

A quarterly newsletter of Communities In Schools, the nation's largest dropout prevention organization

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Robertson Foundation Grant Largest in Communities In Schools' History

Supports Strengthening of Network Operations

Communities In Schools (CIS) received a \$10 million grant from the Robertson Foundation for national office general support and growth capital for one-time investments in the CIS network. The largest single grant in the history of the organization supports the CIS Impact Fund, and represents about one fifth of the total funding goal. The Impact Fund, which will total \$50 million when it is complete, was created to strengthen the CIS network by provid-

ing investments that will support strong business operations, enhance CIS' ability to provide integrated student services and ultimately reduce the nation's dropout numbers. These funds are secured by the CIS national office from major donors like the Robertson Foundation, and then reinvested into the network. (See related story on page 7.) ■

Puttin' on the Glitz

Annual Event Draws Celebrities to Raise Millions for Nonprofits

The Communities In Schools (CIS) national office participated in ICAP® Charity Day last December, an international event organized by CIS national board member John Nixon. Nