Board of Directors knows CIS staff "wouldn't do anything to jeopardize their integrity, their name, or the reputation of this [affiliate]."

## Planning and Development

CIS of Corpus Christi treats their affiliate like a business, which includes having a business plan and involving all stakeholders in the planning process. The most important thing to successful planning and development is good communication between all parties. To this end, the Board of Directors plays a role in the planning and development of policies and procedures implemented throughout the affiliate, and school administrators are engaged throughout the planning process as well.

***“There are so many benefits [to CIS]!”***

*- School Administrator*

## Board of Directors

The main responsibilities of the Board of Directors in CIS of Corpus Christi involve developing the strategic plan, creating and reviewing policies and procedures, and contributing financially to the affiliate. Financial contributions can take many forms (e.g., individual donations, building relationships with corporate sponsors) and are seen as an extension of the Board members’ devotion to the program. One staff member summed it up as, “If they contribute [to CIS], they believe in it.”

Prospective Board members are required to go through a rigorous screening process. This reflects the importance to CIS of Corpus Christi of having people on the Board who truly believe in the CIS mission, and who will be committed to and involved in the process. One way Board members demonstrate their commitment is by proudly displaying their CIS shirts/badges when they host or attend community events.

***“We have good, devoted Board members.”***

*- Board Member*

## Resources/Funding

CIS of Corpus Christi explores all potential funding streams for their affiliate, and feels very fortunate that they have not encountered significant barriers to funding. Resources and funding come from the State legislature, schools participating in CIS, fundraising events (4-5 each month), grants, foundations, and individual contributions.

CIS of Corpus Christi maintains a list of “Champions for Children” – a core group of more than 30 people they can rely on to provide resources for children and families when necessary. Through weekly e-mails, the “Champions” are kept abreast of CIS events, the accomplishments of students involved in CIS, and any needs the students and families may have. CIS of Corpus Christi emphasized that obtaining resources and funding is not always about simply asking for money. It is more about building a relationship with partners who will then want to donate their time or money when an opportunity arises, or who will want to create an opportunity to help. Some of their “Champions” have offered scholarship money, provided shampoo to a family with head lice, and given children an unforgettable Christmas by buying gifts for them.

## Marketing

CIS of Corpus Christi places an emphasis on marketing the Communities In Schools brand within the local community. Marketing CIS, in Corpus Christi, is tied to receiving funding for programs and services for students. The likable, outgoing personalities of CIS of Corpus Christi staff plays a key role in successfully informing people of the CIS process. Staff acknowledge that they must constantly be on the forefront in their efforts, and are willing to market the organization to everyone in the community. They've found that one way of marketing CIS is through stories of children, both children in need of CIS services and children who have been helped by CIS. When individuals or companies hear a story of a student who is in need, they may feel more compelled to provide for that student. Promoting the CIS brand is not as great of a challenge in the schools (where everyone knows the programs and services offered through CIS) compared to the community (where people may have never heard of the organization).

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

The CIS process is based on community partnerships. All CIS of Corpus Christi staff interviewed cited Bill Milliken's idea that relationships are the foundation of every successful CIS affiliate. Both affiliate staff and CIS staff placed in schools receive training on relationship building techniques, which demonstrates the affiliate's commitment to developing relationships with stakeholders, schools, and families.

The relationship between CIS of Corpus Christi and the local community is growing, thanks to the marketing efforts by CIS staff and Board members. CIS is gaining greater recognition in the area, and parents and students are referring others to CIS in larger numbers.

The Corpus Christi affiliate develops partnerships by hosting events in the community and networking at large events like career fairs or health fairs. CIS staff view partnerships as a mutual relationship; it is not about always asking for funds or resources. The partners feel a strong need to "give back to the community, because they give so much to us."

***"We help people give meaningful donations... it's very rewarding."***

*- Resource Development  
Coordinator*

***"I think [CIS] should be part of every school. I could count the ways they've helped [us] but we'd be here forever...If there's a need that I have, it's not: 'No, we can't help you', it's: 'Let me see what I can do to find someone who can help.'"***

*- School Administrator*

Community partnerships are not without their limitations, however. The main challenge CIS of Corpus Christi staff have encountered in their relationships with community organizations is the barrier created by privacy regulations. Several students have parents who live in shelters, and CIS staff in schools sometimes have trouble gaining access to those parents because of the strict privacy policies that are in place to protect the residents. CIS staff hopes to find a way to bypass the regulations so

they are able to contact parents when necessary.

Another important relationship for the CIS affiliate is that which they have with schools. CIS of Corpus Christi works to form a relationship with schools through maintaining open communication with school personnel. CIS of Corpus Christi collaborates with school principals when hiring new staff, and they take measures to ensure staff placed in schools are compatible with the school environment. They have found that the trust they build within the school building has a positive impact on their relationships with community organizations; partners in the community have more trust in CIS because CIS is endorsed by the schools in which they are housed. Participating schools in Corpus Christi strongly endorse the program, saying that “our school couldn’t function without CIS resources” and “each year, [we] make the decision to keep CIS [in the school].”

### **Recruitment/Retention**

The one statement heard over and over during the site visit to Corpus Christi is that CIS is successful because of the people involved. CIS of Corpus Christi has a very structured hiring process, ensuring that prospective employees know what is expected of them and providing good benefits such as inexpensive health plans, retirement plans, and mileage reimbursement. With the assistance of a consultant who directly examined their hiring practices, they have identified several strategies that have enabled them to recruit and retain effective staff members.

They start by placing a newspaper advertisement with the CIS logo and a detailed description of the open position. For each position, CIS of Corpus Christi receives an average of 50-100 applicants. The characteristics they look for in a staff member include a college degree in a social service or more than five years of experience in the social service field, experience working with youth in various settings, strong communication skills, and computer literacy. Prospective staff members also need to be welcoming to parents and students, open to new ways of thinking, innovative, and creative. These characteristics are reflected in their current staff members, who all have had some experience and/or desire to work with children and families before joining CIS.

### **Training**

CIS of Corpus Christi staff participate in monthly and annual staff development trainings. They cite the state office as being very helpful in providing staff training. Training topics include cultural competence/diversity, time management, stress relief, and reporting/collecting data. During the annual staff development day, school staff are also given the opportunity to train and network with their peers (elementary school, middle school, and high school staff are grouped together).

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**

CIS of Corpus Christi places an emphasis on documentation and reporting, both to the State Office and to individual funders. Evaluation and reporting of services by CIS of Corpus Christi is most often done on the school-level, with staff monitoring their programs and services in order



to tailor them to the specific needs of students. The CIS affiliate also provides Program Coordinators with weekly reports on staff activities so staff needs can be met.

### **Relationship with State Office**

The CIS State Office of Texas is described by CIS of Corpus Christi as the leader in keeping the CIS Texas affiliates focused and cooperating with each other. The state office oversees the data collection, reporting, and development of marketing materials and is commended for their efforts to create continuity across the state's affiliates. They also act as a liaison between the National Office and local affiliates in combining local evaluation reports to give to CIS National.

CIS of Corpus Christi and the CIS State Office of Texas have a very good relationship with one another. The affiliate feels that they can contact the state office if they need resources or guidance; the state office often provides them with "a new perspective" on an issue.

## **3.2 School-Level Implementation**

### **Needs Assessment**

Needs Assessments are conducted so that CIS of Corpus Christi can accurately target the issues that students and schools are facing, and then tailor the types of programs and services offered. Since each CIS school in Corpus Christi deals with different students, and therefore different issues, the majority of needs assessments are completed at the school-level. The four areas focused on when identifying needs are:

- Academics
- Attendance
- Behavior
- Social Issues (housing, life skills, college awareness, and employment)

There are multiple approaches that CIS of Corpus Christi employs when identifying and assessing school needs. School personnel play an important role in helping CIS staff identify needs, and teachers will often ask CIS of Corpus Christi to offer a specific service or bring in a speaker on a specific topic. Case managers examine the programs and services currently offered at their school (both through CIS and outside agencies), and identify the areas that are not being targeted by a specific intervention or school resource. They also assess school needs by looking at trends in behavioral issues – they may offer an anger management program if they see an increase in fighting at school, for example. Finally, CIS of Corpus Christi staff may choose to implement certain programs or services based on what is being offered at schools with similar demographics (assuming that similar schools may encounter similar challenges).

When assessing the needs of individual students in their schools, CIS of Corpus Christi staff members feel that it is important to solicit input from everyone who has contact with the child. School personnel are a good source of information, because they are familiar with each child's



demeanor and personality and can tell when there is even a slight change. They also have access to student test scores and records. CIS of Corpus Christi staff are able to access the Schoolnet system - a comprehensive database of students containing information ranging from student grades to attendance rates to teacher's notes on a particular student. Through this system, CIS staff assess the individual needs of students identified for services.

Parents also share what is happening during the hours students are not in school. In the past, CIS of Corpus Christi case managers have given surveys to parents inquiring about needs, but have stopped this practice as the response rate was too low. Now, case managers informally ask for parent input on the types of services they are providing.

An individual needs assessment is conducted by the CIS of Corpus Christi case manager when a student comes to CIS. This involves interviews with school personnel, parents, and the student. Within the CIS community, case managers share their experiences with a particular student when a student switches schools, either because of a move or promotion to the next level.

### **Identification and Referral**

There are several ways that students are identified to receive Level 2 services from CIS of Corpus Christi. CIS of Corpus Christi produces a list of students identified as at-risk based on family income and student grades. School personnel work closely with CIS staff to refer students that they feel have a need for CIS. The state of Texas has strict guidelines for standardized testing (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills [TAKS]), and students from grades 3, 5, 8, and 12 have to pass the TAKS test to advance to the next grade level or graduate from high school; CIS of Corpus Christi receives a large number of referrals from teachers of those grade levels. Additionally, students are referred through word of mouth, parent request, and self-referral. Students are sometimes referred to CIS through a court order, suggesting a positive relationship between the juvenile justice system and CIS of Corpus Christi. The most common reasons students are court ordered to CIS are violation of truancy, mandatory curfew laws, and fighting.

Parents and students interviewed said they learned about CIS at their schools from the following sources:

- Family members (often other children in the family have been involved with CIS)
- Children who participated in CIS at their previous school
- Local advertisements seen on television commercials and billboards
- School personnel
- CIS staff
- Friends

CIS of Corpus Christi requires that students obtain parental consent each year before they are eligible for CIS; students complete an enrollment form for CIS Level 1 or Level 2 services at the time they enroll in school.

## Programs and Services

CIS of Corpus Christi offers a wide variety of programs and services to the students and families in their area. They try to base their programs around the common areas that students and parents identify as challenges. The parents and students interviewed identified academics, TAKS testing, graduation pressures, factors leading to school dropout, behavioral problems, interpersonal relationships with authority figures, and reading as areas they feel

are the greatest barriers to success in school. CIS of Corpus Christi addresses these needs by offering TAKS tutoring, mentoring, a summer reading program, numerous Level 1 services, drug and alcohol prevention classes, crisis intervention, and postsecondary education/employment preparation, among many others. CIS of Corpus Christi also provides information and resources for teachers in participating schools and support for students who need to talk to someone.

***“They make you realize that just because your family won’t always be there, someone will. And that’s just as good. As long as you have someone standing behind you telling you they love you, you can accomplish [anything].”***

- Student

***“They take a lot of weight off our shoulders. As a teacher you always worry about those students in the back of your mind, and I’m just very grateful to have [CIS] where I can send them to people I know who care... That door is always open.”***

- Teacher

In addition to the above activities, case managers also perform home visits; monitor attendance and behavior; coordinate Level 1 programs on topics like drug prevention, healthy living, and dating violence; run parent involvement committees; and provide students with basic needs like clothing, food, and eyeglasses. The CIS model’s influence can be seen in all programs and services offered by CIS of Corpus Christi staff.

## Best Practices

CIS of Corpus Christi has developed an innovative program called BASICS. BASICS stands for *Building Alternative Solutions in Community Service*, and has been implemented in Corpus Christi through CIS for the past five years. In BASICS, a program designed to reduce truancy and prevent school dropout, students who end up in court for skipping school are paired with a case manager who works with the family to find the root of the problem and solve it. “It’s not about putting a Band-Aid on it,’ an executive staff member said. ‘It’s about finding what’s causing it so it doesn’t happen again.’”<sup>6</sup> If a student is unable to pay the truancy fine, they must complete 80 hours of community service within 60 days. The case managers are responsible for helping them find ways to fulfill that requirement.

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from Cavazos, M.A. (2008, April 22). Grant will help non-profit prevent truancy in Kingsville. Caller-Times. Retrieved June 19, 2008 from <http://www.caller.com/news/2008/apr/22/grant-will-help-nonprofit-prevent-truancy-in/>.

CIS of Corpus Christi staff also run a summer program for students. Beginning in 2002, this program has helped students improve their reading scores on the TAKS tests. At-risk students are identified by parents and school personnel to participate in reading enrichment activities along with weekly educational field trips during this six-week program.

Other innovative programs offered through CIS of Corpus Christi include:

- F.O.C.U.S. (Focusing on Children Uniting against Substances) – A substance abuse prevention program designed to educate participants ages 5-17 and their families on the effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- S.T.A.R. (Services to At-Risk Youth) – A program that provides services to at-risk youth ages 0-17 and their families. The goal is to prevent abuse and neglect, runaways, truancy, abandonment, family conflict, and delinquent behavior.

### ***Successes and Challenges***

Like any provider of student support services has experienced, the implementation of CIS of Corpus Christi has been both successful and challenging at times. Overall, everyone interviewed felt that the CIS program is highly successful in helping students. The goals that school personnel have for their students – to be functioning at or above grade level, to graduate from high school, to “become productive citizens and enter the workforce prepared” – are achieved because of the integrated student support provided by CIS of Corpus Christi. As one teacher noted, “It’s hard to teach a child when their other needs aren’t being met.” CIS of Corpus Christi allows students to be successful in school and in life by providing them with basic needs, a safe environment, tutoring programs, positive role models, individualized attention, and positive reinforcement.

School personnel, CIS staff, and families have all seen positive changes in students who participate in CIS of Corpus Christi. Interviews stated that students have a more positive attitude, better attendance, more respect for others, increased trust, and a greater sense of hope – characteristics that provide an invaluable benefit for at-risk students. Parents reported that their children, after joining CIS, are doing better in school, showing greater confidence, feeling less stressed, and acting more mature. Students themselves have seen an improvement in their attitude and behavior, saying that CIS has “helped me not to get mad at people”, “made me bring my grades up”, and “made me try new things and build confidence.” When asked where they thought would be without CIS, one student said she “wouldn’t be graduating this year.”

***“You see the difference in the child. Their attitude and everything changes.”***

*-Parent*

When students were asked what they like about CIS of Corpus Christi they responded that CIS staff:

- “Respect us and treat us well”
- “Give us activities to do”

- “Support all of us when we need something”
- “Say they’re proud of us”
- “Cheer us on during sports games”
- “Gives us what we need, like snacks, clean clothes, and school supplies”

***“Their passion and understanding for the students is incredible. That’s what makes [CIS] exemplary; the people who make it function.”***

*-Teacher*

Students said they would like to have more field trips through CIS of Corpus Christi, more time for science activities, and a separate class for CIS during the school day. They do not like it when exclusion from CIS activities is used as a punishment for bad behavior.

Those interviewed felt that the strengths of CIS of Corpus Christi lay in the people involved. Everyone praised the case managers for their patience and availability to students. They were described as being a reliable resource for kids, someone students can relate to, and people who really care about the students they interact with. Additionally, school personnel are impressed that they always receive what they ask for from CIS of Corpus Christi case managers.

The few challenges that were mentioned regarding CIS of Corpus Christi centered around lack of parental support/involvement—something CIS staff are addressing through their parent involvement committees. School personnel thought that any limitations to CIS of Corpus Christi are based in the community’s limitations, citing problems such as homelessness, too few available resources, and family troubles. Everyone involved would like to see more case managers placed in schools; unfortunately, lack of funding often precludes this from happening.

### **Monitoring and Adjustment**

CIS of Corpus Christi monitors the response to services offered on the school level by administering questionnaires to school faculty/counselors, parents/guardians, and students. These tools aim to measure familiarity with CIS, impact of services, satisfaction with services, and involvement in CIS. CIS of Corpus Christi staff also measure success through student grades, attendance records, TAKS scores, and feedback from parents and students. Programs and services are adjusted based on perceived success and the opinions of students and case managers.

***“I’m a little bit of momma, [a] little bit of daddy, a little bit of everything here...I want [students] to know that I’ll be constant.”***

*-Case Manager*

### **Relationships with Key Stakeholders**

CIS of Corpus Christi staff have formed very positive relationships within their participating schools. Case managers feel that in order to build relationships, it is especially important to stay visible within the school building and always be available to students. The relationship between case managers and students is described as trusting, comfortable, open, and respectful.

A unique challenge facing CIS of Corpus Christi is the high mobility rate of students and large homeless population in the area. These factors may increase the difficulty to form close relationships, but CIS staff work toward building trust with students for as long as they are present in the region. Students describe case managers as their “second mom/dad” and school personnel see the strong connection between students and case managers. One sign of this close relationship is the large number of students who return (after graduation/promotion to next grade level) to see their CIS of Corpus Christi case managers.

*“She’s my school mom.  
She’s my eyes here at  
school.”*

*-Parent*

Parents in Corpus Christi have also formed strong bonds with CIS staff. School administrators noted that while parents may have had negative experiences during their own school years which have kept them from being more involved in their child’s school, they feel comfortable talking to the CIS case

manager. In this way, the case managers can act as a liaison between parents and school personnel.

The relationship that case managers have with school personnel is also a very positive one. Multiple people noted that “CIS and the school intertwine seamlessly” and that there is hardly a distinction between school staff and CIS staff. CIS of Corpus Christi case managers collaborate with school officials on programs and services and keep open lines of communication with all parties in the school.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Corpus Christi was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Corpus Christi and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

CIS of Corpus Christi is currently described by parents, students, school personnel, CIS staff, and stakeholders as the nation’s best dropout prevention program: a comprehensive, holistic approach to keeping kids in school and helping them achieve their goals in life. This clear and concise designation is supplemented by examples of Level 1 and Level 2 services offered to students, testimonials and success stories, and statistics.

#### Future Vision for CIS

Overall, those involved with CIS of Corpus Christi have bright visions for the future of the affiliate. CIS staff see CIS of Corpus Christi staying in the schools they are currently serving, adding more case managers within those schools, and expanding to new schools—especially elementary schools. The vision staff have for students includes an increase in graduation rates

and a decrease in dropout rate. They would also like to increase parent and teacher involvement in CIS. Finally, CIS staff hope the future of CIS of Corpus Christi will see more funds and resources so they can serve more and more students and families each year. One staff member summed up their vision for the future of CIS in three words: “Inspiration, Motivation, Rebirth.”

***“My goal for the future is to help as many students as possible, and to spread out as much as we can while still providing quality of service.”***

*-CIS of Corpus Christi Staff*

School personnel would like to see additional funding to keep case managers in their schools and add case managers when possible. They hope that one day there can be one case manager for every grade level in a school. They would also like increased community and parent involvement, continuity of services between school levels (from elementary to middle to high school), and higher pay for CIS staff.

All parents and students interviewed expressed a desire to continue participating in CIS next year. They also reported having recommended CIS to other parents or friends.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

### **Support Needed to Improve CIS**

The most common request to help sustain the work of CIS of Corpus Christi is increased funding and support from the community. CIS of Corpus Christi feels that with increased training on leadership skills, more awareness of local CIS programs, and funds to hire additional employees, they would be able to more effectively serve the at-risk students in their community. Additional case managers (one male and one female for each school), mentors, and school supplies were mentioned by school personnel as important factors in sustaining the work of CIS of Corpus Christi.

### **Advice to Others Implementing CIS**

When asked what recommendations they would make to new CIS affiliates, CIS of Corpus Christi staff advised new Executive Directors to build a strong foundation so the affiliate can sustain itself if there’s a change in leadership. New Board of Directors members were advised to volunteer for everything – every event, fundraiser, and opportunity – and to give 150 percent of themselves, because the end result is worth it. CIS staff recommended that new case managers stay visible in the school building, collaborate and communicate regularly with school administration, and be involved and creative in the services they provide to students and families. As one staff member said, “You can always work on paperwork when kids are gone – be accessible during the school day.”

In terms of funding, staff offered a number of suggestions:

- Follow through with promises made in grant proposals; granters will want to continue to invest in your organization.

- Provide comprehensive documentation and statistics to funders. Funders who are kept informed of what the money is accomplishing are more likely to continue providing assistance.
- Tap into unknown sources. CIS of Corpus Christi researched potential funders in the state of Texas and found resources that were previously unidentified.
- Continually build/strengthen your relationships with community organizations.

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	George Evans Elementary School	Miller High School Center For Communications, Technology, and the Performing Arts	South Park Middle
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2006</b>			
Reading Proficiency (%)	92.1	74.3	76.7
Math Proficiency (%)	71.7	48.3	52.7
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	81.9	61.7	64.7
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	92.1	74.3	76.7
White	N/A	90.0	71.6
Black	94.2	67.5	65.7
Hispanic	92.6	74.4	78.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	N/A	N/A
Female	94.4	78.5	80.0
Male	90.0	70.5	74.6
Economically Disadvantaged	92.8	72.2	76.2
Non-Disadvantaged	N/A	80.3	81.9
English Language Learners	100.0	24.3	0.0
Non-English Language Learners	92.1	79.2	79.0
Non-English Language Learners 1st Year	N/A	58.4	86.0
Non-English Language Learners 2nd Year	100.0	60.0	N/A
Students with Disabilities	N/A	41.9	50.0
Non-Disabled Students	92.6	77.3	77.8
Migrant	N/A	71.0	77.2
Non-Migrant	92.2	74.2	77.3
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	71.7	48.3	52.7
White	N/A	59.9	50.1
Black	62.4	35.9	56.7
Hispanic	73.9	48.5	52.1



## Individual School Demographics

	George Evans Elementary School	Miller High School Center For Communications, Technology, and the Performing Arts	South Park Middle
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	N/A	N/A
Female	71.1	46.9	50.1
Male	72.9	49.0	55.6
Economically Disadvantaged	72.6	46.3	51.5
Non-Disadvantaged	N/A	51.8	61.1
English Language Learners	57.0	22.5	17.0
Non-English Language Learners	70.1	49.6	54.0
Non-English Language Learners 1st Year	N/A	50.0	43.0
Non-English Language Learners 2nd Year	N/A	43.0	N/A
Students with Disabilities	100.0	22.5	0.0
Non-Disabled Students	70.6	48.8	53.0
Migrant	N/A	40.0	69.2
Non-Migrant	71.1	47.4	52.5
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>			
Students Per Teacher	14.6	12.2	15.8
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>			
Enrollment (#)	405	1,333	585
White	5.2	5.2	5.3
Black	14.3	10.1	7.2
Hispanic	79.8	84.5	87.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.5	0.2	0.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2	0.2	0.0
Economically Disadvantaged	97.0	75.3	86.5
English Language Learners	14.8	6.6	3.2
Students with Disabilities	15.1	23.6	20.0
<b>NCLB Information - 2006</b>			
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	Yes	No	No
<b>School Facts</b>			

## Individual School Demographics

	<b>George Evans Elementary School</b>	<b>Miller High School Center For Communications, Technology, and the Performing Arts</b>	<b>South Park Middle</b>
Address	1315 Comanche	1 Battlin Buc Boulevard	3001 McArdle
City or Town	Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi
County	Nueces	Nueces	Nueces
District	Corpus Christi ISD	Corpus Christi ISD	Corpus Christi ISD
Telephone Number	(361) 886-9316	(361) 884-4963	(361) 878-1446
Urban Status	Large City	Large City	Large City
Grade Levels Served	PreK-5	9-12	6-8

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

### **Case Study Profile: CIS of Hart County, Georgia**

## Table of Contents

### **1. Description of Affiliate**

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- 1.2. Affiliate Information

### **2. Methodology**

- 2.1. Site Selection
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### **3. Findings**

- 3.1. Affiliate
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### **4. Future Direction**

- 4.1. Vision/Plans
- 4.2. Recommendations

## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – Hart County, Georgia

#### Communities In Schools of Georgia

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s in Atlanta, Georgia, CIS has now grown into the nation's largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in 27 states across the United States and the District of Columbia.

Communities In Schools of Georgia, the state CIS organization serving 62 counties and 66 school systems in Georgia, continues to be an innovator in the CIS network nationally. Through the 50 local affiliates, CIS of Georgia provides services to communities seeking to improve outcomes for students and schools, as well as support in developing programs and services to combat the problems of school failure and dropouts. In addition, CIS of Georgia supports the Performance Learning Centers and High School Graduation Coaches in Georgia.

#### Profile of Hart County, Georgia

The geographic status of Hart County is Small Town.<sup>3</sup> The 2007 Census Estimate shows a population of 24,240. The county seat is Hartwell, Georgia. More demographic information regarding Hart County is presented in Exhibit 1.

#### Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for Hart County, Georgia<sup>1</sup>

<b>Population</b>	
2000 census	22,997
2007 estimate	24,240
<b>Ethnicity Composition (2000)</b>	
White	79.1%
African-American	19.4%
American Indian	0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.5%
Other	
Hispanic or Latino origin <sup>2</sup>	0.9%
<b>Age Composition (2000)</b>	
0-17	23.5%
18-24	7.7%
25-44	27.3%
45-64	25.0%
65 +	16.5%
<b>Median Age</b>	39.2
<b>Gender Composition (2000)</b>	
Male	49.2%
Female	50.8%
<b>Median Income</b>	
per household (2000)	\$32,833
per capita (1999)	\$16,714
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	
2007	7.4%
<b>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2006)</b>	
All Crimes	23
Violent crimes	2
Property crimes	21

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

<sup>3</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

## 1.2 Affiliate Information

Communities In Schools of Hart County is located in Hartwell City, Georgia. Its mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and their families through community collaboration, advocacy, and programs.

Since its formation in 1998, Communities In Schools of Hart County has initiated many different programs for at-risk youth, including tutoring and mentoring, technical skills training, family involvement, and parenting courses. Today, 302 students at five public schools are benefiting from CIS of Hart County’s programs and services (Exhibit 2).

<b>Exhibit 2: School Districts and Schools Served by Communities In Schools of Hart County</b>	
<u>District/School</u>	<u>% of students served (Level 2)</u>
Hart County	9%
Hartwell Elementary School	9%
North Hart Elementary School	7%
South Hart Elementary School	20%
Hart County Middle School	9%
Hart County High School	3%

CIS of Hart County was known as Hart Partners up until one year ago from the time of this writing. This name acknowledged the partnership of Communities In Schools and Family Connections. Family Connections is a mandated program for all counties by the State of Georgia. It aims to bring all providers that serve families and children in a community together to address issues and provide services based on collaborative needs sensing and best-practice programming. A symbiotic relationship exists between Family Connections and CIS of Hart County because funding for needs sensing and planning is largely provided through Family Connections and programming is funded through CIS.

CIS of Hart County offers schools Level 2 mentoring/tutoring programs to all schools in the district at all levels (elementary, middle, and high). During the tutoring/mentoring session students can concentrate on improving their learning skills or they can talk with their mentor about issues in their lives. CIS of Hart County also offers Level 1 services at each school. These services include providing free books, participating in school-sponsored events, and providing speakers that address the whole school. In addition to providing services to schools and students, CIS of Hart County provides many classes for adults and families.

CIS of Hart County is organized and operated as a non-profit corporation with five employees. Roughly 50 percent of its funding comes from state or local grants and foundations. The other 50 percent of funding is provided through CIS of Georgia for the mentoring program and Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC). The average cost for CIS of Hart County to provide Level 2 mentoring services to a child was \$66.23 in the 2007-08 school year.

## 2. Methodology

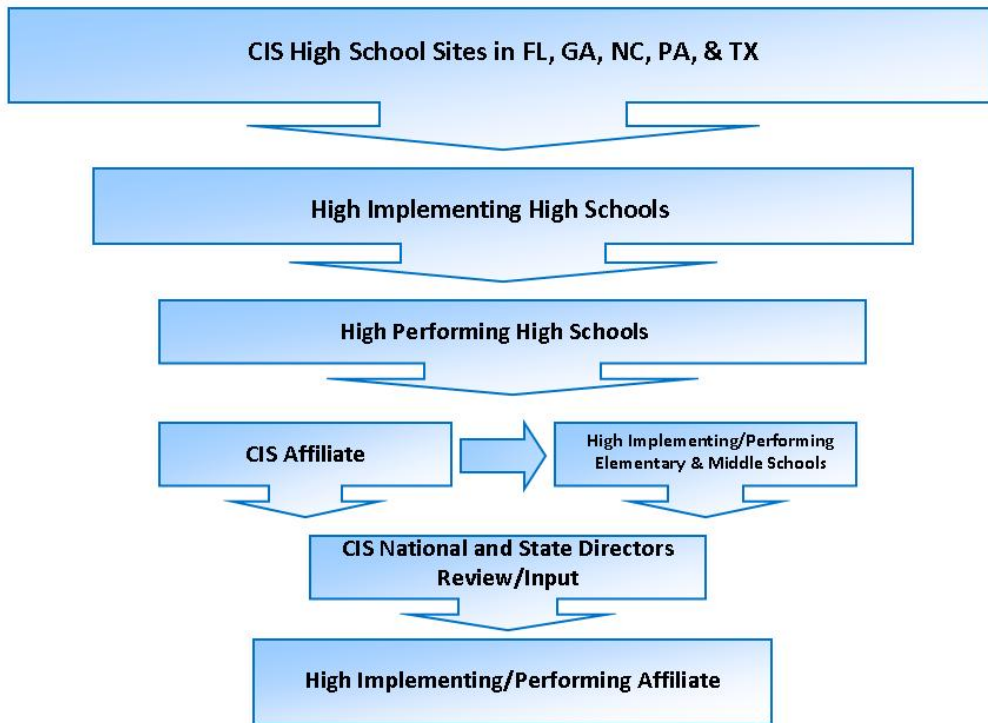
As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate and schools.

CIS of Hart County's case study involved site visits to the selected affiliate and selected schools served by the affiliate. During the site visit, the evaluation team interviewed key CIS stakeholders (e.g., representatives from the local affiliate, schools, and community partners) and conducted focus groups with students. Case study protocols, interviews guides, and focus group guides focused on CIS processes and outcomes including service coordination and brokering, assessments, resource allocation, referrals, placement, training, and assets.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Hart County was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**





## 2.2 Site Visits

For the case study of CIS of Hart County, ICF staff visited the affiliate office and three schools: Hartwell Elementary School, Hart County Middle School, and Hart County High School. (Please see Attachment A for information on each school.) Findings from the site visit are included in Section 3. Schools in Hart County report a total student population of 3,626 attending six public schools in one public school district, including three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Fifty-two percent of the student population are eligible for free or reduced lunch programs. Hart County public schools average a student teacher ratio of 15:1. All five regular schools met the 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).<sup>4</sup> The middle and high schools annual dropout rate was 3.5 percent in 2007. Public schools spent an average of \$7,817 per student each year in 2005.<sup>5</sup> More information regarding Hart County schools is presented in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3: School System Information	
<b>Number of Public Educational Institutions</b>	
Elementary Schools	3
Middle Schools	1
High Schools	1
Other	1
<b>Student Population (2007)</b>	
Total Enrollment	3,623
Limited English Proficient	2.0%
Eligible for Free/Reduced Meals	52.0%
<b>Special Education (Gr. K-12)</b>	
% of Student Population	10.6%
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Hart County	15:1
<b>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</b>	
Schools Meeting AYP	5 (100%)
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Hart County	83.8%
<b>Math Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Hart County	82.8%
<b>Annual Dropout (Gr. 7-12) (2007)</b>	
Hart County	3.5%
<b>Graduation Rate (2007)</b>	
Hart County	68.8%

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Hart County interviews took place from May 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), school administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary, middle, and high school participating in CIS. In addition, community partners participated in interviews, and parents and students participated in focus groups. In total, ICF staff interviewed 49 people over the three-day site visit (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups	
CIS Affiliate Staff and Board Members	8
School Staff	11
Focus Groups with Students and Parents	25
Community Partners	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>

<sup>4</sup> Source: Georgia Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Source: www. SchoolDataDirect.org.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

Strong leadership is an essential component of Communities In Schools (CIS) of Hart County. The Executive Director is described as a valuable link to the community and a dedicated leader. The Executive Director of CIS of Hart County started her career with CIS as a volunteer mentor seven years ago, shortly after the affiliate opened. She then became an AmeriCorps VISTA (volunteer to CIS), Site Coordinator, Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) Program Director, and Assistant to the Executive Director. She has been in her current role as the Executive Director for the past three years. Her compassion and commitment to helping children are clearly evident to everyone she works with. The members of the Board of Directors and affiliate staff can have an open dialogue and feel comfortable sharing ideas and issues with her. She also maintains very good relationships with various community members and organizations and proactively finds resources that sustain CIS programming. In addition to a strong Executive Director, affiliate staff mentioned that strong leadership is also provided by the Board of Directors.

##### Planning and Development

CIS of Hart County has developed and maintains a strategic plan, an annual operations plan, and individual school service plans. Affiliate staff indicated the importance of planning and sensing the needs of the community in order to provide necessary services without duplicating the efforts of other community service providers. To gauge needs, CIS of Hart County conducts a community evaluation every three years through a survey to households, middle and high school students, and local service providers. Select interviews with stakeholders are also conducted in conjunction with the community evaluation.

The findings from the community evaluation are presented to the community and school principals to determine what services are needed to fill the identified gaps. Once this has been determined, CIS of Hart County researches grant opportunities, best practices, and proven program models to

***“CIS affects the future of the community by helping kids that may not have made it.”***

*-CIS of Hart County Staff*

decide what programming they can offer that fits within their mission and particular skill sets.

The Board of Directors also has a role in planning and development by providing feedback and recommendations based on their experiences in the school system and community. By bringing in different perspectives and experiences, the Board of Directors challenges the affiliate to consider all aspects of their programming.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors for CIS of Hart County is made up of community members from diverse backgrounds including education, social services, and business. The role of the Board of Directors is to oversee affiliate operations, discuss program strengths and weaknesses, monitor funding and expenses, attend CIS-sponsored events, hire and evaluate the Executive Director, and provide recommendations based on their experiences. Members of the Board of Directors described their relationships with one another as being open and cooperative. Other ways in which Board members support CIS include endorsing CIS with community members and participating in speaking engagements on behalf of the affiliate.

The Board of Directors meets about once a month. One challenge they face is trying to get all the members to attend every meeting. Each member has many outside commitments and coordinating a time to meet that fits everyone's schedule is challenging. Finding capable, willing, and qualified people to join the Board of Directors is also difficult because many appropriate community members are already committed to other engagements. In spite of these challenges, the Board of Directors at CIS of Hart County is described by affiliate staff as valuable and insightful.

### **Resources/Funding**

Funding for CIS of Hart County originates from many sources, the majority of which are grants. They receive roughly \$90,000 from the CIS of Georgia office annually (about 50% of the budget). Other funding is obtained from the State of Georgia, Imagination Library, Reading is Fundamental, and the Atlanta Falcons. The Executive Director has been proactive in finding grant opportunities and going after them. CIS of Georgia is also a valuable resource in helping the affiliate identify grant opportunities. When appropriate, CIS of Hart County writes grants jointly with community partners in order to maximize their efforts; many grant opportunities, especially from the State, require collaborative community partnerships.

CIS of Hart County, in partnership with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and others, was just awarded the Community Partners for the Protection of Children grant. This grant program was desirable because Hart County currently has one of the highest incidences of

***"It takes a community to raise a child."***

*-Parent*

child abuse in Georgia. Through this program CIS of Hart County will serve in Family Team Meetings, where multiple service providers come together with local families to develop case plans that utilize the services offered in the county and meet the individual needs of the family.

In addition to grant writing, CIS of Hart County conducts fundraising events in the community to secure resources. Donations are extremely valuable to the affiliate, whether it is books, clothes, school supplies, time, or food. CIS of Hart County engages local civic groups and businesses in its fundraising efforts. In the past, the affiliate has partnered with Wal-Mart and other local businesses in a food distribution and school supply program that was very successful.

## **Marketing**

While CIS of Hart County does not have a formalized marketing plan, they proactively keep the community informed of what they are doing through the local media. CIS of Hart County has a long-standing relationship with the local newspaper. CIS activities are well covered by the newspaper and one of their reporters/photographers also serves as a volunteer mentor at Hartwell High School. In addition to the local newspaper, CIS of Hart County reaches out to local radio and television to advertise CIS activities. However, due to the small size of Hartwell, staff indicated that word of mouth is often the best advertisement.

CIS of Hart County also relies heavily on CIS of Georgia for marketing materials. As a small affiliate in a rural county, CIS of Hart County does not have adequate resources to produce marketing materials in-house. CIS of Georgia provides press releases and marketing packages that CIS of Hart County can use or modify to fit their purposes. As a result of the Total Quality Standards (TQS), CIS of Hart County has made a concerted effort to brand themselves as “CIS of Hart County” rather than “Hart Partners.”

## **Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development**

CIS of Hart County has been successful at partnering with various local service providers to coordinate services in the community. Most of these partnerships emerged out of the Family Connections aspect of CIS of Hart County. Family Connections is a mandated program for all counties by the State of Georgia. This program aims to bring all service providers that serve families and children in a community together to address issues and provide services through needs sensing and best-practice programming. As previously mentioned, CIS of Hart County began as a partnership between Communities In Schools and Family Connections. An interdependent relationship exists between Family Connections and CIS of Hart County because funding for needs sensing and planning is largely provided through Family Connections and programming is funded through CIS. One requirement for Family Connections is a quarterly meeting between all the local

***“A lot of people want to help and they see the need that CIS fills.”***

*-Board of Directors*

service providers which CIS of Hart County plans and facilitates. CIS of Hart County also partners with the Chamber of Commerce, local clubs, banks, and businesses.

***“We are working together towards the same goal.”***

*-Community Partner*

Affiliate staff all reported that building strong relationships with community partners is one key to their success. CIS of Hart County was described as being “intertwined” with the community; there is a positive reflection of CIS within the community. This is shown through the great support they receive from individuals within Hart County. CIS of Hart County has recruited over 140 volunteer mentors to serve students identified as “at-risk.” Some businesses and civic offices even allow mentors time during the workday to volunteer at the schools. While the successful recruitment of volunteers is a large accomplishment in itself, one challenge for affiliate staff is recruiting even more mentors because the need for them in the schools is high.

Besides the successful relationships with individuals, CIS of Hart County also has very positive relationships with other service providers in the community, such as DFCS, the Health Department, and the Hart Youth Development Resource Association (HYDRA). The affiliate works closely with its partnering organizations to ensure that it is not duplicating services and to ensure that the identified needs are being met. A strong network between the partners has developed and all parties feel comfortable referring their clients to the partnering organizations. In addition to the programming CIS of Hart County provides to schools and students, they also partner with these organizations to provide services to families, such as parenting classes, infant massage classes, and computer training classes.

By all accounts, CIS of Hart County has an extremely positive and open relationship with the schools it serves. While CIS of Hart County does not currently have an office within the schools, affiliate staff are at each school most, if not every, day. School personnel stated that communication is vitally important and CIS staff are open and willing to discuss any questions or concerns that arise. For example, a unique aspect and new requirement of middle and high schools in Georgia is the graduation coach position. Each middle and high school in Georgia must have a graduation coach that, as the name suggests, works with students to implement strategies for improving graduation rates. CIS of Hart County has a strong partnership with the graduation coaches at the middle and high school and even provides training for them through CIS of Georgia trainings. Affiliate staff attended the district’s education summit to join in the discussion of how to graduate more students.

### **Recruitment/Retention**

Recruitment of staff at CIS of Hart County is largely community-based. Affiliate staff recruit prospective employees from local colleges and from employee referrals. The affiliate seeks out well-qualified staff who are dedicated and compassionate about serving their community. The affiliate office is small and most of its staff are part-time or volunteers.

CIS of Hart County also relies heavily on AmeriCorps VISTAs. CIS of Georgia provides AmeriCorps VISTAs (volunteers to CIS) to the affiliate on an ongoing basis. The VISTA program only allows a two-year commitment from its staff, so there is a great deal of turnover. At the time of this writing, both affiliate Site Coordinators were VISTAs. While the affiliate (and the employees themselves) would like to keep these employees beyond two years, there is not enough funding to pay their salaries with the CIS affiliate's budget.

The Site Coordinators are largely responsible for recruiting volunteer mentors from the community. They look for mentors that have a dedicated amount of time to volunteer each week, are caring and compassionate, and committed. Affiliate and school staff noted that students are very disappointed when their mentor does not show up. Retirees are generally a good source of volunteers; however, there is a need for young men especially to serve as role models for male students.

### **Training**

CIS of Hart County recognizes that training is a valuable and necessary tool for staff development. Several trainings are offered by CIS of Georgia and the affiliate encourages staff to attend. CIS of Georgia is the main source of training for the affiliate and staff have attended sessions on using/managing GNC data, strategies for retaining mentors, case management, and more. Besides affiliate staff, the school graduation coaches also receive training from CIS of Georgia.

As CIS of Hart County is gearing up for a re-vamped mentoring program at the middle and high school, they are planning to host a training course for each mentor/tutor. The course will be taught in a group setting for three hours, followed by a one hour, one-on-one session. The course will be taught by the Middle and High School Site Coordinator based on a successful model from Valdosta State University.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**

Monitoring and evaluation of CIS of Hart County is largely the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The Board reviews all affiliate activities and provides feedback regarding their performance. The affiliate is acutely aware that they are accountable to the Board.

CIS of Hart County also collects data for the GNC. The affiliate has only recently been required to collect these data (within the past couple of years). CIS of Georgia has provided training regarding GNC data and data management; however, the affiliate does not find the database to be user-friendly. Affiliate staff reported that the CIS of Georgia data lead is available if any issues arise and they are grateful for the help that has been provided. A GNC report is sent to CIS of Georgia annually. CIS of Hart County follows all guidelines provided by CIS of Georgia regarding affiliate-level evaluation.

## Relationship with State Office

CIS of Hart County has a very positive relationship with CIS of Georgia. Affiliate staff directly attribute much of their success to the leadership and support of the state office. They feel comfortable talking with anyone at the state office and believe that the state office staff will always be there to support them. Along with advice and guidance, CIS of Georgia provides funding, grant opportunities, and advice on strategies for local fundraising. The most important benefit CIS of Georgia provides is the AmeriCorps VISTAs.

***“We couldn’t do what we do in the field [without CIS of Georgia].”***

*-CIS of Hart County Staff*

CIS of Georgia also serves as a go-between for the CIS National office. The state office informs the affiliate of any initiatives or activities from CIS National that may affect the affiliate.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

Needs assessments for students are based on various factors including The Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test scores, behavioral data, suspension rates, and attendance rates. Students who are then identified as at-risk are eligible for CIS services. In addition to raw data, CIS also takes recommendations for services from school teachers and staff. If they believe that a student needs the extra help, CIS will try to accommodate that student. Parents of students enrolled in CIS commented that their children have had trouble with learning, grades, reading, spelling, and school work in general.

As previously mentioned, CIS of Hart County is gearing up for a more intensive mentoring/tutoring program at the middle and high school. At the beginning of the next school year, the CIS Middle or High School Site Coordinator will work with teachers, and even the student government, to identify students needing additional help. Fliers describing the new CIS tutoring center will also be available at the school for parents to refer their children and student self-referrals.

***“The mentor is the one person kids know that’s there for them.”***

*-Teacher*

### Identification and Referral

Students are referred to CIS from many different sources. Teachers and counselors are the largest source of referrals; however, parents also refer their children for CIS services. The middle and high school graduation coaches are also involved in identifying and referring students to CIS.



For CIS of Hart County’s adult parenting and family skills classes, participants are often referred by partnering organizations, such as DFCS. Additionally, every new mother in Hart County receives a visit in the hospital from CIS or a partnering agency to discuss parenting and offer them assistance through one of their many programs.

### Programs and Services

CIS of Hart County offers schools a Level 2 mentoring/tutoring program for all school levels (elementary, middle, and high). Currently CIS offers tutors chiefly for reading, but also for math. They are working on expanding the program to cover more subjects. Each mentor meets with their student once a week for 30 minutes. During that time, students can concentrate on improving their learning skills or they can talk with their mentor about issues in their lives. The mentors often become an important part of the students’ lives and they are very disappointed if their mentor does not show up. That is why it is vitally important to recruit

***“Mentors teach kids as if they were their own grandkids”***

*-Teacher*

dedicated mentors who are committed to being there every week. The one complaint from students and parents about working with the mentors is that there is not enough time with them. They would like to meet more often than once a week or for a longer period of time.

Parents, affiliate staff, and school personnel agree that the mentoring program is making a difference with the students because they can see that it is improving their self-esteem, increasing their enjoyment of reading, enriching their vocabulary, pointing the students in the right direction regarding good decision-making, improving their academic and standardized testing performance, and increasing their social skills. One elementary school administrator attributed improved reading test results to the impact of CIS. While high school and district administrators considered CIS a large factor in increasing the graduation rate from 69 percent last year to up to 78 percent this year. In general, school personnel are happy to have CIS in their school and understand the value of bringing a stable adult figure into the students’ lives.

While the mentoring program is a successful aspect of the affiliate’s school programming, CIS of Hart County also offers Level 1 services at each school. These services include providing free books, participating in school-sponsored events (Dr. Seuss Day, March Madness, Math and Science Night), and providing speakers that address the whole school, such as the mayor and sheriff.

***“CIS makes a difference by providing individualized attention that is tailored to the student’s needs.”***

*-District Administrator*

In addition to providing services to schools and students, CIS of Hart County provides many classes for adults and families. Through collaborative grants with community partners the affiliate offers basic parenting skills courses such as the Nurturing Parent Program, Parents as Teachers, and Baby Thinking It Over, among others. The affiliate also administers computer and financial training for adults in exchange for free rent at the Hart County Adult Learning Center.



## Monitoring and Adjustment

Students are monitored through many different avenues. Affiliate staff look at pre-/post-test scores, progress reports (which are often discussed with parents), behavior, attitude, and attendance. Each mentor is informed of their student's progress and adjustments are made on a case-by-case basis. Students and mentors are also able to approach the school's Site Coordinator or graduation coach to discuss any problems or concerns. Occasionally, mentors need to be replaced due to a clash in personalities.

## Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Relationships are cited as the key to the successful implementation of CIS by all staff and stakeholders; positive relationships between CIS staff, school personnel, mentors, students, and

***"They [CIS] are part of the family."***

*-School Administrator*

parents are a necessary component. The development of these relationships leads to trusting and open interactions, which all agree are crucial to the success of CIS. It was reported that building trust can be very challenging, but once it is there, people feel that they can count on you and be honest with you.

This is important because there are times when things do not work out as planned (scheduling, staffing, etc.) and all parties need to feel comfortable going to another in order to work it out. CIS staff have a presence at each school and often talk with teachers and administrators to work out any issues and share ideas and insights. Affiliate staff indicated that it is important that CIS staff and mentors are flexible and can work around the school's schedule.

School personnel commented that they have good working relationships with the affiliate staff and the mentors that CIS provides. The mentors enjoy meeting with teachers to talk about a student's progress and are willing to pitch in wherever they are needed. The teachers can inform the mentors about what is beneficial for a particular student so that the mentor is prepared to work with the student appropriately. The mentors can also go back to the teachers to share in their successes and report the results they have seen.

***"They're not volunteers; they're part of us."***

*-School Administrator*

At the affiliate level, the atmosphere among the staff was described as that of a family. All are comfortable with each other and feel safe going to Executive Director with any issues or concerns.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Hart County was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Hart County and provide

recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

## 4.1 Vision/Plans

Affiliate staff and Board members think of CIS as a dropout prevention program that fills in gaps by bringing in the help of the community. CIS provides students with a mentor that can serve as a role model for students that may not have a fulfilling home life. In addition to helping individual students, district administration indicated that CIS also helps the community as a whole. By increasing graduation rates and improving the education system, the community can attract large businesses that will provide jobs to the community's unemployed. In return, the new industries would pay taxes that would be able to "fund schools better than rooftops."

***"CIS is a process of getting the community into schools, not a program."***

*-Board of Directors*

### Future Vision for CIS

The vision of many for CIS of Hart County is to continue doing what they are doing, but reach a larger proportion of students through increased funding and expanded programs; school personnel, affiliate staff, and parents would like more mentors in the schools and to increase parental involvement. One affiliate staff would like to, "work themselves out of a job." Affiliate staff and Board members also mentioned that they would like to see graduation rates improve, to continue working in collaboration with the community, and to continue to grow and improve their programming (such as providing summer programs/camps so students are productive during the summer).

School personnel also reported that they would like to start CIS earlier in the school year. It currently takes about a month to set up mentors and get started. They also would like to be

***"CIS can change Hart County, one kid at a time, one family at a time, one step at a time."***

*-Board of Directors*

able to get the mentors into the classrooms so there is a stronger partnership between mentors and teachers. Additionally, school personnel wish that the Site Coordinators did not change as frequently. As previously mentioned, the Site Coordinator role is filled by AmeriCorps VISTAs who are only allowed to work for two years in this position. That means that the schools have to build new relationships with the Site Coordinators often and there is less continuity for the students.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

In order for CIS of Hart County to continue along a path of success, the most reported needed support was more funding. Additional money would be able to fund increased programming, more technical training, and laptops for affiliate staff. In addition to more funding, the affiliate would also like more information about fundraising techniques and strategies. Besides funding, the affiliate and schools would like to have more volunteers.

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

When asked to give advice to a new affiliate, staff recommended that they be flexible, consistent, persistent, open to new ideas, and immersed in the community. They also suggest that they build relationships with school officials and the Board of Education. They suggest being open about how CIS will help the community and students. They encourage new affiliates not to give up and to strive for excellence; if questions arise, they should ask another affiliate or the state office for advice.

Financially, new affiliates should document everything. They should keep their eyes and ears open for grant and corporate opportunities, community volunteers, and matching grants. New Board members should attend every meeting, should not feel shy or afraid to voice their opinion, should have open communication with affiliate staff, and should volunteer for CIS as much as possible. As for new Site Coordinators, they should learn all they can about CIS by reviewing the CIS website, visiting the schools themselves and not relying on someone else's judgment, and they should be aggressive about what they want.

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	Hart County High School	Hart County Middle School	Hartwell Elementary School
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2006</b>			
Reading/English Language Arts Proficiency (%)	95.5	84.5	76.0
Math Proficiency (%)	92.7	77.5	89.1
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	94.1	81.0	82.5
<b>Reading/ELA Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	95.5	84.5	76.0
White	97.8	87.6	84.3
Black	89.2	77.1	61.8
Hispanic	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Female	97.7	89.8	75.2
Male	93.5	79.8	76.9
Economically Disadvantaged	91.8	78.8	67.9
Non-Disadvantaged	97.5	91.0	88.8
English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	95.5	84.8	76.8
Students with Disabilities	73.7	53.3	n.a.
Non-Disabled Students	98.1	87.8	79.0
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	95.5	84.5	76.0
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	92.7	77.5	89.1
White	96.3	82.5	91.8
Black	81.1	64.8	82.9
Hispanic	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Female	95.4	81.7	83.5
Male	90.2	73.7	95.4
Economically Disadvantaged	85.3	70.5	85.7
Non-Disadvantaged	96.6	85.5	94.4
English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	92.7	77.6	89.3
Students with Disabilities	57.9	32.0	n.a.
Non-Disabled Students	96.9	82.3	91.1

## Individual School Demographics

	Hart County High School	Hart County Middle School	Hartwell Elementary School
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	92.7	77.5	89.1
<b>College Prep - 2005</b>			
ACT - Average Score	18.6	n.a.	n.a.
ACT - Participation Rate (%)	8.6	n.a.	n.a.
SAT Reasoning Test - Average Score	928	n.a.	n.a.
SAT Reasoning Test - Participation Rate (%)	49.2	n.a.	n.a.
PSAT/NMSQT - Average Score	140	n.a.	n.a.
PSAT/NMSQT - Participation Rate (%)	28.1	n.a.	n.a.
AP - Scores 3 or Above (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
AP - Participation Rate (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>			
Students Per Teacher	16.8	16.1	12.7
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>			
Enrollment (#)	1,024	810	511
White	71.8	70.0	51.7
Black	26.4	26.7	37.2
Hispanic	0.9	2.4	4.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.3	0.3	1.6
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0	0.0	0.0
Multi-Racial	0.7	0.7	n.a.
Economically Disadvantaged	38.7	54.0	60.5
English Language Learners	0.3	1.2	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	10.5	11.9	10.2
<b>NCLB Information - 2006</b>			
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>School Facts</b>			
Address	59 Fifth Street	176 Powell Road	147 South College Avenue
City or Town	Hartwell	Hartwell	Hartwell
County	Hart	Hart	Hart
District	Hart County	Hart County	Hart County
Telephone Number	(706)376-5461	(706)376-5431	(706)376-4425
Urban Status	Small Town	Small Town	Small Town
Grade Levels Served	9-12	6-9,11	PreK-5

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

### **Case Study Profile: CIS of High Point, North Carolina**

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1.2. Affiliate Information

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## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – High Point, North Carolina

#### Communities In Schools of North Carolina

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including North Carolina.

CIS of North Carolina, the state CIS organization, assists North Carolina communities in coordinating service delivery, supports the 31 local CIS organizations across the state, and advocates for children, youth, and their families. Specifically, CIS of North Carolina provides regional and on-site training and technical assistance, builds partnerships with state agencies and organizations to benefit young people, and serves as a resource and information center for local communities concerned about youth at risk of school failure.

#### Profile of High Point (Guilford County), North Carolina

Located in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina, Guilford County has a population of 446,189. Most of the city is located in Guilford County, with portions spilling into neighboring Randolph, Davidson, and Forsyth counties. Exhibit 1 presents pertinent demographic information.

#### Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for High Point City, North Carolina<sup>1</sup>

##### Population (2006)

City Population	92,725
(Guilford County)	(446,189)

##### Ethnicity Composition (2006)

White	54.9%
African-American	36.4%
American Indian	0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.4%
Other	
Hispanic or Latino origin <sup>2</sup>	4.9%

##### Age Composition (2006)

0-19	25.9%
20-24	6.5%
25-44	28.3%
45-64	25.2%
65 +	14.1%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>38.5</b>

##### Gender Composition (2006)

Male	48.1%
Female	51.9%

##### Median Income

per household (2006)	\$41,238
per capita (1999)	\$21,303

##### Unemployment Rate

2006	10.4%
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##### Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2007)

Total	65.7
Violent Crimes	8.3
Property Crimes	56.4

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.



## 1.2 Affiliate Information

CIS of High Point, located in High Point City, NC, champions the connection of needed community resources in schools to help students successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life.<sup>3</sup> Since forming in 1988, CIS of High Point has initiated many different programs for at-risk youth, including tutoring and mentoring, skills training, college planning, career awareness, and student advocacy. In 2007/2008 school year, more than 4,000 students at 12 schools, including nine elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools, are benefiting from CIS of High Point's programs and services. CIS of High Point provides many programs and services ranging from Level 2 one-on-one counseling to Level 1 school-wide activities, such as health fairs and social events.

CIS of High Point is organized and operated as a non-profit corporation. In the 2007/2008 fiscal year, CIS of High Point received total income of \$397,986, about 30 percent of which came from Department of Social Service Contract, 30 percent from the United Way, 25 percent from local businesses and community fundraising, and the rest from other grants. The annual average expense per student was \$97.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Methodology

As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

CIS of High Point's case study involved site visits to the selected affiliate and selected schools served by the affiliate. During the site visit, the evaluation team interviewed key CIS stakeholders (e.g., representatives from the local affiliate, schools, and community partners) and conducted focus groups with elementary, middle, and high school students. Case study protocols, interviews guides, and focus group guides focused on CIS processes and outcomes; including service coordination and brokering, assessments, resource allocation, referrals, placement, training, and assets.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis

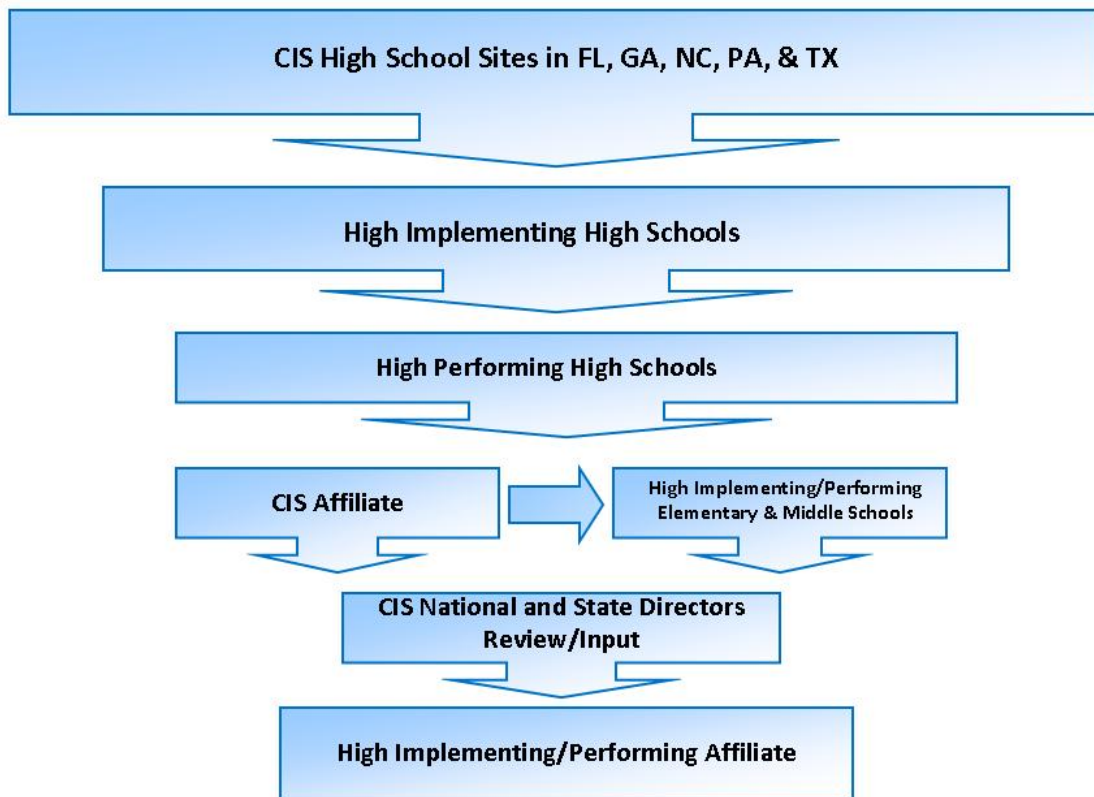
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<sup>3</sup> Source: Communities In Schools of High Point: <http://www.cisnet.org/highpoint/default.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Communities In School of High Point, Inc.

of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of High Point was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

The case study was conducted in three schools located in Guilford County (Oak Hill Elementary, Ferndale Middle School, and High Point Central High School; see Attachment A for individual school demographics and descriptive information). Guilford County schools report a total student population of 68,951 attending 111 schools. About 45 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Guilford County public schools average a student teacher ratio of 14.9:1. Fifty-six percent of regular schools met the 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The annual high school dropout rate was three percent in 2007. Public schools spent an average of \$7,848 per student in 2005.<sup>7</sup>

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Between May 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 26 interviews and four focus groups were conducted for the CIS of High Point case study. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary, middle, and high school participating in CIS. In addition, community partners of these schools were also interviewed. Four student focus groups were also conducted at these schools, with a total participation of 34 students. Exhibit 4 presents the breakdown of interviewees by their role/involvement in the program.

### Exhibit 3: School System Information (Guilford County)<sup>5</sup>

<b>Student Population (2006/07)</b>	
Total	68,951
Limited English Proficient	5.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	45.0%
<b>Average Cost per Student (2005)</b>	
Guilford County	\$7,848.98
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Guilford County	14.9:1
<b>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Schools Meeting AYP	55.9%
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Guilford County	82.9%
<b>Math Proficiency (2006)</b>	
Guilford County	64.4%
<b>Annual Dropout (Gr9-12) (2007)</b>	
Guilford County	3.0%
<b>Graduation Rate (2006)</b>	
Guilford County	74.0%

### Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups

CIS Affiliate/School Staff	9
School Personnel	14
Community Partners	3
Students	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Guilford County Schools <http://www.gcsnc.com/index.aspx>; School Data Direct <http://www.schooldatadirect.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> Source: North Carolina Department of Education.

<sup>7</sup> Source: [www.SchoolDataDirect.org](http://www.SchoolDataDirect.org).

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

The reported success of CIS of High Point was repeatedly linked to the strong leadership of its main office. Numerous stakeholder groups repeatedly mentioned the strength of CIS of High Point's staff and in particular, its Executive Director, as the main contributing factor to its success.

##### Planning and Development

Both members of the Board of Directors and affiliate staff commented on the importance of open and candid communication in their planning process, specifically stating that the success of the program depends on everyone working together. The importance of clearly delineated mission, goals, and policies was also noted.

***"Schools are being asked a lot more than in the past and CIS helps bridge this."***

*- School Administrator*

The affiliate selects the schools that will receive CIS services. Schools that serve students highly impacted by poverty are targeted first. However, CIS must be invited onto the campus. This invitation is not taken lightly, as principals who invite CIS into their schools also agree to, at a minimum, cover half the salary of their CIS Site Coordinator. As such, schools must continually approve funding for CIS each year.

Investment of resources is based on projected income and is distributed equally across schools based on school level (i.e., every elementary school receives the same amount for operating expenses). Site Coordinators are then given latitude on how and what they spend their operating budgets. Grants are often pursued by the CIS of High Point main office for additional funds as special needs arise.

## **Board of Directors**

CIS of High Point's Board of Directors consists of a diverse group of about three dozen dedicated advocates of CIS. Members are plugged into the community and its inner workings, and range from local newspaper editors to local business leaders, government officials, and school principals.

Primary responsibilities of the Board are supportive in nature, including providing guidance, funding, and/or volunteering. Members participate in the success of CIS in many ways such as being involved in awards dinners and mentoring. However, the importance of networking and public advocacy among Board members was repeatedly stressed as common ground for success.

## **Resources/Funding**

Current funding streams for CIS of High Point include the Guilford County School system, the United Way, and local business/community fundraising. Both Board members and affiliate staff commented on the success of their past fundraising methodology (i.e., the corporate campaign/5-year pledge) which has sustained CIS for the past 15 years and led to strong reserves, but both also noted concerns for the continuation of this model. The loss of local business/community supporters and the changing economic landscape of High Point were stated as areas for concern and in need of attention. Competition for funding sources and school budget cuts were also cited.

## **Marketing**

The need for public advocacy for CIS of High Point was repeatedly stressed, specifically the need to spread the word about the CIS success story. However, this was also noted as CIS of High Point's largest weakness. Due to a budgetary shift from operational funding to program-specific funding, marketing related tasks are currently decentralized and dispersed among several staff.

While CIS of High Point does not have specific marketing expertise on staff, they rely on the Board of Directors for additional support. Through their Board's public relations committee they have access to an advertising agent and the local newspaper's editor. Together they produce "The Annual Report", an insert that is mailed and included in the local newspaper, *The Enterprise*.

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

CIS of High Point's partnership development is based on the needs identified by CIS or by the partner organization. CIS's partnership with High Point Housing Authority was noted as one example of this partnership/relationship. In an effort to improve the graduation rates of students in assisted living, the housing authority partnered with CIS to provide these students with services, producing mutual benefits to both organizations.

Reported benefits stemming from community partnerships included additional resources, opportunities, and activities they provide students. Community partners also benefit through their involvement with CIS as they are provided with a well organized and structured vehicle to provide their services to schools and students in need. Main challenges encompassing partnership development stem from scheduling conflicts and limited financial resources.

### CIS of High Point Partner Organizations/Programs

- ABC Grant
- Alcohol and Drug Services
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Public Health
- GoFar
- Guilford County Department of Services
- Hero Factor
- High Point Housing Authority
- La Jamanas
- Old Dominion Trucking Company
- Polo
- United Way
- AmeriCorps VISTA
- Youth Focus

## Recruitment/Retention

CIS of High Point staff come from wide and varied disciplines, ranging from degrees in social work, psychology, journalism, and business administration. Numerous affiliate staff have been involved with CIS for several years and have risen through the ranks as positions have become available, often starting as a Site Coordinator or even sometimes as an intern.

As school employees, CIS Site Coordinators' salaries are negotiated through Guilford County schools. Main incentives stem from on-the-job satisfaction and work flexibility. Site Coordinators are given the flexibility to expend their operating budgets as they see fit based on identified needs and pursue activities and partnerships of personal interest to best meet the needs of their students/school. CIS of High Point has also instituted the CIS Employee Express package, in which staff are assigned points and given awards at the end of the year.

## Training

CIS of High Point provides a diverse assortment of training/professional development opportunities for its staff. Training activities include Guilford County School trainings, local and national conferences (i.e., Leadership Conference, Closing the Achievement Gap Conference, CIS statewide Conference, CIS National Conference) and monthly meetings. Training topics range from suicide prevention, gang awareness, and computer training.

In addition, school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) meetings are regularly held where Site Coordinators are encouraged to brainstorm, provide feedback, and share best practices.

### Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

Site Coordinators were reported to be the largest source of immediate feedback on program effectiveness. In addition CIS of High Point has developed forms/surveys to monitor overall success of its activities, likes and dislikes, possible improvements, and whether or not activities should be continued.

*“You can’t accurately assess the difference this is making on paper; you truly assess the value in the wonderful comments and smiles [of students and parents].”*

*-CIS of High Point Staff*

### Relationship with State Office

CIS of High Point staff described the state office as an extremely good support system, providing additional training opportunities and resources to local affiliates. The state office was applauded for its efforts in sharing information and organizational support.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

Formal and informal needs assessments are conducted to identify student needs, services, and activities of interest. Formal assessments include the use of student surveys, teacher surveys, monthly meetings with school staff, and student interviews. Informal needs assessments include one-on-one discussions with students, parents, and teachers.

*“They [CIS] are data driven – if they see a need for something, they try to address those needs.”*

*-School Administrator*

Group and individual meetings with students, teachers, support staff, and administrators were noted as the cornerstone of needs assessment. Both students and school staff commented on their ability to approach Site Coordinators in an open dialogue regarding their concerns, needs, and worries. Site Coordinators

reiterated student and school personnel’s comments, stating that their school staff, parents, and students know to come to CIS if they need anything.

### Identification and Referral

Students in need of CIS services are identified and referred by school counselors, teachers, school nurses, social workers, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) case workers, and the High Point Housing Authority. In addition, students may

*“This program doesn’t reject you – regardless of background, grades...”*

*-Student*



also self-refer or be referred by another student. School support staff reported collaborating on a monthly basis with their Site Coordinator to update records, maintain databases, and identify/refer students.

## **Programs and Services**

CIS of High Point includes a varied list of programs and services ranging from one-on-one counseling to school-wide activities, such as health fairs and social events.

*Supportive Guidance.* Site Coordinators provide students with one-on-one counseling, weekly group sessions, and club activities. Guidance activities help students to deal with everyday pressures, become more self-assured and self-confident, and provide students with tools and strategies to make good choices and deal with situations inside, as well as outside, of school. In addition, clubs target boys and girls in early adolescence, separately, to talk about the changes going on with young ladies and men and how to deal with them. Intervention programs also target at-risk students and give students the opportunity to speak with inmates at local correction facilities, showing them the consequences if they continue with their current behavior.

### **Program Spotlight: Breakfast Buddies**

In this program, elementary students are paired with a breakfast buddy with whom they meet over breakfast once a week. Buddies can be local high school students and/or community volunteers.

Breakfast buddies provide a stable role model/mentor, in that students are paired one-on-one with a caring adult with whom they can confide and simply discuss weekly concerns and issues, both academic and personal.

In addition to activities directly orchestrated by CIS staff, Site Coordinators also organize and manage student mentoring activities (i.e., Breakfast Buddies). Mentors include student peers, volunteers, and local business leaders.

*Health and Human Services.* CIS staff coordinate annual health fairs, in-house clothing closets, and canned food drives by which students and parents are provided with information and daily attire as needed. In addition, guest speakers are also invited to speak to students about health and physical fitness.

*Career Awareness/Employment.* Career fairs are held annually; local business leaders are invited to provide and answer students' questions. CIS staff also organize and arrange job shadowing opportunities for students. High school students are provided with specific college preparatory activities, ranging from helping students complete applications to college visits.



*Enrichment.* Enrichment activities vary from an annual school festival, in which business partners are encouraged to contribute, to field trips. CIS provides students with the opportunity to visit local colleges, attend rallies (i.e., Martin Luther King), and visit local amusement parks. In addition, CIS also sponsors school dances, pizza parties, and a family picnic. Guest speakers, stemming from local businesses and community leaders, are also invited to speak with students.

*Educational Enhancement.* Site Coordinators closely monitor student performance and attendance and provide students with guidance, tutoring, peer-tutoring, and progress updates. In addition, CIS institutes and enforces high standards and expectations for their students. For example, to participate in field trips and other enrichment activities, students must have met several criteria, ranging from academic standards to attendance and behavioral standards.

### ***Successes and Challenges***

School and CIS staff noted receiving positive feedback from both students and parents regarding CIS. School administrators, teachers, and CIS Site Coordinators all reported observing positive changes in students, both academic and behavioral. Students reported their enjoyment of CIS activities and their strong desire for continued participation. School staff unanimously agreed on the positive impact of CIS, stating that students have come to rely on CIS; that CIS motivates and encourages students; and that the mentoring and guidance CIS provides helps students stay in school, stay focused, stay away from drugs and gangs, and become productive citizens.

***“Kids start becoming more and more involved in school.”***

*-School Administrator*

The main challenges and limitations for CIS of High Point stemmed from limited resources and funding. School staff noted that the biggest challenge was “*man power*,” that there was only one Site Coordinator per school. Time was also noted as a significant challenge, not only in that students must be pulled from classes to participate in CIS activities, but also in that a Site Coordinator can only do some much in a single day. Site Coordinators also noted time/schedule management as one of their biggest challenges, stating there was difficulty involved in coordinating numerous volunteers and community partners as well as the disappointment their students experience when an appointment is canceled or rescheduled. Transportation for students from CIS programs and services was also noted as an issue. In addition, students indicated their desire for services and activities to be increased (i.e., increasing Breakfast Buddies from once a week to twice a week or perhaps lunch buddies).

***“She [Site Coordinator] is the link between the families, children, and school.”***

*-School Staff*

## Monitoring and Adjustment

Site Coordinators monitor weekly and monthly student attendance reports, suspension rates, grades, and other behavioral indicators. This information is then collated to create an ongoing monthly report, which is used by CIS staff to monitor student progress, set goals and incentives to help remediate problems, and adjust services as needed.

Feedback on CIS services is collected from students and parents, for example, what they liked/disliked about a particular program or service, overall impressions, and whether a program or service is worth continuing. In addition, community partners are also asked to complete surveys and provide feedback. CIS volunteers also have a log where they sign-in, track hours, and share information with the Site Coordinator.

## Relationships with Key Stakeholders

CIS staff stressed the importance of relationships and communication, stating that helping the whole child, and addressing character development takes the whole community working together. The importance of respect, at all levels, and establishing clear goals and expectations as a team at the beginning of each year were cited as the foundations for the relationship between CIS staff, school personnel, and students.

***“She [Site Coordinator] helps meet a lot of their needs in a similar way that a parent would do; emotionally, financially, she advocates for them.”***

*-School Administrator*

***“Teachers are really grateful... It can be overwhelming for them when the needs are there ... CIS relieves the stress or anxiety and allows them to focus on teaching.”***

*-School Administrator*

School staff all commented on the excellent relationship between CIS staff and students, noting that students in crisis often go to their CIS Site Coordinator before school support staff. School staff said the Site Coordinators are able to hold students accountable and set high expectations; this is a crucial aspect of CIS of High Point’s success. Site Coordinators have established a strong, trusting, and intimate

relationship with students and their families. Furthermore, school staff also commented on their own interactions and relationships with CIS staff as a partnership, working together to resolve behavioral issues.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of High Point was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of High Point and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

## 4.1 Vision/Plans

CIS of High Point was described as a dropout prevention program that connects community resources to students and schools. CIS staff commented that CIS works to remove barriers that keep a child from succeeding by ensuring students have the resources they need to do their best and go beyond high school to get a college education.

***“Sometimes they [site coordinators] are counselors, sometimes other things – not easy to identify. They just jump in wherever they are needed and do whatever it takes.”***

*-CIS of High Point Staff*

Students regarded CIS as helping the school as well as those students directly participating. Students stated CIS helps them become successful, figure out the implications of their actions for the real world, and prepare them to become independent.

### Future Vision for CIS

CIS staff uniformly commented on the continued expansion and growth of CIS of High Point. This growth referred to not only the expansion of current participating schools but the amount and type of programs and services offered, for example, providing more community

***“Helping the whole child... addressing character development – total child... takes everyone, community, school...”***

*-CIS of High Point Staff*

involvement, additional guest speakers, and stronger scholarship programs. One theme that ran across CIS staff responses was the need for consistency and continuity in programming, to consistently provide students with services throughout elementary, middle, and high school. After-school programs, summer components, and a CIS boarding school were all given as potential examples of improving continuity of services.

Community partners unanimously commented on their desire to continue their partnership with CIS and see it continue to grow and expand.

Similarly, school staff commented on their wish to see CIS expand and grow. Specifically by bringing in more organizations to meet the needs of the students and reach more children. In addition, teachers also commented on their desire for CIS to continue current efforts and activities, involve parents more directly (i.e., a large parent open house), and increase student exposure to activities outside the classroom.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

Almost all adults interviewed indicated the need for continued funding and additional financial support. The need for additional volunteers, guest speakers, and manpower was also noted

several times. Increased advocacy, information, and marketing materials on CIS of High Point successes were also reported.

### **Advice to Others Implementing CIS**

Three general themes of advice emerged from our review. First, the importance of pacing when beginning was repeatedly stressed. It is important to be vigilant and move slowly as you begin, stressing quality over quantity. The CIS website, shadowing other affiliates, and CIS literature were all noted as valuable resources to help avoid reinventing the wheel. Secondly, community buy-in/commitment were stressed as crucial to success. Staff should be encouraged to participate in the community and give of themselves to the community at large. Finally, staff commitment to success, passion, and vision were also noted as crucial factors to success.

***“You have to be your community and willing to give up your time and of yourself and be available for your students and the community at large.”***

*-CIS of High Point Staff*

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	Oak Hill Elementary	Ferndale Middle	High Point Central High
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2006</b>			
Reading Proficiency (%)	69.7	65.7	71.8
Math Proficiency (%)	43.8	35.9	64.0
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	56.8	49.3	68.0
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	69.7	65.7	71.8
White	81.0	79.6	86.4
Black	60.0	61.8	60.7
Hispanic	65.1	59.0	65.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	80.0	77.3	86.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	67.3	50.0	90.0
Female	71.1	71.4	79.3
Male	68.4	59.2	65.3
Economically Disadvantaged	70.8	63.3	63.9
Non-Disadvantaged	64.7	72.4	82.8
English Language Learners	59.1	39.0	60.5
Non-English Language Learners	73.1	70.0	73.2
Students with Disabilities	40.0	38.2	32.6
Non-Disabled Students	79.7	72.5	77.4
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	69.7	65.7	71.8
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	43.8	35.9	64.0
White	58.6	53.0	87.8
Black	27.2	25.5	49.7
Hispanic	46.5	41.0	56.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	59.1	55.3	55.6
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	53.8	18.3	69.2
Female	47.0	35.2	62.9
Male	41.0	36.8	65.3
Economically Disadvantaged	45.1	32.5	51.8
Non-Disadvantaged	38.3	44.9	79.3
English Language Learners	34.1	33.7	62.9
Non-English Language Learners	47.0	36.3	64.1
Students with Disabilities	20.0	18.4	33.3
Non-Disabled Students	51.9	39.1	68.8
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	43.8	35.9	64.0

## Individual School Demographics

	Oak Hill Elementary	Ferndale Middle	High Point Central High
<b>College Prep - 2005</b>			
SAT Reasoning Test - Average Score	n.a.	n.a.	946
SAT Reasoning Test - Participation Rate (%)	n.a.	n.a.	66.4
PSAT/NMSQT - Average Score	n.a.	n.a.	122
PSAT/NMSQT - Participation Rate (%)	n.a.	n.a.	100.0
AP - Scores 3 or Above (%)	n.a.	n.a.	26.8
AP - Participation Rate (%)	n.a.	n.a.	39.7
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>			
Enrollment	366	594	1,347
Students Per Teacher	8.7	9.4	19.0
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>			
White	17.5	18.2	36.7
Black	39.3	54.6	47.2
Hispanic	30.9	19.4	10.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	12.0	7.9	5.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3	0.0	0.5
Economically Disadvantaged	86.6	70.0	53.2
<b>School Facts</b>			
	320		
Address	Wrightenberry Street	701 Ferndale Boulevard	801 Ferndale Boulevard
City or Town	High Point	High Point	High Point
County	Guilford	Guilford	Guilford
District	Guilford County Schools	Guilford County Schools	Guilford County Schools
Telephone Number	(336)819-2925	(336)819-2855	(336)819-2825
Urban Status	Mid-Size City	Mid-Size City	Mid-Size City
Grade Levels Served	PreK-5	6-8	9-12

**Communities In Schools  
National Evaluation**

**Case Study Profile:  
CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County,  
Pennsylvania**

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## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics — CIS Pittsburgh - Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

#### Communities In Schools of Pennsylvania

Communities In Schools champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including Pennsylvania.

Communities In Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA), the state CIS organization, utilizes the power of partnerships to serve students, schools, and communities. Established in 1994, CISPA currently encompasses five local CIS affiliates in 97 schools serving over 15,185 students throughout Pennsylvania. Through the five local affiliates, CIS Pennsylvania provides and allocates resources and services to communities seeking to improve outcomes for students and schools, as well as support in developing programs and services to combat the problems of school failure and dropouts.

Allegheny County is classified as a Large City. For more demographic information about Allegheny County, please see Exhibit 1.

### 1.2 Affiliate Information

CIS has had a local presence in Allegheny County since 1985, becoming independently incorporated in 1995 as Communities In Schools of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County. CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny provides Level 1 and 2 services in three public high schools, three after-

#### Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>

<b>Population</b>	
2000 census	1,281,666
2006 estimate	1,223,411
<b>Ethnicity (2006)</b>	
White	82.8%
African-American	12.8%
American Indian	0.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.3%
Hispanic or Latino origin (2000) <sup>2</sup>	0.9%
<b>Age Composition (2006)</b>	
0-19	24.2%
20-24	6.5%
25-44	24.0%
45-64	28.2%
65 +	17%
Median Age	41.7
<b>Gender Composition (2006)</b>	
Male	47.6%
Female	52.4%
<b>Median Income</b>	
per household (2006)	\$43,691
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	
2006	5.9%

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

school/summer programs in three school districts, and three independent academies. To date, the local CIS organization has delivered services to over 45,000 students.

In Pittsburgh, CIS leads the way in creating and managing school and community partnerships that meet students' academic and social needs. In CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County's "fundamental" model, the CIS Coordinator, positioned full-time at the school, identifies community resources and services; connects these services to the school, students, and their families; manages the delivery of the services; and monitors student participation and progress. The Coordinator, working with the whole school and/or a designee, assures that services are delivered in a personal, accountable, and well-coordinated manner.

In 1999 CIS launched the Communities In Schools Academy for at-risk students who have either dropped out of school or who are at high-risk of dropping out of school. Now in three locations (Alle-Kiski, East End, and South Hills), the Academies serve students from area school districts, offering a stay-in school program for students likely to leave school and a dropout retrieval program for young adults who wish to return to earn their high school diploma. Workforce development and service learning are key components of the Academies.

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County is organized and operated as a non-profit corporation with 11 management team members and 40 full- and part-time employees. This fiscal year, the estimated number of volunteers in CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny is about 187. The 2007/2008 operations budget is \$1.4 million. About 33 percent of the funding comes from federal, state, or local government grants; 30 percent from school districts; and 24 percent from foundations; while corporations and individual contributions make up the remaining funding. The average cost per student of the fundamental CIS model is about \$400.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Methodology

As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

### 2.1 Site Selection

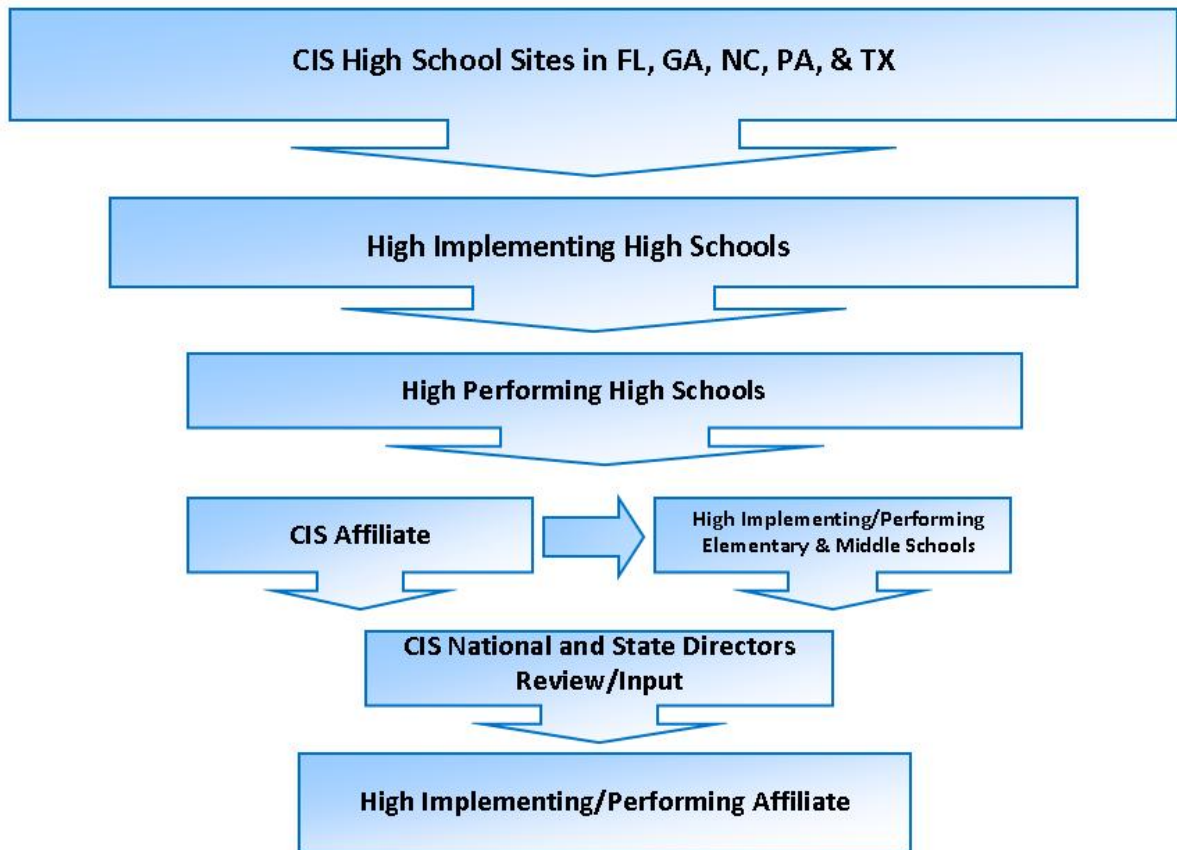
Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Communities In Schools of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County.

schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

ICF visited two schools within the CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny affiliate: Elizabeth Forward High School and Oliver High School (see Attachment A for information on the individual schools). Schools in the Pittsburgh School District report a total student population of 32,506 attending 85 public schools.<sup>7</sup> About 60.2 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Pittsburgh School District averages a student teacher ratio of 12.5:1. About 40 percent of regular schools met the 2006-2007 Average Yearly Progress (AYP). The overall Allegheny County high schools annual dropout rate was under 1.2 percent in 2006.<sup>8</sup> Public schools spent an average of \$12,559 per student in 2005 at Pittsburgh School District.<sup>9</sup> More information regarding the Pittsburgh school system, as well as the Elizabeth Forward School District, is presented in Exhibit 3.

### Exhibit 3: School System Information

<b>Student Population (2006)</b>	
Pittsburgh School District	32,506
Elizabeth Forward School District	2,903
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Pittsburgh School District	12.5:1
Elizabeth Forward School District	14.9:1
<b>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)<sup>4</sup></b>	
Pittsburgh School District	23 (40%)
Elizabeth Forward School District	7 (100%)
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Pittsburgh School District	51.4%
Elizabeth Forward School District	73.5%
<b>Math Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Pittsburgh School District	55.4%
Elizabeth Forward School District	75.0%
<b>Annual Dropout (High School) (2006)<sup>5</sup></b>	
Allegheny County	Under 1.2%
<b>Graduation Rate (2002)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Pittsburgh School District	46.9%
Elizabeth Forward School District	78.0%

## Interviews and Focus Groups

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008, a total of 13 interviews were conducted at CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), administrators (i.e.,

### Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups

CIS Staff and School Personnel*	12
Community Partners	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary and high school participating in CIS. A breakdown of interview participants by their roles is presented in Exhibit 4.

\*CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny runs several CIS academies, where the CIS staff are also the school staff.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>6</sup> Cumulative Promotion Index (Urban Inst.). Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

<sup>7</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>9</sup> Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

The leadership at CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny, which provides Level 1 and 2 services in three public high schools, three after-school/summer programs in three school districts, and three independent alternative learning academies, is seen as a vital component to the success of CIS in this community. The Executive Director has been with CIS for a little over two years. She is described by her colleagues and supervisors as an outstanding executive director who is quick on her feet, believable, and sincere. With a Master's in Psychology, she says that she always knew she wanted to be an executive director for an organization working with children and throughout her career has intentionally sought out professional experiences that have allowed her to build the necessary skills to succeed at her job. Her prior experiences include serving as the volunteer director of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, a court appointed special advocate, an administrator for five centers at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, the director of development for a women's center, and the vice president of development and communications at Adagio Health. She joined CIS because she was impressed with the programs and services offered to the children and youth.

In addition to being seen as someone who is passionate about the mission, she builds relationships with those inside as well as outside the organization according to staff at CIS as well as community partners. Staff said that she was accessible and supportive and outside partners described her as a visionary. The administration and Board of Directors also credit her ability to connect with funders and community members as a key element to their increased success in securing revenue. When one respondent was asked for advice for new affiliate offices (s)he responded, "Have a clone of [the Executive Director]."

##### Planning and Development

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny is currently working on its strategic plan. Staff at all levels of the organization are aware that this is happening and acknowledge the

***"I think we're on the road to something great [with CIS]."***

*-School Administrator*

importance of having a strategic plan to guide their growth development.

In addition to creating a strategic plan, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny is in the process of creating a “program of studies” booklet with procedures, personnel protocols, and other organizational policies. As part of this booklet, protocols are being created to align with state standards to help build the structure of the organization and increase credibility within school districts.

At the management level, weekly meetings are held to discuss current activities and engage in program planning. Program directors note that program planning and vision meetings tend to take place during the summer and that during the school year these meetings provide a setting to check in, assess progress, and follow up on needed changes and adjustments. Each Academy also holds regular meetings to discuss issues affecting the individual academies. In addition, staff trainings are held every three weeks throughout the school year, and professional development is held weekly at each Academy.

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny has a unique combination of programs operating in schools as well as separate academies that provide services to youth having difficulty succeeding in their home schools and youth who have dropped out of school. Staff are very proud of the fact that Georgia’s Performance Learning Centers were inspired by the academies of CIS Pittsburgh-Allegheny and CIS of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

When seeking new schools for CIS programs, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny casts a wide net to identify interested school districts. While some school districts have begun proactively contacting them, administrative staff recognize the need to increase the volume and impact of marketing to school districts so that they are aware of CIS services. At one point, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny was in 17 schools; however, when they could not secure sustainable funding they pulled back to five, and after three schools closed, they now operate in only three high schools. There is some desire by executive staff to be more strategic about what schools they expand into in the future and for there to be more collaboration between academies in terms of curriculum.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors for CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny consists of 15 people including an executive committee that is made up of 3-4 people. The relationship between the Board of Directors and Executive Director is described as extremely positive by everyone interviewed. Both sides attribute this to the excellent relationship between the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board and the fact that the Board acts as an advisor to the executive director and does not micro manage. The Board meets once a month; additional meetings are scheduled as needed. The Board is currently focused on creating a strategic plan and fundraising.

Board members are described as bright, competent, engaged, and accessible. The majority of members have been active on the Board for a number of years, with the Chair having served over 10 years on the Board. They have just instituted term limits to assist them in being more

disciplined about replenishing the Board. Limits are now set at two three-year terms with members able to be reelected by the Board after a one year break.

### **Resources/Funding**

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County secures funding through foundations, government sources (PA Department of Education and federal monies passed through to the county and city), the United Way, school districts, individual donations, and corporations through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program. They charge schools who contract for a full-time CIS Coordinator \$35,000 for a 10-month contract and \$40,000 for a full-year contract.

Securing funding is described as one of the most difficult challenges for CIS by Board members and staff at all levels of the organization. While they were in a financial hole a couple of years ago, after making a change in management, their financial situation has improved. Staff at the program office, including the executive director, are primarily responsible for applying for grants and other funding opportunities. Over the past few years, CIS has worked hard to identify viable funders specifically interested in supporting the programs they offer. As with most non-profits, they struggle with securing sustainable funding. School district budgets are constantly changing and some of the foundations they have worked with in the past are not interested in providing funding beyond the initial few years of engagement. In addition, most foundations do not support general operating funds so the support they receive through EITC is extremely valuable because there are minimal restrictions on use.

In an effort to build and maintain financial support, the executive director has worked to form positive relationships with a diverse funding base including county officials and school personnel. As a result of this, foundations are beginning to approach them. CIS has also worked to maintain communication with funders throughout the year. They currently send funders quarterly newsletters and their annual report, invite them to the students' graduations, and often communicate informally.

The Board is also prioritizing fundraising despite it being described as the "biggest chore of the Board." While some members are able to make significant personal donations, others provide assistance through *pro bono* services. The Board also contributes to fundraising by spreading the word about CIS and creating connections to potential funders. At the time of the site visit, they were planning a fundraiser for June 2008. For this event, the Board agreed to hire an outside event planner which was seen by all involved as a vital aspect to putting on this event.

While the Board and administrative staff are responsible for securing monetary resources, programmatic staff are responsible for securing material resources and in-kind donations. This is often done by contacting companies that are getting rid of old supplies, such as computers. During the 2007-2008 school year, one school was able to obtain 80 computers donated through in-kind donations.



## Marketing

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County is currently working on augmenting its marketing materials and generating increased awareness about the services they offer to the community. They have created “elevator pitches” of various lengths so that staff and Board members are using consistent language when talking about the services they deliver. They have also created a marketing plan which involves sending out multiple promotional pieces to stakeholders over a period of time. Promotional pieces include quarterly newsletters, service brochures, and marketing packets containing information about CIS at the national, state, and local levels.

*“I hear people say, ‘CIS is a great secret’.”*

*-CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny  
County Staff*

While the primary marketing audience is school districts, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County also creates brief marketing pieces tailored to different stakeholders such as funders, parents, and school administrators. These handouts focus on issues of concern to different audiences. For example, one staff noted that school districts tend to have negative opinions of cyber schools because they lose money for each student enrolled. Since students choosing to enroll in these programs may be less motivated than regular students, CIS created a handout for school administrators addressing the costs and benefits of sending these students to CIS before they drop out and enroll in cyber schools.

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County administrators have also proactively reached out to local media. One example of this is that they have key media figures emcee their student graduations. They also thought that the commercials put out by CIS National were excellent because they educated people about the existence of CIS and its programs. In general, they believe that when people hear the term “CIS” they understand what it means.

Both the administration and Board recognize the importance of increasing their visibility among all stakeholders. Community members tell them, “You guys are a great secret. You do great work but nobody knows about you.” One of the main challenges they face is finding ways to market CIS without speaking poorly about what is happening in the school systems since school districts are important partners to their work.

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County engages partners and stakeholders in two ways. The first way is by pursuing partners and targeting them for specific services. For example, when CIS is looking at working with a new school or school district they complete a partnership questionnaire whereby they assess the needs of the school and its students. Upon completion, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County will then target specific partners who can help them fill that school’s unique needs. As part of creating new collaborations, each program director is responsible for seeking out potential organizations for CIS to work with and presenting them at staff meetings so that all staff members are aware of the services available in the community.



The other means for engaging partners is through organic growth. This tends to happen through personal relationships and can develop in a variety of ways.

Staff at all levels of the affiliate identify their relationship with school districts as a key element to their success. They note that while teachers sometimes initially feel threatened by CIS's presence, they quickly change their opinions when they see the benefits of the program. CIS also works hard to build relationships with parents and rally the parents behind the program. They have found that when parents support the work they are doing communities and school administrators are more apt to support them as well.

In part, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County attributes its success in the schools to the ability to identify the primary "movers" in the school districts who support their programs. One program director noted that it is important to be persistent. If someone is not interested, then they try to find someone else. They also suggested not turning away youth seeking services just because a relationship does not exist with the students' school districts; rather these youth can help facilitate access into new school districts. CIS staff also believe that it is important to be present during the summer when the individual schools and school districts are preparing for the upcoming year and discussing new opportunities they want to pursue.

Community partners also echoed the fact that CIS's presence in the schools and relationships with the school administrators, teachers, and students facilitate its success. CIS's presence in the schools allows community partners to know what is going on with the students on a daily basis. They consistently note the unique energy, passion, and commitment of the individual CIS staff members and feel that the staff is always open to suggestions. The only area for improvement noted by community members was a desire for increased communication between the CIS academies and school personnel for students who are still enrolled in their home schools. One suggestion was for CIS to use an online database that would allow the schools to log in and see students progress on a daily basis.

When reflecting on how successful relationships are formed with partners outside of the school system, one staff member found it helpful to have an outline that detailed the key elements of the partnership and identified what each party is responsible for. This type of agreement allows both parties to know what is expected of them and helps create accountability. In addition, one of the academies found it useful to be located within a community center because of the natural partnership that can be formed with other organizations based in the community center.

### **Recruitment/Retention**

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County has been extremely successful at both recruiting and retaining staff. The average length of time that participants interviewed for this report have been working with CIS is a little over seven years (ranging from 1-16 years). The majority of these staff have been promoted at least once during their time at CIS. Administration and direct service staff all commented that their recent hiring of a therapeutic licensed counselor has

assisted them in working with students on behavioral issues. Staff come from a variety of backgrounds with regards to both their work experience and education. This diversity among staff is seen as a benefit by program directors because they bring different perspectives to the classrooms and programs.

When hiring staff, those involved in the hiring process recognize the importance of using explicit criteria. They not only look at applicants' GPAs and work experience, but also their outside activities and socially oriented experiences. They want to ensure that they are hiring staff that want to work with this population, who are youth oriented, and who have some background with alternative education. One of the ways they have been successful in recruiting staff is to hire retired teachers. They have found that many of these teachers still have a desire and zest for teaching and their pension helps to support them financially. While they also like to hire young teachers, they find that these teachers are often looking for the salary and benefits that align with the public school system. When good teachers are looking to leave their positions at CIS, management has been successful at maintaining their involvement in CIS by allowing them to stay on as adjuncts or on a part-time basis. The one area that has been a struggle, in terms of staff recruitment, is finding effective math and science teachers for their programs.

Staff, administration, and the Board all acknowledge the importance of communication in retaining staff. They recognize that people working at CIS could obtain other positions with higher pay and that in order to retain good staff members it is important to recognize them, thank them, and offer them praise for their work. They also acknowledge the importance of allowing staff to communicate with each other through in-service and providing professional development.

While the program director and administrative personnel feel that they do a great job with the staff they have, most would support an increase in the number of staff. There is a desire for both direct service and administrative staff to support the programs and lower the student-teacher ratio. They feel that this will be especially important as their programs continue to grow.

## **Training**

At the affiliate level, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County prioritizes staff training and professional development. Multiple program directors have backgrounds in and prior experience conducting training and staff development. Every Friday, Academy staff are provided training by their program director or outside providers. Since September 2007, staff have received over 60 hours of professional development. In addition, all Coordinators attend staff training every three weeks.

Training topics are chosen based on staff surveys done at the beginning and end of every year to assess their needs. Direct service staff are quick to point out that if they want training on a specific topic or need assistance in any area they make it known to the program directors who

integrate it into their Friday trainings. In addition, when program directors see a need they also make adjustments to incorporate necessary trainings. For example, program directors noticed that some of the teachers they were hiring did not have prior experience working with serious disciplinary issues and so they are now hiring differently and working to create a classroom management training that all teachers will take when they are initially hired. They are also working to create a teacher mentoring program to assist new hires.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County recognizes the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. They collect what the Global Network Campus (GNC) data management system requires as well as a significant amount of additional data. Information that they collect includes, but is not limited to: demographic information, behavioral records, attendance, and student and parent surveys. In addition, when students first enroll in a CIS Academy they work with the home schools to get credit determination records.

There is acknowledgement among everyone involved in the monitoring and evaluation process that while evaluation is improving it tends to be something that is done at the last minute; there is a lot of room for improvement. CIS staff believe that it is important to focus on obtaining the most meaningful data but struggle with identifying the best measurements and outcomes to track. Recently, Duquesne University did a preliminary evaluation on their data collection and provided suggestions on additional measures they can be collecting.

***“If I didn’t work for CIS, I wouldn’t think that way [data-minded].”***

*-CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Staff*

Another difficulty that CIS has encountered is obtaining school records for students re-enrolled in their programs. For example, they often have to badger schools for PSSA results and attendance records. In addition, they feel that schools do a poor job of measuring behavior and it is difficult to get a good baseline measurement of behavior. While CIS does

academic screenings during intake they would like to incorporate *pre* and *post* tests on behavior into their programs.

As mentioned above, CIS records their data in the GNC; however, they do not find it to be user-friendly. Last year, they tried to supplement the GNC with a database called Maestro but it was not successful so now they are working to make the GNC more user-friendly. They also struggle with getting staff to consistently enter data because while they recognize the importance, it is not something that is enjoyed by most staff.

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny incorporates the data that they collect into their communication with parents and funders. Weekly report cards are sent to parents with qualitative updates and data are used in grant proposals and reports. Data are also used for program planning purposes. For example, after noticing that there was a heightened rate of African-Americans unsuccessfully leaving one CIS Academy, they created a business camp to provide a space for

students to learn outside of their normal living environment. Results from this program showed that there was an increase in participation from African-American students using this model.

Another example is their response to identifying that 25 percent of their students had children or little brothers and sisters they cared for. As a result of this finding, CIS created a program focusing on parenting skills and birth control for these students.

In the future, CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County would like to hire a third-party evaluator to measure the impact of their programs and conduct more long-term evaluation where they followed students after they left the program.

### Relationship with State Office

The administration at CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County feels supported by the state office. They say that the meetings have been very valuable and are encouraged that the state office is working on a strategic plan. They also appreciate the state office taking a bigger role in passing along funding and grant ideas and opportunities. There is general recognition that the state office has recently undergone significant transition and that the new director has done a superb job of reinvigorating the office.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

Needs assessments are conducted at both the school and individual levels and plans are created at both levels. When CIS is looking at partnering with a school they complete a partnership questionnaire whereby they talk to everyone in the school from the janitor to the principal. They feel that this assessment helps to give them a well-rounded picture of what is going on in the school and what the needs are.

*"I'm the connector, the missing link. The extension cord that will make you bubble up and come to life, stay in school."*

*-CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny  
County Staff*

For students admitted into the academies, their needs are assessed during their initial intake, which is conducted with the guidance and therapeutic counselors. This intake is also a time where CIS tries to ensure that the program and student are a good fit for each other. Some academies have found that the schools send them students in need of partial hospitalization because CIS is a less expensive option for the school districts. During intake, staff also reach out to parents to see if they are in need of any services.

### Identification and Referral

The academies' intake processes are focused on identifying students' needs; however, identifying all of the needs of a student can take time. In an effort to continue identification

throughout a youth's time in the program, academy staff meet every Friday to engage in "kid talk" where they discuss what is going on with individual students. In addition, some students approach staff with needs after they have built relationships with them and trust them.

Most students are referred to the CIS academies by their home school after they have dropped out or when the school has exhausted all of their resources to help the student succeed. CIS is a preferred referral for schools because of their success rate and faculty. The fact that CIS is not located in a mall is seen by schools as a benefit since malls can be places where students tend to act out. In addition, schools recognize the important advantages of having a therapeutic counselor to work with students on a one-on-one basis. Once students have been referred into the CIS Academy, school personnel receive monthly (or more frequent) communication from the program director. In addition, school personnel can stop by the academy to visit their students.

### **Programs and Services**

The academies at CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County offer a combination of three specialized programs:

1. *Transitions* – This program works with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to improve their academic and social skills so that they can succeed in high school. The kids in this program are enrolled for a variety of reasons, including: being gifted but not meeting academic potential, falling asleep in class, violent tendencies, and truancy. The program has a classroom feel with interdisciplinary, theme-based learning. Students come every Monday through Thursday 9am-2:30pm and Friday 9am-12pm. The goal of this program is to transition these students back into their home high schools.
2. *High School Success Program* – This program works with students enrolled in their home high schools but who are at risk of dropping out. These students have been unsuccessful in their schools for a variety of reasons including: behavior problems, mental health issues, pregnancy, learning disabilities, etc. Youth come for 18 hours a week, 8am-4pm two days a week and every other Friday. The other two days students go to jobs, internships, and job shadowing programs. CIS works with employers to place students based on individual student interests. Students enrolled in the High School Success Program either transition back into their home schools after they are no longer deemed at heightened risk for dropping out or graduate through the CIS High School Success Program, receiving diplomas from their home schools.
3. *Diploma Plus Training Program (DPTP)* – This program works with students who have dropped out of high school. These students are no longer on their home school rosters. They come in the evenings. The program uses a self-paced curriculum and upon completion students receive high school diplomas, not a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Students enrolled in the academies also receive a number of additional services. These include presentations on sexually transmitted diseases, abstinence, drinking and driving, healthy relationships, job training, and drug use. Part of the Service Coordinator's responsibilities is to

form partnerships with local human service agencies to provide additional services. Some of the agencies linked to the academies include: Mercy Management, Pittsburg Action Against Rape, Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, and ITT Tech. Students also attend field trips related to what they are learning and participate in service learning and restorative justice initiatives. Targeted Level 2 services are offered through staff, teachers, and the therapeutic counselor.

For CIS programs located within the schools CIS provides a number of Level 1 and Level 2 services following the traditional CIS model. The Level 1 services offered tend to relate to: health awareness, AIDS, pregnancy, safe sex, leadership development, voter registration, jury training, money management, and healthy food for testing time. Some programs are open to all students, but students have to be selected to attend. These include Rotary Club symposiums and entrepreneurship programs. Site Coordinators believe that this process teaches students to appreciate what they are given because not everyone is able to participate. Students receive Level 2 services based on referrals from teachers, the special education department, other agencies operating programs in the school, and self-referrals.

### **Monitoring and Adjustment**

Students enrolled in CIS academies are assigned advisors who work with them on their academic and career goals. Each month, advisors submit reports on student progress and make adjustments based on these reports. Many students also have Individualized Education Programs (IEP) which help track progress and areas in need of modification. Regular management meeting assist staff in identifying what specific steps should be taken with individual students.

Student feedback has been very positive across programs. According to CIS staff and community partners, most students (over 90% according to student surveys) say that CIS helped them succeed at school.

### **Relationships with Key Stakeholders**

As mentioned above, staff and stakeholders involved with CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County consistently comment on the importance of relationships in the CIS programs. CIS was described as having multi-level relationships with partners, students, and families.

Whether working with teachers, parents, or students direct service staff find it important to be consistent and reliable. Some direct service staff noted that students have their cell phone numbers and call them when they are nervous. This acts as a safety net for both students and parents, who often call Site Coordinators to check on how their children are doing. As one staff member commented, “relationship building is essential and it takes time.” Site Coordinators said that it is important to learn the school’s and student’s cultures and to be involved in school activities, such as standing in the hallways between class and monitoring behavior in the cafeteria. CIS staff located in schools often use

***“You need to learn the culture of the school.”***

*-CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny  
County Staff*

their multi-level relationships to act as mediators between students, teachers, and administrators.

Within CIS, staff members described their collegial relationships as “family.” Saying that they feel supported and know that if they need anything they can turn to others in the organization for assistance.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

Staff and Board members described CIS as a “dropout prevention program.” They work with partners and collaborators to improve academic progress, behavior, and attendance and provide students the skills to help them complete school, enter the workforce, and improve their lives. Staff noted that because they are not limited by school district parameters they are able to work one-on-one with youth and take a “more holistic approach.” One program director described it as “a utopia.”

#### Future Vision for CIS

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County is looking forward to completing and following through on their strategic plan. There is a desire to expand geographically as well as to begin working with younger elementary school children. Community partners and school districts said that their future vision was to continue working with CIS.

Most staff hope that someday they are able to shut down their academies because children are able to succeed in their home schools. However, they feel that with the growing number of students at-risk for dropout it is important to continue both the academies as well as the home school-based programs. As one staff member put it, “CIS is needed across the nation, across the state, in rural as well as urban communities.” Despite recognizing the need to expand their programs they are also very aware that this growth has to occur in a sustainable manner.

***“CIS is needed across the nation, across states. Too many kids are hurting, and parents don’t know where to turn.”***

*-CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny  
County Staff*

As part of this growth, there is a desire to increase awareness about CIS so that there is wide visibility and name recognition. The feeling is that they have “barely scratched the surface” in regard to marketing and that the possibilities for CIS are endless.



## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

CIS of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County is very focused on wanting to improve their programs at all levels. They would greatly appreciate knowing what best practices exist around the country and advice on how to measure the impact of their local program. As part of this they are looking for funding for a third-party evaluator and would ideally like a more user-friendly database.

Many staff members commented that they would like to attend more state and national conferences where they can hear about best practices and network with other CIS schools.

*“It’d be great if there was an online database where we can check grades, so we know what’s going on [with our students].”*

*-School Staff*

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

When providing advice to new affiliates, staff would encourage them to be flexible and trustworthy, to listen and learn, to understand that relationships are give and take, to never sit back, and to consistently drive to push for better outcomes. They suggest talking with other affiliates and people who have gone before them. They note that the CIS network can provide both advice and resources. Staff at this affiliate feel that it is important to have instructors and administrators who understand and believe in the mission, who will support each other, and work with each other to meet the needs of the staff and youth. Finally, they should “hang in there” and know they are supported.



## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	Elizabeth Forward High School	Oliver High School	
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2007</b>			
Reading Proficiency (%)	71.6%		27.2
Math Proficiency (%)	49.0%		13.0
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)			20.1
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>			
All Students	71.6%		27.2
White	73.3%		41.4
Black	n.a.		21.5
Hispanic	n.a.		n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.		n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.		n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.		n.a.
Female	81.8%		29.6
Male	62.2%		23.5
Economically Disadvantaged	66.7%		26.9
English Language Learners	n.a.		n.a.
Students with Disabilities	9.7%		2.4
Migrant	n.a.		n.a.
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>			
All Students	49.0%		13.0
White	50.8%		24.1
Black	n.a.		9.2
Hispanic	n.a.		n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.		n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.		n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.		n.a.
Female	54.8%		13.3
Male	43.7%		12.5

## Individual School Demographics

	Elizabeth Forward High School	Oliver High School
Economically Disadvantaged	33.4%	12.6
English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	3.2%	2.4
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.
<b>College Prep - 2005</b>		
ACT - Average Score	n.a.	n.a.
ACT - Participation Rate (%)	n.a.	n.a.
SAT Reasoning Test - Average Score	994	792
SAT Reasoning Test - Participation Rate (%)	66.7%	33.5
PSAT/NMSQT - Average Score	142	115
PSAT/NMSQT - Participation Rate (%)	60.3%	35.1
AP - Scores 3 or Above (%)	81.5%	6.7
AP - Participation Rate (%)	7.8%	4.8
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>		
Enrollment	1,010	806
Students Per Teacher	16	11.8
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>		
White	97.1%	14.1
Black	1.9%	85.4
Hispanic	0.2%	0.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.0
Economically Disadvantaged	17.5%	74.8
<b>NCLB Information - 2007</b>		
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	Yes	No
<b>School Facts</b>		
Address	1000 Weigles Hill Rd.	2323 Brighton Road
City or Town	Elizabeth	Pittsburgh
County	Allegheny	Allegheny

## Individual School Demographics

	Elizabeth Forward High School	Oliver High School
District	Elizabeth Forward School District	Pittsburgh School District
Telephone Number	(412) 896-2349	(412)323-3250
Urban Status	Large City	Large City
Grade Levels Served	9-12	9-12

**Communities In Schools  
National Evaluation**

**Case Study Profile:  
CIS of Putnam County, Florida**

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## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – Putnam County, Florida

#### Communities In Schools of Florida

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including Florida.

Communities In Schools of Florida, the state CIS organization, utilizes the power of partnerships to serve students, schools, and communities. Through the 13 local affiliates, CIS Florida provides services to communities seeking to improve outcomes for students and schools, as well as support in developing programs and services to combat the problems of school failure and dropouts.

#### Profile of Putnam County, Florida

Putnam County is rural.<sup>3</sup> Its county seat is Palatka, and the county is centrally located between Jacksonville, Gainesville, St. Augustine, and Daytona Beach. More information regarding Putnam County’s demographics is presented in Exhibit 1.

<b>Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for Putnam County, Florida<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b><u>Population (2006)</u></b>	
Putnam County	74,083
<b><u>Ethnicity Composition (2006)</u></b>	
White	77.9%
African-American	17.0%
American Indian	0.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin <sup>2</sup>	5.9%
<b><u>Age Composition (2006)</u></b>	
0-19	27.7%
20-24	6.7%
25-44	21.5%
45-64	24.5%
65 +	19.7%
<b>Median Age</b>	39.1
<b><u>Gender Composition (2006)</u></b>	
Male	51.2%
Female	48.8%
<b><u>Median Income</u></b>	
per household (2006)	\$30,771
<b><u>Unemployment Rate</u></b>	
2006	9.2%
<b><u>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2007)</u></b>	
Total	60
Violent Crimes	10

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

<sup>3</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

## 1.2 Affiliate Information

Putnam County's Communities In Schools program began in 1988 out of concern for the high number of students dropping out of school. CIS was a program with a reputation for success in helping reconnect youth to their schools and community.

Communities In Schools of Putnam County strives to foster collaborative partnerships with government, education, business, and community resources to promote the importance of staying in school, learning, and becoming productive, contributing adults. It provides Level 1 and 2 services in local public schools. Since forming in 1988, it has initiated many different programs for at-risk youth, including providing scholarships, family involvement, health/medical services, tutoring and mentoring, and after-school programs. According to the 2007/2008 operations plan, CIS of Putnam County provides 1,690 students with Level 1 services, and 730 students and 75 parents with Level 2 services.

CIS of Putnam County is organized and operated as a non-profit corporation and has five employees. From July 1, 2007 to February 11, 2008, CIS of Putnam County received total income of \$682,283.56, about 80 percent of which came from federal, state, or local grants and foundations, and about 11 percent of which came from CIS of Florida and other contributions.

According to the 2006/2007 independent auditor's report, the total annual expenses of CIS of Putnam County were \$1,301,654, 87.0 percent of which were for program services, 12.7 percent for general and administrative, and 0.2 percent for fundraising.

## 2. Methodology

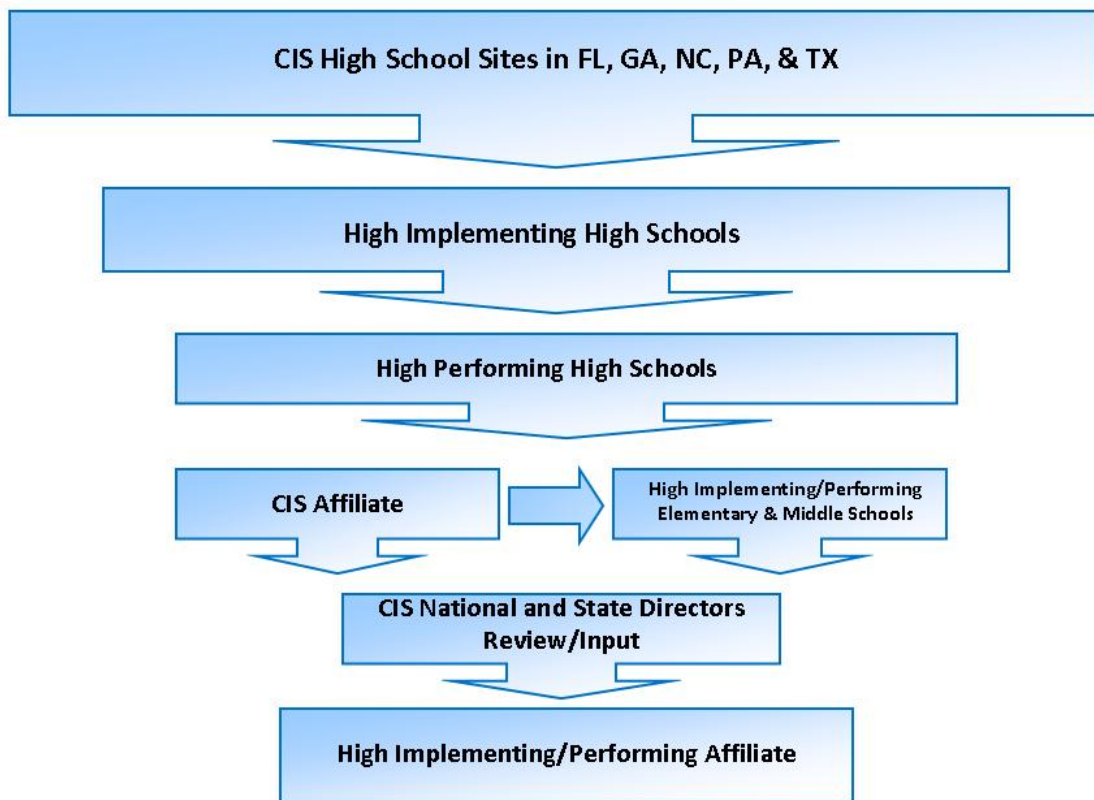
As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and

behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Putnam County was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**





## 2.2 Site Visits

The case study was conducted in two schools located in Palatka, Florida (Riverbreeze Elementary and James A. Long Elementary schools; see Attachment A for individual school demographics and descriptions).

Schools in Putnam County report a total student population of 12,274 attending 23 public schools in one public school district, including 20 regular schools and 3 alternative schools. About 65.9 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Putnam County public schools average a student teacher ratio of 17.5:1. Thirty-five percent of regular schools met the 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The annual high school dropout rate was 4 percent in 2006.

Public schools spent an average of \$6,785 per student in 2005 (see Exhibit 3).<sup>5</sup>

<b>Exhibit 3: School System Information (Putnam County)</b>	
<b><u>Student Population(2006/07)</u></b>	
Total	12,274
Limited English Proficient	4.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	65.9%
<b><u>Average Cost per Student</u></b>	
Putnam County	\$6,785
<b><u>Student /Teacher Ratio</u></b>	
Putnam County	17.5:1
<b><u>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)<sup>4</sup></u></b>	
Schools Meeting AYP	35%
<b><u>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (2006)</u></b>	
Putnam County	50.1%
<b><u>Math Proficiency (2006)</u></b>	
Putnam County	54.0%
<b><u>Annual Dropout (High School) (2006)</u></b>	
Putnam County	4.0%
<b><u>Graduation Rate (2002)</u></b>	
Putnam County	49.2%

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Between May 20 – 22, 2008, 19 interviews and focus groups with 38 participants were conducted at CIS of Putnam County. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of two elementary

<b>Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	
CIS Affiliate/School Staff	5
School Personnel	12
Board Members	2
Parents	18
Students	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>

schools participating in CIS. Two parent focus groups were conducted with 18 participants and 2 student focus groups were also conducted at these schools, with a total participation of 20 students. A breakdown of interview participants by their roles is presented in Exhibit 4.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Florida Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

The leadership of CIS of Putnam County is spearheaded by the Executive Director who is described by colleagues and the community as the most valuable asset of CIS of Putnam. Her commitment, experience, and passion for getting things done were demonstrated when, as she became Executive Director of the affiliate eight years ago, she worked tirelessly to bring the affiliate from the brink of financial disaster to a fully functioning organization and a vital player in improving the lives of children and families in Putnam County. Her training was in psychology with a graduate degree in public administration. While she initially knew “nothing” about Communities In Schools, she did know how to run a small business. Prior to working for CIS of Putnam County, she retired from over 30 years of managing the Port Authority of Jacksonville where she worked in multiple positions from human resources, to marketing, to public relations. She credits her work with the Port Authority for developing her strong sense of being responsible to shareholders and operating under public scrutiny—key skills she uses in her current role. She is a self described “problem solver” and very hands on; however, she is not a micro-manager and expects her program managers to know and run their programs. Her leadership style is characterized as “guiding” and “teaching” which results in a great degree of trust both in staff and from the community.

***“She (the Executive Director) really believes (in CIS)...goes above and beyond...Working with someone like this is purely an honor.”***

*- CIS of Putnam County Staff*

At the school level, the CIS Site Coordinator serves in a leadership role in the elementary school after-school programs. Critical to the effectiveness of this position is an ability to manage student discipline; schedule activities, classes and transportation; and interact with both staff and students. Leadership qualities are key factors in selecting Site Coordinators.

##### Planning and Development

CIS staff and Board members indicate that planning and development have historically been and continue to be crucial to the continuation of the programs and services they provide.

Toward this end, they are engaged in a process focused on identifying and obtaining resources to extend and sustain their work.

Much of the infrastructure to support the ongoing operation of CIS is in place. CIS staff cite the development of a policies and procedures manual as a significant document to support these operations. The manual covers all aspects of human resource policy, contracting and interaction with external partners, programs and the media. The manual reflects the philosophy and orientation of CIS toward the internal and external relationships necessary to carry out its work, providing an outline of program objectives and goals and the strategies to employ to make certain that the program is successful.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors for CIS of Putnam County is composed of a diverse group of community members, many who have been on the Board longer than the eight-year tenure of the current Executive Director. Several new members have been added to the Board providing new energy to the work that it is being undertaken. There is a sense that the current Board is the strongest that it has ever been with like-minded members who are hard workers. This is especially important at this juncture in the development of CIS of Putnam County as it is necessary for Board members to step up and assume greater ownership in identifying resources for CIS through community networks. Board members perceive these community relationships as an inherent strength of the Board as it is currently constituted.

According to Board members, the primary responsibilities of the Board are—on the resource development side—to supplement activities, provide resources, and make key connections with stakeholders and potential funders. On the programmatic side, Board members describe their responsibilities as making recommendations for program development and, most importantly, providing advice to the Executive Director.

### **Resources/Funding**

Maintaining critical financial resources has been a significant challenge for CIS of Putnam County. CIS staff members expressed that the best way to manage financial resources is to stay within the budget and reduce expenses. The current leadership team has scrupulously adhered to this process. CIS staff members have developed ingenious fundraising strategies including everything from “selling hot dogs on Fridays” to conducting an annual fundraising event. CIS staff members indicate that they are very frugal with resources and make certain to spend only what is needed; they work hard to reduce costs.

CIS of Putnam County is supported through its relationship with the Putnam County School District. It works with local businesses and stakeholder agencies to provide resources for CIS programs and services. Putnam County, however, is not an economically diverse or wealthy county. CIS staff indicate that their community is generous in giving of their time and things (like clothing and shoes for needy CIS students), but not as generous with money—“they don’t

have the cash.” The little industry that exists in Putnam County—specifically Georgia Pacific Corporation—has to provide support across county agencies and usually facilitates this through its United Way contribution. CIS has developed a mechanism for school district employees and others to contribute to CIS through a payroll deduction plan. While it is not envisioned that this will generate large sums of money, it does tap in to the largest employer in Putnam County—the School District.

The state legislature has in the past provided a line item for Communities In Schools in Florida. The resources from the line item were distributed through the State CIS office. However, this line item was eliminated from the state budget in 2008 and these resources, approximately \$40,000 annually for CIS of Putnam County will not be provided for the next fiscal year. The loss of state resources is especially devastating to rural CIS programs that do not have other sources of revenue available to them in their local communities. It supported the administrative costs of CIS of Putnam County and while CIS of Putnam County currently has a small reserve, identifying resources for continued administrative operations is seen as crucial to the continuation of its operations.

## Marketing

As CIS of Putnam County recovered financial stability over the past eight years, the goal of the Executive Director was to maintain a low profile in an effort to blend into the woodwork and get the operations back on track. In the last six months, however, the focus of the organization has been on marketing. CIS staff members are working to provide their local community with an understanding of what will happen to students and their families if CIS withdraws or shuts down. They have targeted key community partners for presentations, including the local Rotary. The local newspaper featured CIS of Putnam County in a full-page article which included pictures of the end-of-year celebration by CIS students. Board members are examining other marketing venues including direct mail and marketing, face-to-face networking, and presentations.

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

The primary partner for CIS of Putnam County is the Putnam County School District. CIS program services are coordinated directly through Site Coordinators who are employees of the school district. The school district provides space and helps coordinate transportation at a reduced cost for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program that is the focus of CIS of Putnam County’s academic and behavioral change model. CIS, in turn, is responsible for screening and certifying all volunteers that work in the district regardless of the volunteer involvement with a CIS program.

### CIS of Putnam County Partner Organizations/Programs

- Putnam County School District
- AmeriCorps
- United Way
- University of Florida Agricultural Extension Agency
- Local businesses and churches

Enrichment activities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program are provided by local enterprises. For example, for a reduced fee, CIS after-school program participants are able to receive drumming lessons that most of the students could not afford on their own. The University of Florida's Agricultural Extension Agency provides classes on nutrition and cooking at no cost to the program. A combination of volunteers and reduced-fee contractors serve as partners with CIS to provide a wide array of these enrichment activities.

The AmeriCorps program is a key partner for CIS providing literacy tutors for elementary students. AmeriCorps provides a paid CIS staff member to direct the program. Local businesses provide much needed resources for students and their families like clothes, shoes, glasses, and book supplies. Local business organizations like the local Rotary, Lions Clubs and local churches coordinate drives to collect these resources. CIS staff members work with these organizations to connect them directly with the students they are assisting. CIS of Putnam County also works with their local Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

### **Recruitment/Retention**

CIS of Putnam County staff members are well trained for the positions they hold. They are primarily recruited from school district personnel. There is a mix of educational backgrounds depending on the position held. For example, the CFO has a degree in Finance and Accounting and worked at Georgia Pacific prior to coming to CIS. For the RISE program (i.e., the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program) a majority of the administrative and program staff have been with the program since its inception in 2004. The current CIS administrative team (e.g., the Executive Director, Corporate Financial Officer, and Program Manager) have worked together for eight years. CIS after-school positions are highly sought not only because of the extra pay that teachers receive for participating in the program but also because the after-school format allows teachers to work with students in more informal ways that cannot be accommodated in the structure of the school day.

### **Training**

CIS staff members are provided mandatory training including an orientation to Communities In Schools. Because staff members are deployed across a variety of programs and operate independently at their school, the goal of the training is to "help people understand they are not an island but representatives of Communities In Schools." Much of the training focuses on the specific needs of the program being delivered. While staff wide meetings are few, the close relationship that CIS has with the school district allows staff to participate in training without being penalized with an absence from work.

AmeriCorps volunteers, teachers, and other participants in specific programs are trained prior to coming into the school. The training focuses on specific skills, especially dealing with challenging students. Teachers share lifetime experiences and utilize peer-to-peer learning and information sharing to sharpen and improve their interactions with students and parents.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

CIS programs are monitored continuously through data collection processes developed by the CIS Program Manager. This includes program benchmarks as well as student academic performance and behavioral outcomes. Data are fed back to Site Coordinators who in turn communicate information to their staff. Data are used to inform practice and the development of programs. Because much of the funding for CIS program activities is derived from external sources, the evaluation and reporting requirements of individual grants have been folded into the ongoing practices of the organization. For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program, CIS of Putnam County has been on the forefront of developing and tailoring evaluation tools to collect and report on the impact of the program on students and their families.

*"CIS doesn't just follow the money... but decides what programs are best for Putnam County based on analyses of data."*

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

## Relationship with State Office

The primary contact between CIS of Putnam County and the state office is through the Executive Director. The state CIS office is viewed as very supportive and provides technical assistance specifically surrounding marketing. The state office helps CIS of Putnam County do things that they cannot do themselves. For example, they help get programs designed and printed for the annual fundraiser. The loss of state revenue has seriously impacted the ability of the state office to provide financial support. One suggestion for the state office is to coordinate a state-wide public awareness campaign. The Governor of Florida has proclaimed November as Communities In Schools month. Currently no major public awareness or fundraising drive has been developed to take advantage of this month of celebration. By developing a coordinated campaign, CIS of Florida could begin to become recognized statewide for the tremendous impact it has on the lives of children and families.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

Needs assessments drive the work of providing services and participation in CIS of Putnam County programs—particularly participation in the major program offerings of CIS—such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after school program and the AmeriCorps literacy tutoring program. Other basic needs (e.g., clothing, health care, school supplies) are identified through observations and feedback provided by teachers and other school personnel and are coordinated through the school guidance counselor.

Data about student performance and other measures of student outcomes are also gathered in preparation for establishing a new CIS program. These data are shared with school personnel

***“The (after-school) program is highly data driven and the data determines the activities and programs available to students, including enrichment activities. I work with teachers to determine specific students and the specific needs of students and discuss this information with CIS staff.”***

*-School Administrator*

who decide a direction for programmatically addressing the need. It then becomes the task of CIS to identify evidence based programs and resources to address the need and to bring the identified programs to the school.

CIS also administers individual, targeted one-on-one assessments of students to identify social, emotional and behavioral needs and works with parents and teachers to address these needs.

Overall, the assessments provide the basis of successful program activities. In addition to improving academic performance and enrichment, the programs provide a safe and exciting environment for students.

### **Identification and Referral**

Students are identified and referred by school guidance counselors, teachers, and other school personnel. For the after-school program, students who are not meeting adequate yearly progress and students participating in Title I programs are assessed first and provided access to the program. If there are additional slots available, student performance data are used to prioritize students on the waiting list.

***“It’s a team effort between CIS and the school—it’s in the teacher’s best interest, the student’s best interest, in everyone’s best interest, that we collaborate to succeed.”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

Referrals from outside stakeholders are also employed. The community can raise a concern and have it directly addressed by the school through CIS resources.

### **Programs and Services**

CIS of Putnam County focuses a majority of its programs and services at the elementary school level in both Level 1 and Level 2 CIS programs. As it prioritized resources, CIS staff pointed to the need to intervene early (i.e., at the elementary school level) to promote the ability of a child to succeed in school and avert the possibility of dropping out later in the educational process. Exhibit 5 provides a description of programs conducted by CIS of Putnam County.



**Exhibit 5: Current Major Programs provided by CIS of Putnam County, Florida**

Current Major Programs	Program Descriptions	Number of Students Served (2007/2008)	Total Expenses (2006/2007)
RISE 21st Century Community Learning Centers	This program provides <u>academic remediation and enrichment activities</u> to at-risk students in grades K-5. It also includes a parent component which requires parents of attending students to participate in at least two of eight available workshops/activities in support of their child’s education.	300 (students) 75 (parents)	\$556,340
AmeriCorps Putnam READS!	The program places members at <u>trained literacy tutors</u> in all elementary schools in Putnam County to provide instruction in grades K-6.	220	\$235,659
Take Stock in Children	CIS has partnered with Take Stock in Children, to target deserving, low income children to receive full <u>tuition scholarships</u> to college or vocational school. Along with the promise of a scholarship, each child in the Take Stock program is matched with a mentor. Mentors are caring adult volunteers who meet with students once a week at school to offer encouragement, motivation, and support. Mentors also serve as positive role models for the students.	16	\$45,120
Foster Grandparents Program	The program provides <u>tutoring and mentoring</u> for children in grades pre-K-4 who are identified by teachers and/or administrators as having an exceptional need.	164	\$217,970

**Students and Parents**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program is viewed by students, parents, and school staff as a positive asset for everyone, both the individual student who benefits from additional academic support, and the school as a whole. While the program provides much needed skills development and reinforcement for academically at-risk students, the enrichment part of the program receives high praise. Students remain at school at the end of the school day and participate in a range of activities that parents are unable to afford on their own. Students indicate that one-on-one teaching, the ability to complete complex homework assignments and the “cooking, drumming,

***“RISE (CIS) allows me to do interesting things instead of sitting at home and being a couch potato.”***

*- Student*



and dance classes” make their participation productive and fun. Parents indicate that the program has improved the academic performance of their children. More importantly, they view the after-school program as a safe and caring environment where each child can succeed. Universally, parents, students and teachers expressed the desire that the program not only continues, but expands to include more classes and activities for more children.

### **Successes and Challenges**

***“...the after-school program is of immeasurable value in meeting the social needs of underserved children. It not only fills a void in their after school hours, but also increases their activity, comprehension, and social interaction.”***

*- School Administrator*

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program has demonstrated success at multiple levels. At the student performance level, students participating in the RISE program (2006-2007) increased their reading scores by an average of 70 percent.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-four percent of first and second grade students scored at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the SAT 10 reading test.<sup>7</sup> Seventy-five percent of regularly attending students increased their math Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) developmental scale scores.<sup>8</sup> Finally, 70 percent of students participating in the program demonstrated

acquisition of skills in music, art, or drama as indicated by teacher skill mastery checklists.<sup>9</sup> In addition to academic gains, students demonstrated increased self esteem and self confidence and improved peer relationships and social skills development.

A school administrator commented on the role CIS plays in helping the school maintain a comprehensive assessment of student performance and improve the delivery of services to students based on data and targeted delivery of programs and services. The program helps teachers focus on student needs, revise programs and lesson plans, respond to the learning abilities of students, and meet the requirements for state testing. There is limited time during the regular school day for focused attention on those students who need more help to learn. CIS works with schools to ensure that those challenges are addressed as completely as possible.

Across all levels of participants, teachers, administrators, Board members, and CIS staff, the most immediate and difficult challenge is finding the needed resources to continue individual programs and the operation of CIS. Second in level of priority is providing transportation for students to participate in the after school programs. This priority is also tied to obtaining additional financial resources or in-kind contributions.

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<sup>6</sup> Communities In Schools of Putnam County, Inc. Progress Report 2006-2007.

<sup>7</sup> Communities In Schools of Putnam County, Inc. Progress Report 2006-2007.

<sup>8</sup> Communities In Schools of Putnam County, Inc. Progress Report 2006-2007.

<sup>9</sup> Communities In Schools of Putnam County, Inc. Progress Report 2006-2007.

## Monitoring and Adjustment

CIS of Putnam County staff members monitor the progress of students and program performance. The *Think Link* online database was purchased by CIS for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program to provide students, teachers and staff with a way to monitor potential student performance on the state standardized test—the FCAT. The database tracks student performance through interactive performance benchmarking, intervention assessment, and practice activities. Data are monitored at the individual student level as well as school-wide. Three times per year teachers are brought together to review the *Think Link* data and other student behavior data in order to adjust individual student activities. School administrators review the data to monitor where improvements need to be made school-wide—with an eye for improving performance on the FCATs. As CIS staff indicate, “we not only correct student performance issues in the after-school program but also correct the issues in the regular school program.” The after-school program also monitors attendance and student behaviors.

***“We use Think Link data and apply it to services across subjects and programs to ensure that we are constantly responding to the whole child and the whole school.”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

Monitoring of overall program performance is implemented by the CIS Site Coordinator, who is responsible for scheduling all activities and events, hiring staff, on-site management, discipline, and other administrative tasks including coordination of transportation of students to and from school. Effective Site Coordinators frequently use a “three minute” walk through in every classroom with a pre-specified checklist to evaluate classroom activity. Feedback from the walk through is shared with both staff and the CIS Project Manager. The CIS Project Manager also conducts observations of classroom activities and provides de-identified information to the school principal, the CIS Site Coordinator, the CIS Executive Director, and the school district’s Assistant Superintendent.

## Relationships with Key Stakeholders

CIS staff and Board members indicate that the strong relationships they have with the Putnam County School district and their local community partners are an important component of the success of their program. Board members point to utilizing the strength of these relationships for developing strategic partnerships to address the financial challenges of the community and of CIS.

***“The flexibility and support of the school district and at [sic] the school level [sic] is definitely a great benefit.”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

At the school level, relationships among CIS Site Coordinators, school administrators, and teachers are described and collaborative, collegial, and supportive. CIS staff members are school employees and participate as faculty members in the decisions and processes of the school. Students and their parents are very “attached” to CIS staff and teachers who work in the after-school programs.

Efforts are made to reach out to parents and ask them to become involved and knowledgeable about their child’s after-school activities. During the school year, parent activities that involve the child and other family members are offered. Two of the more popular activities include game night where parents and students learn new interactive games, and cooking classes where parents and students cook together. The end-of-year performance and celebration draws parents out to see their children perform.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Putnam County was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Putnam County and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

CIS of Putnam County staff members describe their program as a community resource for children who do not have the basic support needed to perform well in school. They see their work as advocating for children much in the way that is described in Bill Milliken’s book, *The Last Dropout*. Board and community members view CIS as a much needed partner in ensuring that students are able to fully participate in all school activities—not hampered by poor health, lack of clothing, or in need of resources such as housing, electricity, or a place to be safe.

***“If you (a child) are hungry, you can’t learn; if your teeth are rotten and falling out, without that service you can’t learn; if you don’t have glasses... CIS provides solutions.”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

Parents describe CIS as a support for families that provide opportunities to improve parental involvement so as to improve the academic, social, and behavior skills of their children. Students see CIS as safe place to be after school where they can finish homework and explore a wide range of interests.

### Future Vision for CIS

CIS of Putnam County is at a critical stage in its development. Site visit interviewees pointed to two significant and looming changes the organization is immediately facing: 1) the final year of programming for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CIS after-school program and 2) the loss of state funding which supports the administrative operations. With these two issues on the horizon, everyone’s attention is focused on increased solvency and fiscal stability for CIS of Putnam County.

***“..we must figure out a way to get both things and money...”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

From the Board to the students and families participating in CIS programs, all respondents hope that CIS will grow and thrive in order to improve and meet the needs of underserved students. They point to greatly increased academic success of participating students, improved attendance, and increased community involvement in the success of the school.

CIS administrative staff and others are working together to generate greater awareness county- and state-wide so that this program and others like it can continue in Florida.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

Two areas of needed support were repeatedly mentioned. One focused on awareness of the important role that Communities In Schools plays in Putnam County. It is assumed that as more potential financial supporters understand the costs of not having CIS, they will help find the needed financial resources to continue. The school district has already provided in-kind space for the next school year for administrative staff. The resourcefulness of CIS staff and the Putnam County community are viewed as significant assets to create new avenues of support.

A second area is increased parental support of the CIS program—not necessarily financial support but greater participation in and advocacy for continuation of CIS programming. Parents are extremely grateful for the positive changes that have occurred for individual students. Their increased involvement is viewed as necessary for continuation of the program.

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

Board and CIS staff members as well as school administrators indicated that the best recommendation they could make to other organizations like CIS would be to secure the services of an “awesome” Executive Director, like the Executive Director for CIS of Putnam County. CIS staff suggested that new Site Coordinators visit other CIS schools to determine ways to achieve success, meeting with students, staff, and parents. Finally, developing strong relationships with community stakeholders was viewed as important for sustaining the work of CIS.

***“The best thing that an organization can do is to be proactive and creative in the ways it solicits resources—save whenever possible and manage funds and reduce expenses when possible.”***

*-CIS of Putnam County Staff*

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics		
	James A. Long Elementary School	Riverbreeze Elementary School
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2007</b>		
Reading Proficiency (%)	57.5	60.9
Math Proficiency (%)	53.1	53.5
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	55.3	57.2
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>		
All Students	57.5	60.9
White	70.5	73.5
Black	40.3	52.9
Hispanic	n.a.	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	n.a.
Female	60.0	60.3
Male	54.9	61.3
Economically Disadvantaged	51.0	57.0
Non-Disadvantaged	77.8	73.2
English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	27.4	40.0
Non-Disabled Students	66.5	66.7
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>		
All Students	53.1	53.5
White	62.4	64.2
Black	41.5	47.8
Hispanic	n.a.	n.a.
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.
Multi-Racial	n.a.	n.a.
Female	53.5	52.2
Male	52.1	54.2
Economically Disadvantaged	47.6	49.6
Non-Disadvantaged	69.5	65.8
English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners	n.a.	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	27.2	40.9
Non-Disabled Students	60.7	56.8
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>		
Enrollment	524	533

Students Per Teacher	14.6	15.7
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>		
White	56.1	30.4
Black	42.0	66.2
Hispanic	1.5	3.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4	0.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0	0.0
Economically Disadvantaged	77.9	83.1
<b>NCLB Information - 2007</b>		
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	No	Yes
<b>School Facts</b>		
Address	1400 Old Jacksonville Highway	1100 Husson Avenue
City or Town	Palatka	Palatka
County	Putnam	Putnam
District	Putnam County School District	Putnam County School District
Telephone Number	(386)329-0575	(386)329-0562
Urban Status	Rural, Outside CBSA	Small Town
Grade Levels Served	PreK-5	PreK-5

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

**Case Study Profile:  
CIS of San Antonio, Texas**

## Table of Contents

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- 1.2. Affiliate Information

### **2. Methodology**

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- 3.1. Affiliate
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- 4.1. Vision/Plans
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## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – San Antonio, Texas

#### Communities In Schools of Texas

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in the early 1970s, CIS has now grown into the nation's largest stay-in-school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including Texas.

Communities In Schools of Texas accomplishes this by coordinating community resources in local schools. The Texas CIS program (CIS State Office) is managed by the Texas Education Agency, through 26 local programs (affiliates) across the state, including CIS of San Antonio. CIS Texas provides services in more than 600 schools in 100 school districts, serving more than 330,000 students.<sup>4</sup>

#### Profile of San Antonio

San Antonio is a Large City in South Central Texas.<sup>5</sup> More information about San Antonio's demographics is presented in Exhibit 1.

### 1.2 Affiliate Information

Communities In Schools of San Antonio was established in 1985 by a concerned group of citizens and business leaders to address the city's high dropout rate. The founders' vision was to provide a positive environment for at-risk students, ensuring their access to all educational opportunities, social services, and support services. By developing positive self-esteem,

#### Exhibit 1: Demographic Information – San Antonio<sup>1</sup>

<b>Population</b>	
2000 census	1,144,649
2006 estimate	1,273,374
<b>Ethnicity Composition (2000)</b>	
White	66.0%
African-American	6.7%
American Indian	0.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino origin <sup>2</sup>	38.7%
<b>Age Composition (2006)</b>	
0-19	30.9%
20-24	7.7%
25-44	29.3%
45-64	21.9%
65 +	10.2%
Median Age	32.6
<b>Gender Composition (2006)</b>	
Male	48.3%
Female	51.7%
<b>Median Income</b>	
per household (2006)	\$40,650
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	
2006	6.8%
<b>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2006)<sup>3</sup></b>	
All Crimes	67
Violent crimes	6
Property crimes	61

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports.

<sup>4</sup> Data are for Fiscal Year 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

confidence, and respect, CIS of San Antonio helps to facilitate the ultimate goal of youth graduating from high school and going on to reach their highest potential as successful citizens, contributors to the community, and full participants in a world-class society. Today, CIS of San Antonio provides services to over 7,000 students in 49 schools in six school districts.

CIS of San Antonio is organized and operated as a non-profit corporation with over 100 full-time employees and 810 volunteers. The total 2007/2008 proposed budget is \$5,990,658. About 67 percent of its revenues come from federal, state, and local government grants and foundations; 17 percent is from school districts; United Way, corporate/fundraising, and other donations make up the remaining 16 percent of the annual budget. The average proposed expense per student is \$881 for 2007/2008.

Most services provided by CIS of San Antonio are targeted Level 2 services for case managed students; however, CIS of San Antonio does provide Level 1 services that are directed toward the entire school (e.g., an anti-bullying program, a “You’ve been caught being great!” initiative). Most case managed students receive individual and/or group counseling or are provided with a mentor. In counseling sessions, students learn many skills, such as learning to control anger, acting respectfully toward others, or avoiding drugs and alcohol.

## **2. Methodology**

As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

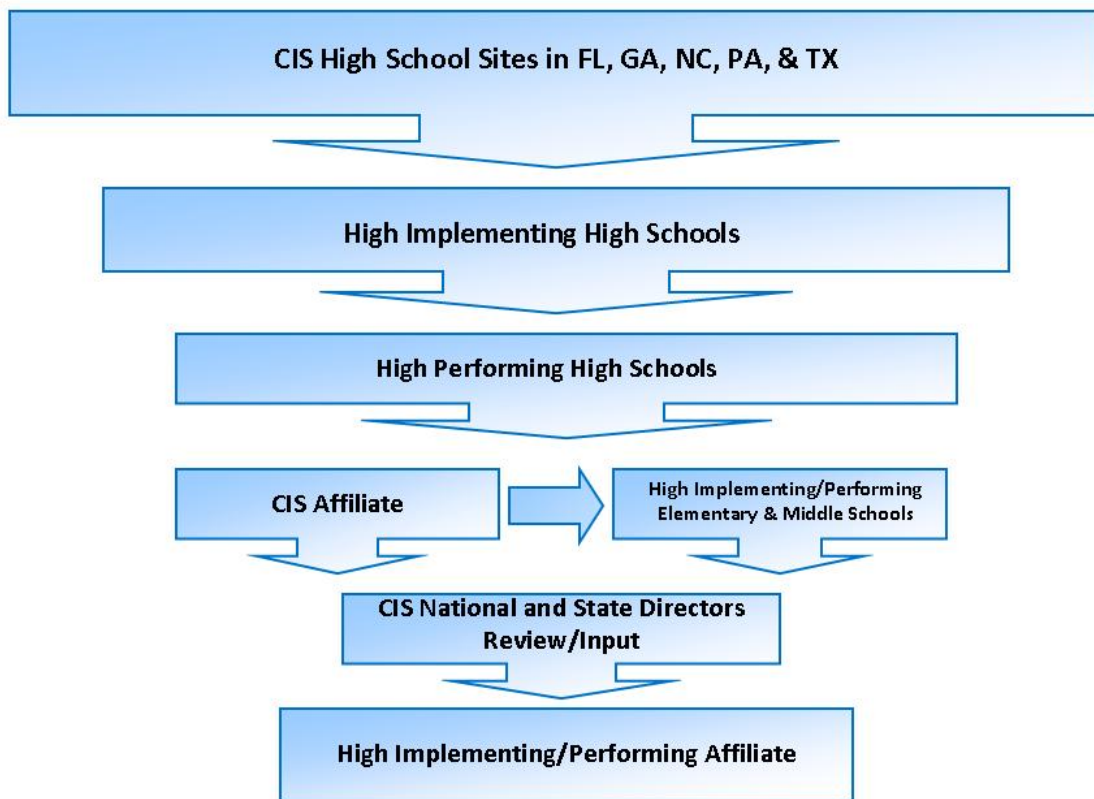
The case study of CIS of San Antonio involved site visits to the affiliate and selected schools served by the affiliate. During the site visit, the evaluation team interviewed key CIS stakeholders (e.g., representatives from the local affiliate, schools, and community partners) and conducted focus groups with elementary, middle, and high school students and parents. Case study protocols, interview guides, and focus group guides targeted CIS processes and outcomes, including service coordination and brokering, assessments, resource allocation, referrals, placement, training, and assets.

### **2.1 Site Selection**

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and

graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of San Antonio was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

The case study was conducted in three schools located in San Antonio, TX (John F. Kennedy High, Wrenn Junior High, and Westside Terrace Elementary School; please see Attachment A for information on each school).<sup>7</sup> Schools in the Edgewood School District report a total student population of 11,906 (Exhibit 3). About 96.5 percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Edgewood ISD public schools have an average student teacher ratio of 15.7:1. This district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the 2006-2007 school year. In 2006-2007, the dropout rate was 4.8 percent.<sup>8</sup> Public schools spent an average of \$8,523 per student in 2006.<sup>9</sup>

### Interviews and Focus Groups

Between May 19<sup>th</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, a total of 80 interviews were conducted on-site. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), and the administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of an elementary, junior high, and high

<b>Exhibit 4: Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	
CIS Affiliate/School Staff	12
School Personnel	15
Community Partners	7
Students and Parents	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

### Exhibit 3: School System Information – San Antonio

<b>Student Population (2006)</b>	
<b>Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)</b>	
Total Enrollment	11,906
Limited English Proficient	19.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	96.5%
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)	15.7:1
<b>2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</b>	
Meeting AYP	No
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)	81.3%
<b>Math Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)	64.6%
<b>Annual Dropout (High School) (2006)</b>	
Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)	4.8%
<b>Graduation Rate (2002)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Edgewood ISD (San Antonio)	42.9%

school participating in CIS. Student and parent focus groups were also conducted at these schools, with a combined total participation of 46 students and parents. A breakdown of interview participants by their roles is presented in Exhibit 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cumulative Promotion Index (Urban Inst.). Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

<sup>7</sup> The case study was conducted in two schools located in Edgewood ISD, and one school in Northside ISD. Statistics from Edgewood are reported here to best represent the case study schools.

<sup>8</sup> Source: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/dropcomp\\_district\\_supp\\_2006-07.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/dropcomp_district_supp_2006-07.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Source: www.SchoolDataDirect.org.

## 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

### 3.1 Affiliate

#### Leadership

One of the most important factors that Case Managers attributed to CIS's success is the dedication and experience of the executive staff at CIS of San Antonio. The Executive Director was praised by the entire leadership team as playing a vital part in the team's success. She has been the Executive Director of CIS of San Antonio for 10 years.

She has a Masters Degree in Counseling and her Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) license, two recommended qualifications for Case Managers. In fact, she was a Case Manager herself at one time. She has been with CIS of San Antonio for 17 years and has worked her way up through many positions at CIS -- Case Manager, Site Coordinator, Program Director, and finally, Executive Director. She believes that her direct experience in these roles makes her a better leader.

The Executive Director praised the leadership team at CIS of San Antonio and said that they are one of the primary reasons that CIS of San Antonio is able to achieve so much. She stated that they are experts in their fields, and they all work and make decisions together, with her acting as "a coach, a cheerleader" for the group. The leadership staff, in turn, praised her effusively and said that they were very lucky to have her as the Executive Director.

One indication of the Executive Director's success is the financial stability of CIS of San Antonio. In her 10 years as CIS Executive Director, she has improved the financial stability of CIS of San Antonio dramatically, increasing their revenues to approximately 5.4 million per year. She has also worked to enhance the visibility of CIS in the media and hopes to continue to improve visibility over time.

#### Planning and Development

CIS of San Antonio has a clear strategic plan. The plan is formed by the leadership team, the Executive Director, members of the Board of Directors, and selected field staff and brought to

the full Board for approval. The Board of Directors then use their expertise to help see the plan brought to action.

CIS of San Antonio has built an excellent reputation among the school districts (CIS of San Antonio services 15 independent school districts). CIS is present in over 50 elementary, middle, and high schools. Schools typically contact CIS of San Antonio and request to be a part of the program, and, at present, there is a significant waiting list.

There are several factors that influence CIS of San Antonio's decision to enter a new school. First, to be an eligible campus, the school must have a high percentage of students who can be classified as "at-risk." Second, CIS of San Antonio tries to ensure a "feeder pattern" of entry into CIS, so that if children attend an elementary school with CIS, they will then attend a middle school and a high school with CIS. School districts that already implement CIS on their campuses are prioritized over those that do not implement CIS. Ultimately, however, the largest factor in choosing new schools is funding. Typically, schools pay a percentage of CIS's operating costs, and CIS San Antonio pays for the rest through grants and other funds. At present, CIS is spending about 96 percent of its incoming revenue on its existing programs. Thus, they are not able to serve as many schools as they would like. However, if a school district is able to fund CIS entirely, the executive committee may decide to put CIS in that school.

One of CIS of San Antonio's goals, then, is to obtain more funding and larger grants to be able to expand the program in breadth and depth. They would like to be in as many schools as possible and also increase the richness of services they offer and the number of students they can serve at each school.

CIS is implemented differently at each school, depending on the school's needs as determined by the annual campus needs assessment. CIS of San Antonio receives many small grants that have particular foci (e.g., increased parent involvement, drug and alcohol abuse prevention) that are then targeted to particular schools, based on results from the needs assessments.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors of CIS of San Antonio is comprised of several different committees, including resource development, communications, program, government relations, and finance and audit. The Board members are all experts in their fields. Many are executives at national and international corporations based in San Antonio, as well as representatives from local universities, elected officials, and judges.

In addition to serving on committees and being ambassadors for CIS in the community, Board members each adopt a CIS school and frequently interact with the CIS Case Manager, students, administrators, and other personnel at the school to make sure that their needs are being met. A leadership team member described the board as, "really involved and rolling up their sleeves."

A challenge for the Board noted by several of the leadership team is fundraising. They note that many Board members are uncomfortable asking for funds for CIS, but that is a very important need. Despite this challenge, there is consensus that the Board of Directors is committed, active, and an asset to CIS of San Antonio.

## Resources/Funding

Obtaining funding and other resources is a key factor in the continued success and growth of CIS of San Antonio. Their annual revenue is currently 5.4 million dollars. They obtain 29 percent of their revenue from the state government (the Texas Education Agency, or TEA). The rest of their funds come from federal and local governments, private foundations, and donations from corporations or individuals.

***“I believe that once they participate, they will want to know more about our organization. Later on, they will be a donor. It’s all connected.”***

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

Additionally, CIS of San Antonio has several large-scale donation drives. One such event is the “Stuff the Bus” initiative. In the summer, yellow school buses are parked in the lots of all the local Wal-Mart stores and the community is challenged to “stuff the bus” with school supplies. In 2007, the event was extremely successful, raising over \$185,000 in supplies. Additionally, the event

generates significant media coverage, which increases awareness of CIS. The leadership team also noted the importance of getting individuals and corporations involved with CIS at any level (for example, volunteering for an event).

Important factors in obtaining grants were noted by other members of the leadership team. Staff members try to choose grants carefully and only apply for the grants that are a good fit for CIS. Community partners that work with CIS praised this consistency, noting that many non-profits change their focus based on the grants that they receive. This consistent focus allows CIS to show success, which often leads to additional resources.

At the school level, Case Managers are encouraged to ask local businesses in the area for donations of time, resources, or expertise. They note that both large and small businesses are equally likely to give. One Case Manager drives to local businesses and organizations with a pre-written donation letter with a tax form stapled to it. (S)he then gives information about CIS and asks for donations. “They’re more than willing to give if you ask,” (s)he says.

CIS of San Antonio recognizes the need to secure additional funds and is always looking for ways to increase grants (in dollar amount and length) and donations by corporations. One challenge is that corporate funders often want to give material goods (e.g., computers) instead of money. CIS’s biggest need, by far, is money for salaries for their program staff.



## Marketing

CIS of San Antonio is currently trying to increase awareness of the CIS brand. Press releases are sent to local media outlets and through large initiatives (such as the “Stuff the Bus” initiative). Building relationships with media partners is an important part of raising awareness. Last year, CIS of San Antonio hired a marketing company to do a large scale media campaign. Although it was expensive, the executive committee believed that the attention the media coverage brought to CIS was well worth the money.

***“We used to be one of the best kept secrets in the city. We hired a marketing company and it cost us but the return has been one-hundred fold. Now we’re in the newspaper, we’re on TV. Now people say, ‘I’ve heard so many good things about you.’”***

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

CIS of San Antonio has many marketing materials that they frequently distribute. They have a colorful brochure with general information, an annual report, a custom spiral bound press document with a fact sheet and representative press releases, and other materials tailored to different audiences. They create most of their materials in-house, but professionally print larger jobs that are not tied to a short-term schedule. To save money, most of these marketing materials do not have dates on them (so they do not have to be re-created every year) and are small enough that they can be sent with bulk postage. In addition, the website ([www.cissa.org](http://www.cissa.org)) is used for

marketing and is kept current with information on the successes of the organization.

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

Partnering with organizations in the local community is an integral part of CIS of San Antonio. They are currently partnered with 50-60 local and national organizations, including YWCA, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the City of San Antonio. Many organizations have partnered with the affiliate for quite some time; of those interviewed, the mean time was four years (range = .5 years – 10 years).

***“I would like to see the Case Manager stay here for awhile. We have a really good working relationship, and someone new would be an unknown.”***

*-Community Partner*

Partner organizations provide needed services to CIS students, including enrichment and counseling. Some organizations also provide mentors to CIS students. This relationship is mutually beneficial because CIS refers the students that the partner organizations need to operate, and the organizations provide the services that CIS needs. Partner organizations also mentioned enjoying interacting with CIS staff, and described them as professional, helpful, and friendly.

Case Managers said that networking with other CIS staff members and the community was crucial to creating new partnerships with organizations. Some executive staff members are also members of these partner organizations, which gives them the opportunity to advocate for CIS.



Once potential partner organizations are found, CIS staff cited the importance of creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailing exactly what services the partner organization will provide and the rights and responsibilities of both organizations. These MOUs improve clarity and communication and reduce the potential for conflict.

To maintain relationships with partner organizations, Case Managers try to ensure that they have positive contact with the partner organizations and show appreciation for them in small ways (for example, calling the partner organization if a group meeting will be cancelled due to a fire drill). The case managers also must be professional and be sure to follow through on their agreements. Building relationships with partner organizations takes time, and several interviewees recommended that Case Managers remain in one school for at least two years for this reason.

Building relationships is of key importance to school personnel. The affiliate leadership team recommended that the Case Managers and Site Coordinators interact as often as possible with the principal and have a weekly meeting with school staff. Creating strong relationships with school staff often makes the Case Managers' jobs easier and also can result in the school advocating for CIS in the face of budget cuts. Additionally, positive interactions with principals and school boards can create opportunities at new schools.

### **Recruitment/Retention**

CIS of San Antonio has high standards for recruiting staff. Although a Masters degree in Counseling or Social Work is not required, it is encouraged. Many Case Managers (including all of the Case Managers interviewed) have Masters Degrees. Additionally, potential applicants must have worked with children in some capacity and possess high levels of maturity and an ability to work independently.

***“Our greatest resource is our staff. We’re constantly trying to find more money to pay them, because they are way underpaid.”***

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

Staff retention is improving at CIS of San Antonio. The Case Managers that were interviewed averaged 4.2 years with CIS. With the exception of one member, the leadership team had all been with CIS for at least eight years. The majority of the leadership team had worked their way up the organization; one even started as an intern with CIS. Indeed, recruiting interns to be full-time staff (typically starting out as Case Managers) was cited as a best practice by several members of the leadership team.

CIS of San Antonio believes that they have increased Case Manager retention in recent years due to creating four different Case Manager Levels (1, 2, 3, and 4). New Case Managers (Case Manager 1) are required to shadow a Case Manager 3 or 4 before they are allowed to work on their own. In addition, there are significant increases in pay at each level.

Salary is a key component to hiring and retaining staff. Case Manager 1 salaries are low, and thus it can be hard to attract people. In addition, some people use CIS to get hours for their LPC licenses and move on. Retention rates increase as the salary increases at Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4.

CIS of San Antonio offers incentives other than salary to its Case Managers. Case Managers receive extensive vacation time and good benefits. In addition, the leadership team tries to support the Case Managers in any way that they can. They create an atmosphere that is almost family-like in its supportiveness. Case Managers reported spending time with other Case Managers on the weekends, asking them to chaperone field trips, and calling them when they had questions or needed new ideas.

Additionally, CIS Site Coordinators provide as much support as they can to their Case Managers. When they are first hired, Site Coordinators spend one day per week on-site with them, helping them do anything that they need. Even after they have worked with CIS for a long period of time, Site Coordinators are always available to help. In addition, Site Coordinators try to stay in touch with their Case Managers regularly via e-mail. This added support can have a strong impact on retention rates.

## Training

CIS of San Antonio places significant emphasis on training. At the beginning of the school year, Case Managers attend a three-day staff development training. In addition, the affiliate gives a handbook to each Case Manager covering policies and ethical issues, as well as practical information (e.g., how to create a campus plan, how to work with mentors).

*“They are always available if we have questions or anything like that. Our central office—I think that’s why CIS is such a successful non-profit agency.”*

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

There are also mandatory monthly trainings for Case Managers at the CIS of San Antonio Central Office covering specific topics. These trainings are often linked to events in the community, such as trainings on gang violence or cutting. In addition to formal trainings, Case Managers are encouraged to discuss any problems or questions that they have with their Site Coordinators. If the Site Coordinators are unable to answer questions, they discuss the questions with the Program Director or the Human Resource Director. The result is an effective, supportive network.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

CIS of San Antonio carefully monitors the performance of its students. Data are collected throughout the school year, including information on academics, attendance, number of discipline referrals, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores, graduation rates and behavior (using a behavior checklist given to teachers). Case Managers use professional judgment to evaluate other areas of student performance (e.g., self esteem, attitude). These

data, along with data on services provided, are entered into CIS of San Antonio's own database and the Texas Education Agency (TEA)'s database. Having dual data entry is expensive and time consuming but is necessary because the TEA database does not meet all the needs of the various funders. Data are regularly analyzed by two leadership team members, and reports are created and sent to funding agencies when needed.

### Relationships with State Office

The CIS State Office is run by TEA, but is not an office with dedicated CIS staff—the employees of the agency work on various other programs. However, they provide 29 percent of CIS's yearly budget.

## 3.2 School-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

CIS of San Antonio's schools offer different services based on student need. At the beginning of each year, a needs assessment for each school is performed by talking to all stakeholders – principals, teachers, parents, students, and staff, including the cafeteria workers. CIS Case Managers create a summary of the stakeholder's perspectives and identify high, moderate, and low needs based on the six components of the CIS program (e.g., enrichment, counseling). In addition, they take into consideration the student populations they are serving. For example, a middle school implementing CIS has a school-wide, anti-bullying program and a high school CIS program has a teen pregnancy/parenting initiative.

*"When you sit down and say, 'What do you think could be different around here?' students will give you ideas."*

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

Concerns of parents, students, teachers, and administrators fall into three overall categories: academic, social, and basic needs. Academic concerns include grades, TAKS scores, future education (e.g., college or trade school), and basic skills (e.g., reading). Social concerns include core values, dealing with peer pressure, emotional control, gang violence, drugs, and relating with others. Finally, basic needs concerns include lack of school supplies, food, clothing, and other necessities. CIS adjusts its programming based on the needs of the school. For example, all schools that were interviewed provided school supplies, but only one school provided clothing.

### Identification and Referral

Students can be referred to CIS in several different ways. Any school staff member can refer a student, guidance counselors and teachers are particularly active. Parents can also request CIS services for their children and many do so after hearing about positive experiences friends or family members have had with the program. Finally, students can self-refer to CIS. Many of the

students who participated in the focus groups reported joining CIS because their friends were involved.

Once students are referred, Case Managers require their parents to fill out a packet of information, including information on demographics and family status. If the student is eligible for CIS services (at the schools in the case study, over 90% of students were eligible) and there is room in the Case Manager's caseload, that student is enrolled. In some instances, students are helped with a particular problem they are having but are not case managed.

### **Programs and Services**

Students involved in CIS receive key services based on the "five basics" of CIS. The services are provided either by the CIS Case Manager or by the community partners (see "Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development"). Most services are targeted to case managed students (Level 2); however, Level 1 services are also provided (e.g., an anti-bullying program, a "You've been caught being great!" initiative).

### ***Supportive Guidance***

One of the key programmatic features of CIS of San Antonio is guidance and counseling of students. Most case managed students receive individual and/or group counseling or were provided with a mentor. In counseling sessions, students learn many skills, such as controlling anger, acting respectfully toward others, or avoiding drugs and alcohol. Other CIS services are discussed below.

*Health and Human Services.* CIS of San Antonio provides basic needs assistance to its case managed and non case managed students (all students, for example, can come to the CIS office for school supplies). Some CIS schools offer clothing and food. They also offer assistance with utility and medical bills.

*Parental and Family Involvement.* Parental involvement at the schools CIS serves is low, but CIS's efforts to draw families into the school have been quite successful. Many parents of children in CIS volunteer at the school or stop by to talk to the Case Managers. At one school, "cafecitos"—parent get-togethers with coffee, pastries, and presentations of important topics—were well attended.

*Career Awareness/Employment.* CIS of San Antonio schools offer career fairs, speakers, and job shadowing programs for their students. In addition, CIS provides many students with mentors who encourage them in their career aspirations.

*Enrichment.* Enrichment activities are an important part of CIS, such as volunteering at a local food bank. The enrichment activities are very popular with students, as evidenced during the focus groups.

*Educational Enhancement.* Students can also come to CIS for help with schoolwork. Many who do so report higher motivation to do well in school. One student in a focus group said that he “would’ve given up on school” if not for CIS. That student now has a scholarship to a 4-year university.

### **Students and Parents**

Students who were interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about CIS. “What’s there not to like?” asked one student. Students stated that they enjoy going to groups, talking to the Case Managers one-on-one, and participating in field trips.

The individual Case Managers are key to CIS’s success. The focus group students all reported liking their Case Managers. Students feel comfortable sharing problems and concerns with them. “They treat everyone like they are important and you get close to them,” reported one student.

***“We love [our Case Manager]! She’s nice, she’s cool, her personality, she’s trustworthy, she’s helpful. She has a good sense of humor. She encourages us to do the right thing and helps us with our problems.”***

*-Student*

***“The kids love it. They would come every day if I let them.”***

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

When asked what they would change about CIS, students replied that they didn’t want anything to change or that they wanted more of CIS’s services – more field trips, more groups, more school supplies and clothes. “I want to add more time! CIS all day!” said one student. Many students wished that there was more physical space for CIS and that

there were more Case Managers. One student suggested that CIS create a student mentorship program, where older CIS students (e.g., 8th graders) would meet with and mentor younger CIS students (e.g., 6th graders).

### **Successes and Challenges**

School personnel reported improved grades, attendance, behavior, self-esteem, and motivation in CIS students. They believe that children enjoy going to CIS and thereby like coming to school more. School staff agreed that one-on-one time with an adult and enrichment activities were helpful to children’s development and were especially necessary in high needs schools.

***“They help you choose the right choices.”***

*-Student*

School staff reported few challenges with CIS. The most significant challenge concerned taking students out of class during core classes to participate in CIS – especially near TAKS test time. Better communication with CIS staff could mitigate these concerns; one teacher said that she would feel better about her students missing class if she knew what her students were doing in the CIS office. Other concerns regarded lack of resources. School personnel thought that there should be more Case Managers at each school and more space for the CIS office. Overall,

teachers and other staff overwhelmingly supported CIS. In fact, many volunteered with the program as mentors or as event staff.

Parents reported that participation in CIS has resulted in significant changes in their children. They reported the same positive changes that school personnel had noted, and, in addition, reported being closer to their children and learning parenting skills because of CIS. Parents also appreciate the basic needs assistance that CIS provides. One parent, for example, received a Thanksgiving dinner basket. Another parent said that her daughter felt much more confident with her new (CIS provided) backpack full of supplies.

***“The value is invaluable. They are a central part of what keeps this school going.”***

*-School Staff*

Parents suggested that CIS market more extensively in the community so that more students could be served. They thought that many parents in need of assistance would be embarrassed

***“One of the problems I had was my daughter being friends with bad students. After CIS, my daughter was quoting statistics to me about drug use! My daughter has become a young lady because of the individual sessions she has had in CIS.”***

*-Parent*

to seek help but if CIS were presented to them, they might sign their children up. They also requested more male Case Managers to serve as role models for their children. They expressed some concern with the amount of paperwork required to sign up for the program. Although the forms are translated into English and Spanish, some of the forms include technical terminology that may be challenging for some parents to understand. Instead of asking for help from CIS staff, these parents might simply throw the forms away.

## **Monitoring and Adjustment**

CIS services are constantly adjusted to meet the desired outcomes. CIS collects data on many factors concerning its students, including grades, attendance, and discipline referrals (See “Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting” above for more information). Observation of student behavior, however, is the key factor in adjusting services. CIS Case Managers, for example, observe groups that community partners facilitate and may change the content – or even cancel the group – based on student reactions. Case Managers also ask their students on a regular basis what they would like to do, and try to follow up to make it happen

At the school level, CIS is not formally monitored by the school administrators, although administrators all believed that CIS was highly successful.

## **Relationships with Key Stakeholders**

Relationships were mentioned by stakeholders at all levels as key to CIS’s mission. In some ways, building relationships between people within the community is the mission of CIS.



At the school level, Case Managers placed a strong emphasis on relationship building with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community partners. The relationships between CIS and all stakeholders were described as warm, friendly, respectful, and open.

***“I can’t talk enough about how important it is to relationship build – with staff, students, and even CIS personnel.”***

*-School Staff*

At the affiliate level, relationships were mentioned by every person on the executive team as crucial to success. The team maintains strong ties to the city of San Antonio, non-profit organizations, corporations, and schools. Every member of CIS of San Antonio emphasized the importance of openness, honesty, and professionalism when interacting with others.

Many members of CIS of San Antonio said that relationships take time to build. It takes some time – especially in communities that lack stability – for people to trust organizations. To that end, there was an important concern of several stakeholders interviewed. Case Managers can be moved to a new school every year. Stakeholders at all levels said that it takes approximately two years for the Case Managers to establish trust in their schools and communities. Thus, the first two years of working at a school are the hardest – and least productive – because Case Managers must spend their time trying to gain this trust. Therefore, stakeholders recommended that Case Managers be encouraged to stay at one school as long as possible.

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of San Antonio was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of San Antonio and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

The CIS of San Antonio staff provided a clear, consistent message on the purpose of CIS. It is a dropout prevention program that gives children the resources (basic needs, social connection, and academic support) to succeed in school. They provide targeted services to at-risk students as well as school-wide services. They bring the community – including non-profit organizations, businesses, parents, and individuals – into the schools that need it most.

***“They understand what you’re going through, they don’t really judge. They can help you get through school and life.”***

*-Student*

Parents and students said that CIS is an organization that helps children and families succeed. Students reported that it is a good place to get help with problems and meet friends. One student said that CIS is “a program that helps you out with whatever you need.”

## Future Vision for CIS

CIS has a good reputation in the City of San Antonio, and an excellent reputation in the schools that it serves. Stakeholders at all levels had similar visions of future goals. The goals fell into three major categories: serving more students, increasing the richness of services offered, and raising awareness of CIS in the community.

The first major goal is serving more students in the San Antonio area. There are two ways of approaching this goal – to have CIS in more schools, or to serve more children at each school. At present, the Case Managers can only serve some of the students who need services. The average caseload for Case Managers is approximately 100 students; many schools in the San Antonio area have 500 or more students (the majority of whom would be considered “at risk.”) CIS of San Antonio is currently trying to ensure that each high school with CIS has at least two Case Managers, and would like to have at least two Case Managers at all schools that CIS currently serves. To meet these goals, CIS of San Antonio will need to increase funding by a significant amount. Indeed, one worry of Case Managers and school staff at individual schools is that they will lose the funding to stay in the schools that they are currently serving. One principal, for example, had a large budget cut in 2007. (S)he had to choose between cutting CIS and cutting other staff and services. The principal reported, “I knew that I wasn’t going to cut CIS because they are too important. So we found the money.”

The second major goal is increasing the richness of services that CIS offers. One member of the leadership team suggested having support staff for the Case Managers, including parent specialists, mental health specialists, and refugee specialists. Students and parents requested more enrichment activities, groups, and field trips. One-on-one interactions were mentioned by students, counselors, and Case Managers as one of the key elements of CIS’s success, and all would like to see the ability for students to have more one-on-one time with Case Managers or other CIS staff members. The ability to follow up with students after graduation – to see if they go on to graduate from four-year colleges and earn higher salaries – would also be helpful for CIS.

The final goal is to raise awareness of CIS in the community. Parents at schools that have CIS are well aware of the program and its benefits, but parents at schools without CIS have often never heard of the organization. A consistent message and focus across all CIS schools in Texas or nationwide would help raise awareness.

***“The superintendent of Northside ISD – the fourth largest district in the state – said most of his problems would be solved if he had CIS in every school. He sees the value and the difference that CIS has made.”***

*-CIS of San Antonio Staff*

***“They are just wonderful. I may be transferring to another Title I school that doesn’t have CIS. I will miss it very much. It’s another place where we can get help, and where our parents can go for help.”***

*-School Staff*



## 4.2 Recommendations

### Support Needed to Improve CIS

CIS of San Antonio staff reported feeling supported by the organization. However, there are a few additional supports that were universally desired. The first was more marketing of CIS – with that marketing reflecting a consistent message and focus – to bring in more funds and more name recognition. The second was more training. Staff at all levels of the organization wanted to learn best practices and get more training on leadership and management. The third was data entry support. CIS of San Antonio recognizes the burden that large amounts of data entry add to its staff’s workload, and would like to lessen that burden by modernizing the systems or adding more support staff.

*“Continue with what they’re doing. I’m pleased with it. If it’s not broke, don’t fix it!”*

*-School Administrator*

School staff and community partners were satisfied with CIS overall, but some mentioned hoping to increase communication between CIS staff and themselves. For example, some teachers requested information on their CIS students so they could integrate that information into the students’ progress reports.

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

When asked to provide advice to a new CIS affiliate, the CIS staff gave two broad types of advice. The first suggestion regarded securing grant money. Two members of the leadership team suggested that consistency was important in securing grant money, and that CIS affiliates should make sure that they understand the rules of the funding sources and don’t try to bend CIS’s services to the grant’s needs. Affiliates may lose money in the short term (i.e., not obtaining certain grants) but will pay off in the long term by being able to demonstrate consistent results. The second suggestion was to maintain strong relationships with people in the schools and in the community. Doing so will create a sense of harmony in the schools and among the CIS staff members, increasing their ability to successfully serve students.

## Attachment A

Individual School Demographics			
	E T Wrenn Middle School	John F Kennedy High School	Westwood Terrace Elementary School
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2006</b>			
Reading Proficiency (%)	70.0	81.9	86.0
Math Proficiency (%)	51.3	45.8	83.3
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	60.7	64.3	84.6
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	70.0	81.9	86.0
White	n.a.	100.0	100.0
Black	92.3	80.0	n.a.
Hispanic	69.0	81.6	85.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Female	77.2	84.9	87.0
Male	63.3	78.9	84.7
Economically Disadvantaged	72.4	82.3	85.5
Non-Disadvantaged	58.6	67.8	87.3
English Language Learners	39.9	39.0	60.0
Non-English Language Learners	70.8	84.3	85.6
Non-English Language Learners 1st Year	82.4	100.0	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners 2nd Year	74.0	75.0	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	50.1	61.5	58.7
Non-Disabled Students	70.4	82.9	87.8
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	70.4	82.2	86.3
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2006</b>			
All Students	51.3	45.8	83.3
White	n.a.	57.0	90.7
Black	76.9	n.a.	n.a.
Hispanic	50.9	45.8	84.6

## Individual School Demographics

	E T Wrenn Middle School	John F Kennedy High School	Westwood Terrace Elementary School
Asian/Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
American Indian/Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Female	50.4	45.2	83.7
Male	52.4	46.6	84.0
Economically Disadvantaged	53.2	46.3	83.7
Non-Disadvantaged	42.1	39.8	88.1
English Language Learners	28.7	20.2	86.0
Non-English Language Learners	50.0	47.6	84.2
Non-English Language Learners 1st Year	77.9	30.0	n.a.
Non-English Language Learners 2nd Year	79.0	35.9	n.a.
Students with Disabilities	27.8	42.1	71.5
Non-Disabled Students	52.1	45.6	86.2
Migrant	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Non-Migrant	51.6	46.1	84.3
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>			
Students Per Teacher	14.6	12.6	14.2
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>			
Enrollment (#)	624	1,492	708
White	0.3	1.2	5.4
Black	2.7	0.7	3.8
Hispanic	97.0	97.9	89.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.1	0.8
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0	0.1	0.3
Economically Disadvantaged	84.5	100.0	90.5
English Language Learners	12.2	8.1	21.2
Students with Disabilities	13.5	16.4	15.0
<b>NCLB Information - 2006</b>			
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	No	Yes	Yes
<b>School Facts</b>			

## Individual School Demographics

	<b>E T Wrenn Middle School</b>	<b>John F Kennedy High School</b>	<b>Westwood Terrace Elementary School</b>
Address	627 South Acme Road	1922 South General McMullen Drive	7615 Bronco Lane
City or Town	San Antonio	San Antonio	San Antonio
County	Bexar	Bexar	Bexar
District	Edgewood ISD	Edgewood ISD	Northside ISD
Telephone Number	(210)444-8475	(210)444-8040	(210)397-0300
Urban Status	Large City	Large City	Large City
Grade Levels Served	6-8	9-12	PreK-5

## **Communities In Schools National Evaluation**

### **Case Study Profile: CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania**

## Table of Contents

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- 1.2. Affiliate Information

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### **4. Future Direction**

- 4.1. Vision/Plans
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## 1. Description of Affiliate

### 1.1 Demographics – Southwest Pennsylvania

#### Communities In Schools of Pennsylvania

Communities In Schools champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in 1977, CIS has now grown into the nation’s largest stay-in school network, serving just over two million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 states across the United States, including Pennsylvania.

Communities In Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA), the state CIS organization, utilizes the power of partnerships to serve students, schools, and communities. Established in 1994, CISPA currently encompasses five local CIS affiliates in 97 program schools serving over 15,185 students throughout Pennsylvania. Through the five local affiliates, CIS of Pennsylvania provides and allocates resources and services to communities seeking to improve outcomes for students and schools, as well as support in developing programs and services to combat the problems of school failure and dropout.

#### Profile of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania, which provides Level 1 and Level 2 services to schools in over seven school districts and one independent academy, is one of them. The case study was conducted

#### Exhibit 1: Demographic Information of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>

<b>Population</b>	
2000 census	369,993
2006 estimate	366,440
<b>Ethnicity (2006)</b>	
White	96.0%
African-American	2.3%
American Indian	0.01%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino origin (2000) <sup>2</sup>	1.0%
<b>Age Composition (2006)</b>	
0-19	22.4%
20-24	5.9%
25-44	24.3%
45-64	29.4%
65 +	18.0%
Median Age	43.3
<b>Gender Composition (2006)</b>	
Male	48.5%
Female	51.5%
<b>Median Income</b>	
per household (2006)	43,617
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	
2006	4.9%
<b>Crime Index Rate (per 1,000) (2007)</b>	
Total	63.7
Violent Crimes	6
Property Crimes	57.7

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race, so they are also included in applicable race categories. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

in two high schools in Belle Vernon Area School District and Yough School District in Westmoreland County.

The geographic status of Belle Vernon Area School District is listed by the U.S. Census as Urban Fringe of a Large City, and Yough School District is listed as Rural.<sup>3</sup> As of 2006, there were 366,440 people, 150,323 households, and 100,673 families residing in the county (Exhibit 1).<sup>4</sup> The average household size is 2.37.

## 1.2 CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania (PA) was incorporated and received the designation of a 501(c)(3) in 1989 after a group of educators, business members, and civic-minded community members came together with Uniontown School District in an effort to provide dropout prevention services for their at-risk students. Today, through its twenty-six local schools, CIS of Southwest PA provides services to twenty-two schools in fifteen school districts. Core programs include on-site academic and behavioral assistance through mentoring, tutoring, and homework assistance clubs; career awareness and preparation; self-esteem and behavioral modification workshops; intergenerational and summer programs; after-school educational programs; alternative education; and services for pregnant and parenting teens.

There are thirty-nine members of the CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania Board. Staff include one Executive Director, one Administrative Assistant, one Accountant, one Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Program Supervisor, twenty-three Project Coordinators, seven Success Academy staff, one Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program Supervisor, and thirty-two volunteers.

The total 2007/2008 annual operating budget is \$1,144,422. About twenty-four percent of the funding received by CIS of Southwest PA is from federal and state government, 62 percent from school districts, and the remaining funding is from grants from non-profits, corporate contributions, and other miscellaneous funding sources. The average expense per student is about \$584.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

<sup>4</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2006 American Community Survey.



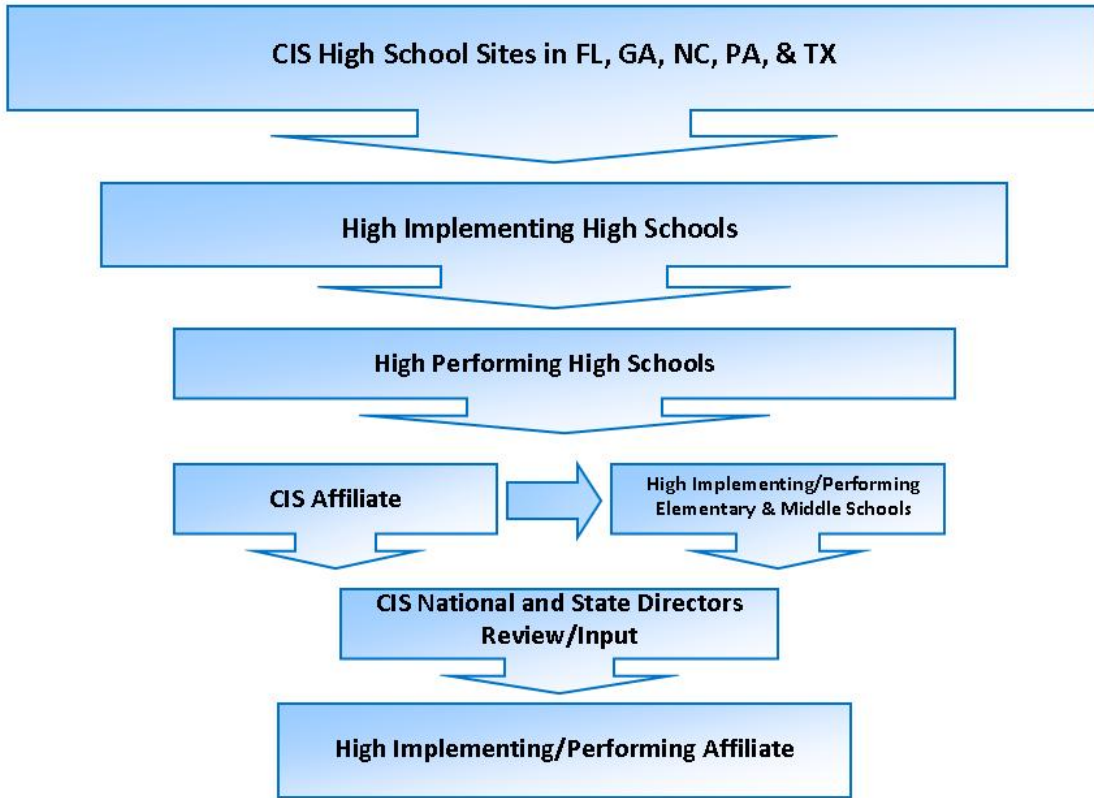
## 2. Methodology

As part of its national mixed method evaluation, ICF International conducted eight case studies to understand the processes that contribute to a successful CIS affiliate and school. Each case study examined a different affiliate.

### 2.1 Site Selection

Eight case study sites were selected from five of the states targeted for the school-level outcomes study in the National Evaluation (FL, GA, NC, PA, and TX). Schools were selected by their levels of CIS implementation and performance, as determined by the school-level study: if schools adhered closely to the CIS model - conducting needs assessments, site operations plans, evidence-based service delivery, and service monitoring and adjustment - they were considered high implementing CIS schools. High implementing high schools were then chosen on the basis of their performance level: if, based on the school-level study, CIS high implementing high schools reported meaningful, positive changes in outcomes such as promoting power and graduation, they were considered high performing. Next, high implementing/high performing elementary and middle schools were selected from the CIS affiliate corresponding to each selected high school. Specific focus was also given to ensure a mix of urban, rural, and suburban affiliates, an equal representation from participating states, and a mix of academic and behavioral program services. Finally, CIS National and local state directors were enlisted to review the selected affiliates and schools and suggest alternatives if necessary. Once the affiliate was on board, the schools were reviewed and finalized. In some cases, primarily due to scheduling, schools identified by the evaluation team could not be included in the case study. Therefore, an assessment of whether a school was high implementing/high performing was made by the affiliate. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania was identified through this process. The site selection model is presented in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2: CIS Case Study Site Selection Model**



## 2.2 Site Visits

### Schools Visited

The case study was conducted in two schools located in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania (Yough High School and Belle Vernon High School; see Attachment A for individual school demographics and descriptions). Belle Vernon Area school district has a total student population of 2,899; Yough school district totals 2,516 students (Exhibit 3). Twenty-eight percent of the student population in Belle Vernon Area school district and 33.6 percent of students in Yough school district are economically disadvantaged. The student-teacher ratio in Yough school district averages 16.8:1, while the student-teacher ratio in Belle Vernon school district averages 18.8:1. Both Yough school district and Belle Vernon school district had a graduation rate of over 80 percent in 2002. Additionally, Westmoreland County's annual dropout rate in 2006 was less than 1.2 percent.

### Exhibit 3: School Information<sup>5</sup>

<b>Student Population (2006)</b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	2,899
Yough School District	2,516
<b>% of Economically Disadvantaged (2006)</b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	28.0%
Yough School District	33.6%
<b>Student /Teacher Ratio</b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	18.8:1
Yough School District	16.8:1
<b>2006-07 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	5 (100%)
Yough School District	5 (100%)
<b>Reading/ ELA Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	70.6%
Yough School District	68.3%
<b>Math Proficiency (%) (2006)</b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	70.4%
Yough School District	66.2%
<b>Annual Dropout (High School) (2006)<sup>7</sup></b>	
Westmoreland County	<1.2%
<b>Graduation Rate (2002)<sup>8</sup></b>	
Belle Vernon Area School District	80.1%
Yough School District	86.7%

### Interviews and Focus Groups

On May 14<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, a total of 16 interviews were conducted at CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania. Interviews were conducted with affiliate staff (i.e., Board of Directors, Executive Director, Financial Officer, Program Director, and Site Coordinators), administrators (i.e., principals/vice-principals), support staff, and teachers of two high schools participating in CIS. Two student focus groups were also conducted at these schools, with a combined

### Exhibit 4: Number of Participants

CIS Staff and Board of Directors	8
School Personnel	6
Student Focus Groups	18
Community Partners	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

<sup>5</sup> Source: www. SchoolDataDirect.org.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>8</sup> Cumulative Promotion Index (Urban Institute). Source: www. SchoolDataDirect.org.

total participation of 18 students.

### 3. Findings

This section describes the findings and themes from the in-depth case study. The results are organized by affiliate- and school-level information. The affiliate-level section discusses leadership; planning and development; the Board of Directors; resources and funding; marketing; partnerships and key stakeholder development; recruitment and retention; training; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and relationship with the state office. The school-level section discusses needs assessment; identification and referral; programs and services; monitoring and adjustment; and relationships with stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Affiliate

##### Leadership

Strong leadership is a critical factor in successfully managing the Communities In Schools affiliate. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania, which provides Level 1 and Level 2 services in public schools as well as an independent academy, feels that in order to be a successful affiliate, it is essential to have dedicated leaders with a vision for the future, skills at networking, and an ability to identify and apply for all existing grant opportunities.

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania's Executive Director has been with the affiliate for 15 years. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Social Science and Social Studies, as well as a K-12 teaching certification. She believes that her previous career choices – as a teacher for over two decades, an executive director for a non-profit organization, and a program manager for a hospice – have helped her gain the valuable experience needed to lead CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania.

As a school teacher, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania's Executive Director felt that there was something she could do to impact a greater number of students. She did not realize what that was until she came upon Communities In Schools. At that moment, it became clear that "Everything leading up to this has prepared me for this job. And I love it."

##### Planning and Development

When selecting schools for a CIS program, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania involves all parties, including school administration and personnel, superintendents, parents, and community organizations. They feel it is important to research the schools' needs, and they tend to look at dropout rates and go where CIS is most needed on that basis. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania gains the trust of schools and districts by sharing past successes and demonstrating how CIS can benefit the schools. This strategy has enabled them to expand into new counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and has prompted districts to approach them when looking for a solution to school issues.

As part of the planning process, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania also reviews their policy and procedure manual annually, making revisions when necessary. The affiliate currently has a strategic plan and an annual operations plan in place. They identify and address staff needs, plan community events for parents, and volunteer with other community organizations. They feel that being involved in the community and having personal contact with the region they serve is one of the most important parts of the planning and development process. By getting to know their community, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania is able to quickly identify areas of need and solutions to common challenges facing the children and families they serve.

### Board of Directors

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania's Board of Directors is truly interested in helping kids succeed. They are very involved in the community and very active in their role as Board members. They are responsible for contributing to the success of CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania through financial donations and community service. The Board is also responsible for promoting CIS in the community; they do so by inviting community members to functions and fundraisers held by CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania, as well as by informing other organizations of the CIS mission. Additionally, the CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania Board of Directors has formal policies in place for personnel management and fiscal accountability.

***"[We've] been blessed with a wonderful Board of Directors."***

*-CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania  
Staff*

### Resources/Funding

Funds from the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board (WIB) account for about half of all CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania funding. The remaining funds come from foundation grants, individual donations, and school district budgets. Since the amount of money that WIB receives from the state is reduced each year, the percentage of funds CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania receives from WIB also decreases. In order to compensate for this decline in funding, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff have developed several strategies regarding identification of resources. These strategies include:

- *Being aware of potential funding sources* – Since budgets can be cut with little advance warning, it is beneficial to know of other places to look for funds.
- *Developing relationships with people* – A personal touch goes a long way. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff have gone out and knocked on doors to get funding.
- *Presenting statistical data to funders* – CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania shares the success of the program with their funders, including the 98-100 percent graduation rate, 85-88 percent attendance rate, and approximately 88 percent improvement in student behavior.

- *Lobbying with the Department of Education for a line item in the State budget* – CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania is hoping that the CIS state office can accomplish this goal in the future, in order to secure long-term funding.

## Marketing

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff market the program in a variety of ways, mainly through newspaper stories, word-of-mouth, and charity events. Whenever possible, the affiliate tries to get stories about its programs published in local newspapers, although it was noted that it is difficult to get continuous, consistent coverage through newspapers alone. Affiliate staff also hold numerous meetings with stakeholders and potential funders in the community. The affiliate also holds a major fundraising event each year, and “saturates the market” with advertising to ensure a good turnout. Persistence and repetition were noted as effective strategies when marketing any event.

Most affiliate programs are known by the CIS name; others (e.g., the Success Academy) are not. The CIS “brand name” is particularly important to affiliate staff. As one staff member mentioned, “it’s who we are.” The brand has its limitations, however. For example, one staff member noted that the CIS acronym does not have any inherent meaning, and suggested that CIS rebrand itself as “Communities In Schools.” By spelling out the CIS acronym, national, state, and local offices can better market themselves without the additional explanation on the meaning of “CIS.” As one staff member said, “Do you know BBBS? No, but you know Big Brothers Big Sisters.” Because the CIS brand name is not instantly recognizable, some staff described CIS as “a best kept secret.” Others describe their program as “a local affiliate of the largest non-profit organization that works with at-risk youth.”

## Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania partners with a large number of agencies within the community. Major partners include:

- **Workforce Investment Board (WIB):** Provides grant funding for CIS Dropout Prevention Project Coordinators in five high schools in Fayette County and nine high schools and a Youth Technology Center in Fayette County.
- **United Way of Westmoreland:** Provides funding and worked with CIS of Southwest PA to develop a high school tutoring/mentoring program and supports an after-school program for middle school youth.
- **United Way of South Fayette:** Provides funding for a Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program.
- **Local colleges:** Provides training to CIS affiliate and school staff, and host CIS students for field trips.

*“Being such a small community, we all try to bond together and help one another.”*

*-CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania  
Staff*

- **PACT (for pregnant teens):** Provides a free program to young adults in Westmoreland County who are either pregnant or parenting and have dropped out of schools. The program provides educational and emotional support during pregnancy and after childbirth.
- **Tech-prep consortium:** Opened a local technical school for kids to attend in the evenings.
- **MedRad (an arm of Bayer Aspirin):** Contacted CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania to donate office supplies and create an outing to Nemaocolin resort for kids.

Formal agreements are in place with some partners, but not all of them.

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff and partners universally agreed that the relationship between the affiliate and the community is very good. Affiliate staff engage in a lot of face-to-face contact with their partners and share information whenever possible.

According to affiliate staff, the key to a successful relationship with community partners is to make the point clear that you are there to work with them, and not compete with them. Several staff mentioned the importance of developing close working relationships with partners, and the bonds forged between CIS of Southwest PA and its partners appeared to be especially strong.

Marketing within schools also involves “high-touch” methods. Affiliate staff mentioned that they take their role as a guest within the school very seriously, and work to ensure that school administration understands the role that CIS plays in kids’ lives. CIS staff also emphasized the importance of letting teachers, students, and parents know about the program, and that CIS is there to help. In order to provide this message, CIS staff attend parent nights, send letters to parents and students, and work with teachers to get their input on students who are having problems.

Community partners mentioned that the relationship with CIS of Southwest PA is a win-win situation. Partners provide support (e.g., Student Assistance Program liaisons) to CIS, and CIS staff participate in partner task forces and advisory boards. Community agencies mentioned that their partnerships with CIS has provided benefits, such as a resource for referrals and stronger relationships with parents. Although no major challenges were noted, community partners did emphasize the importance that trust plays in their relationship.

Community partners also noted the effects that CIS has on students. For example, partners mentioned that students truly trust CIS staff, and that students often have mental health issues they are not even aware of, so it helps to have someone they can trust and talk to about issues they are facing. CIS was described as a “safe haven” for students, and given that teachers and school staff often do not know about a student’s home life, it is important to develop trust and encourage dialogue with a positive adult role model.



## **Recruitment/Retention**

CIS staff in the Southwest Pennsylvania affiliate are trained professionals. Affiliate and school staff generally have bachelor's or master's degrees, while data and marketing staff tend to hold associate's degrees, but are working toward their bachelor's degree. The average tenure of the two school staff interviewed was less than two years, although affiliate staff reported greater longevity in their positions. The Project Director and Chief Financial Officer at the affiliate had been with CIS for more than 10 years, while other affiliate staff had been in their positions for at least 3 years.

Retaining staff at the school level may be a challenge for CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania due to the relatively low salaries available; however, school staff mentioned that their passion for children more than made up for the low salaries. Beyond fostering a passion for the work, affiliate leadership retain their staff by providing the best benefits (e.g., health plans) possible, and by making employees feel appreciated (e.g., through outings, holiday parties, etc.).

CIS staff noted that they like to hire people with flexibility, a good personality, and who can "go with the flow." Ideal staff characteristics noted include an outgoing nature, a good sense of organization, and an ability to "roll with the punches." Moreover, affiliate staff noted that they look for people who can work with youth at their level, since youth need to be comfortable with their adult role models before they start talking about their issues. A strong service orientation was also mentioned as a key predictor of success. All staff are required to have a background check before they have contact with students, and an annual performance review process is in place to monitor staff progress.

## **Training**

Affiliate staff are sent to local colleges and local agencies for trainings. CIS of Southwest PA also brings speakers in for staff trainings, and provides for a day or two of job shadowing before a staff member begins work. Training needs are assessed through a self-evaluation completed by Site Coordinators, through reviews of monthly reports from staff, and through conversations with students, guidance counselors, and administrators.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff collect monthly reports and other data on their program, and use these data to write grants and identify target groups for fundraising. Staff are encouraged to keep daily reports, which can then easily be developed into the monthly report. In addition, affiliate staff conduct student, teacher, and parent surveys to gauge satisfaction with the CIS program and to track student improvement. Reports are presented bimonthly to the Board of Directors.

Successes are reported through newspaper coverage, and through events open to the public. Obtaining local media coverage was identified by affiliate staff as a best practice for reporting.



## Relationship with State Office

The relationship that CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania has with the CIS Pennsylvania State Office has fluctuated over time. Currently, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania describes their affiliate as being very “self-sufficient.” They feel that the key to a strong relationship between the state office and the affiliate lies in mutual communication and support. However, they are unsure of how to go about developing this foundation.

## 3.2 Site-Level Implementation

### Needs Assessment

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania conducts both formal and informal needs assessments. Typically, needs assessments are conducted at the school level, in an effort to tailor programs and services to the needs of the school. Teachers and guidance counselors provide input on the need for specific programs and/or services.

In our focus groups, National Evaluation staff asked CIS students to identify the primary challenges in their lives. Key challenges include:

- Finishing school
- Waking up on time
- Being bored with school
- Not falling asleep in a boring class
- Parents/Step-parents/Family
- Fighting with parents/kids at school
- Getting good grades
- Difficulty with friends understanding who I am and how I deal with things
- Lots of friends dying (9 deaths in past 1.5 years, the majority of which have been drug/alcohol related)
- Moving/friends moving away
- Weird people
- Teachers
- Graduation
- Deciding to stay in school or drop out
- Working
- Having kids
- Personal problems

From this list, it is evident that the most pressing challenges facing students at CIS of Southwest PA include engagement in school (i.e., reducing boredom), achievement (i.e., getting good grades, graduation), maintaining stability (i.e., friends moving or dying), and relationships (i.e.,

with parents, friends). Given that CIS provides a measure of stability and a forum for students to talk about their problems, it appears that the program is meeting students' primary needs.

### **Identification and Referral**

Students can be referred to CIS from a number of sources. When asked how they were referred to CIS, students reported the following:

- Case Manager told me about the program
- Aunt told me
- Friend suggested the program
- Boyfriend told me about it
- Teacher sent me
- Guidance counselor recommended me

CIS appears to obtain most of the referrals using word-of-mouth advertising. In fact, one staff member noted that CIS is not really advertised around the school – CIS has to market its services continually. Brochures are available in the CIS room for students to peruse and bring home to their parents.

CIS Case Managers enjoy a particularly strong relationship with guidance counselors within their schools. According to guidance counselors, CIS provides an extra level of support to students who need to meet more than once per week. Due to budget cuts, guidance counselors are taking on more responsibilities, and CIS provides a backstop for the students who need a strong one-on-one relationship with an adult. One Case Manager said that CIS's support made a noticeable, positive difference in dropout and behavior problems within the school.

CIS Case Managers are on-site two or three days a week. Guidance counselors recommended that a daily presence on-site is needed, and that more case managers are needed.

### **Programs and Services**

CIS Case Managers are the key personnel charged with the delivery of programs and services; however, when asked to identify their primary responsibilities, CIS Case Managers reported more of a counseling function in their day-to-day work. Key responsibilities identified include:

- Building a relationship with students
- Supporting kids at-risk for dropping out of school
- Listening to students
- Giving students a place to vent or de-stress
- Establishing a "community within a community"

Case managers reiterated that they view themselves as a guest within the school – and they take that privilege seriously. Ultimately, the onus is on CIS Case Managers to keep school

administration informed about the role of the program in students' lives, as well as the benefits students receive from participating in CIS.

Key programs offered by CIS include character development, academic support, mentoring, and summer schools (e.g., to provide certification in CPR and first aid). Programs have a strong career focus. CIS invites employers to speak about what they look for in employees and how to make resumes stand out. Site Coordinators also continually engage students in discussions about attending college.

School staff reported that they have received positive feedback about CIS from both students and parents. They are generally appreciative of the program, and students especially appreciate having someone at the school who will listen to their problems. Parents do not generally provide formal feedback, but in informal discussions, they have provided positive comments about CIS. One staff member mentioned that he does not think parents understand how much support their children are receiving through CIS.

### ***Successes and Challenges***

School staff noted that they have seen a number of positive changes in CIS students as a result of the program:

- Better interpersonal relationships with adults
- Willingness to talk about problems
- Better study habits
- Improved behavior: kids "calm down" more easily
- Improved attendance
- Progress toward graduation requirements
- Students are happier

Staff noted that some of the keys to improving outcomes among students was to provide a more personal environment. Students can walk into the CIS room within a school and talk with the CIS Case Manager. This personalized, non-judgmental environment allows students to open up about their problems and seek out help when needed. Case Managers also maintain an "open door" policy, which is inherently welcoming for students, especially those without a positive adult influence at home. Several staff members noted that students genuinely like going to CIS.

School staff generally appreciate CIS within the school because it adds another support system. CIS staff are most often described by others as functioning as an additional guidance counselor for students, especially because there is a perceived lack of guidance counselors within the school due to budget cuts. School staff also noted that the CIS Case Manager brings into the school a new perspective, and can share perspectives from working across multiple schools. CIS was also described as a program that could help students build relationships with teachers; by

providing a positive adult role model to students, CIS is also helping all other adults in a student's life.

Parents often distrust school administration. CIS's unique advantage within the school has been its "outsider" status, which has provided parents with an outlet to advocate for their children. Because CIS is not involved in establishing policies and procedures within the school, they are in a unique position to gain parents' trust. Some school staff noted that parents sometimes perceive a stigma from having a child in need of help, and that parent engagement could be a serious challenge in some cases.

Very few challenges were noted regarding CIS's presence within the school. Most respondents indicated that the primary challenge facing CIS was the lack of resources (both in terms of staff time and budget) and that CIS "needs to do more."

National Evaluation staff also asked CIS students about the successes and challenges of CIS within the school. Some positive changes noted by students include:

***"I don't see nothing in me, but she [the Case Manager] sees a lot in me."***

*-Student*

- They feel more mature
- They learn to deal with problems
- They don't get as aggravated by everyday situations
- They don't use as many drugs as they did before
- They are achieving their goals
- They are doing better in school
- They have someone in their life who cares
- They are thinking about going to college

Students generally liked CIS staff members' positive attitude, as well as the open-door policy (i.e., the accessibility of CIS staff). Students noted that they especially appreciated having an adult at the school who was non-judgmental and who could be trusted with confidential information.

***"We tell the Case Manager everything."***

*-Student*

When asked about the weaknesses of the CIS program, students generally thought that the program needed to expand. Some students wanted to go on more field trips; others wanted the Case Manager on-site every day. Since the CIS room within the school could only handle a small number of students at one time (i.e., about 5 students), many students expressed a need to have a bigger space within the school for CIS.

## **Monitoring and Adjustment**

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania assesses performance and progress from a number of sources. The primary source of information used to monitor services is the Case Manager's monthly

reports. The affiliate also conducts student, parent, and teacher surveys – and looks at students’ grades every nine weeks – to monitor the program for successes and client satisfaction. The affiliate also keeps track of students for at least one year after they graduate.

Adjustments to services are generally made at the end of the school year, in preparation for the fall school term.

## Relationships with Key Stakeholders

The CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania affiliate feels that forming strong relationships is key to successful outcomes for students being served. They have built relationships with schools, community partners, students, and one another. Within the schools, CIS staff maintain open channels of communication and a high level of accessibility to school personnel. Collaboration between these two parties is essential to a successful relationship, and CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff take their role as a guest within the school very seriously. Staff feel that their relationship with the school flourishes because they are able to use their own discretion while providing programs and services to students. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff feel respected by the school administration and personnel, and vice versa.

***“We truly believe it’s the relationship that’s the most important aspect [to successfully implementing CIS].”***

*-Board of Directors*

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff describe the relationship they have with students as one built from mutual respect for one another; a respect that affiliate staff placed in schools strive to instill in students. As a CIS staff member commented, “I try to model respect for the students, and a tolerance for each other. Everyone needs to feel welcome here.” School personnel recognize the strong bond between students and CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff. They described the relationship as “excellent” and “very supportive”, and noted that the students really place their trust in CIS; “[The case manager] isn’t [just] their friend, but she’s able to provide direction and support for them.”

## 4. Future Direction

The future of CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania was explored during the case study site visit. Affiliate staff and school personnel had the opportunity to share their vision for CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania and provide recommendations based on their experiences. These insights are examined in the following section.

### 4.1 Vision/Plans

When asked how they would describe CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania, affiliate staff, school personnel, and stakeholders said it is a confidential, school-based, community-funded program with the goal of supporting students throughout their time in school and preparing them for

their future endeavors. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania is described as a positive organization that “does whatever it takes to help kids” and whose goals is to, “help students who would normally fall through the cracks and who would not graduate.” This description is supplemented with specific examples of the various Level 1 and Level 2 services offered to students. Students had a positive view of CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania, saying that it is a place where “someone’s going to listen to you” and somewhere where “you can come in to talk about what’s on your mind.”

***“We are the most successful alternative education program in the area.”***

*-CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania Staff*

### **Future Vision for CIS**

All those involved with CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania see a bright future for the affiliate, full of increased programming, expansion, and more parent, school, and community involvement. Expansion was the aspect of the future most often mentioned by affiliate staff; many plans for expanding are already in place. CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania is currently developing performance learning centers and planning to expand the Internet Learning program for students who have dropped out of school. Staff would also like to create apprenticeship programs for students, begin serving elementary and middle school students in the region, provide training for affiliate staff on SAP (business software), and decrease the dropout rate of students in schools being served.

***“You can never remain stagnant because you’ll go backwards and you’ll fail.”***

*-CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania Staff*

School personnel see the future of CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania as continuing in their schools and would like to see Case Managers placed in each school full time. They hope that CIS can expand to serve more students who have already dropped out of school and students who do not necessarily meet the low-income requirements currently in place for participation in the program. School staff would also like to increase parental involvement in the schools, and feel that CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania can help them achieve that goal.

***“We put in 50% and [the case manager] puts in 50%.”***

*-Student*

When asked about their vision for the future of CIS, students enthusiastically agreed it is a needed program and expressed a desire to continue the program during their postsecondary education. Students have recommended CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania to their friends, and suggested that CIS spread out to middle schools, where it is desperately needed.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Needed Support to Improve CIS

The most common request for assistance to help sustain the work of CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania involved increased funding. This is not surprising, as this integrated student support system needs resources in order to provide for students and families. Staff would like additional guidance from the CIS state office regarding available grant opportunities. They noted that more funds and resources would allow them to increase programming and services offered to students, increase the number of students served, hire a larger number of staff to be placed in schools (currently, Case Managers are part-time at more than one school), and expand CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania into the elementary schools. One staff member felt that, “a lot of times before [students] get to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, you’ve [already] lost them.”

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff believe that the blessing and support of school administration is crucial in allowing CIS to successfully help students. They would like more freedom in the types of programs and services offered to students and families. School personnel would like to have Case Managers placed in their schools full-time; they often see “backwards movement” in students when a Case Manager is gone for the day. School personnel also mentioned that the most important support they could receive is the continuation of CIS in their schools. Not surprisingly, increased funding is at the root of this need.

### Advice to Others Implementing CIS

When asked what recommendations they would make to new CIS affiliates, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff advised new Executive Directors to find a mentor who would be able to guide them through the experience of leading a local CIS affiliate. They suggested mentors could come from nearby CIS affiliates, or those that are doing particularly well in similar situations. Regarding securing resources, CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff advised new affiliates to be creative with what is available, and try to get the most out of what may be limited sources. One staff member noted that, “you can’t be told yes unless you ask.” Another piece of advice was to make contacts in the local media, which will help market the program to potential participants and funders.

CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff recommended that members of the Board of Directors become as knowledgeable as possible about CIS and other alternative education programs so that they are able to explain to outsiders the benefits of CIS for students and families. New Program Directors were advised to be open-minded and willing to change and adapt to fit the needs of the communities being served. Staff placed in schools acknowledged that new Case Managers are going to have a challenging role at times, but it helps to always be visible and consistent. Follow-through is essential to maintaining a successful relationship with schools, students, and the community. One CIS of Southwest Pennsylvania staff member summed up

the advice to all staff members at new affiliates as, “My motto to live by is adapt, improvise, and overcome.”



## Attachment A

	Belle Vernon Area High School	Yough Senior High School
<b>Student Proficiency on State Tests - 2007</b>		
Reading Proficiency (%)	69.5	73.4
Math Proficiency (%)	56.5	50.3
Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) (%)	63.0	61.8
<b>Reading Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>		
All Students	69.5	73.4
White	69.8	73.5
Black	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	N/A	N/A
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	N/A
Multi-Racial	N/A	N/A
Female	76.5	80.2
Male	62.9	67.6
Economically Disadvantaged	50.0	63.6
English Language Learners	N/A	N/A
Students with Disabilities	18.5	10.0
Migrant	N/A	N/A
<b>Math Proficiency by Subgroup (%) - 2007</b>		
All Students	56.5	50.3
White	56.6	50.6
Black	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	N/A	N/A
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A

	Belle Vernon Area High School	Yough Senior High School
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	N/A
Multi-Racial	N/A	N/A
Female	63.8	52.9
Male	49.6	48.0
Economically Disadvantaged	40.0	35.7
English Language Learners	N/A	N/A
Students with Disabilities	10.5	5.0
Migrant	N/A	N/A
<b>College Prep - 2005</b>		
ACT - Average Score	22.5	19.4
ACT - Participation Rate (%)	6.6	11.4
SAT Reasoning Test - Average Score	1,020	1,039
SAT Reasoning Test - Participation Rate (%)	63.6	38.1
PSAT/NMSQT - Average Score	146	140
PSAT/NMSQT - Participation Rate (%)	36.0	49.0
AP - Scores 3 or Above (%)	84.6	55.6
AP - Participation Rate (%)	7.5	9.4
<b>Classroom Profile - 2006</b>		
Enrollment	982	841
Students Per Teacher	18.4	19.0
<b>Enrollment (%) - 2006</b>		
White	97.6	97.6
Black	1.6	1.3
Hispanic	0.3	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4	0.6

	Belle Vernon Area High School	Yough Senior High School
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1	0.1
Economically Disadvantaged	22.9	28.9
<b>NCLB Information - 2007</b>		
Is this school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?	Yes	Yes
<b>School Facts</b>		
Address	425 Crest Avenue	919 Lowber Road
City or Town	Belle Vernon	Herminie
County	Westmoreland	Westmoreland
District	Belle Vernon Area School District	Yough School District
Telephone Number	(724)929-9800	(724)446-5520
Urban Status	Urban Fringe of a Large City	Rural, Inside CBSA
Grade Levels Served	9-12	9-12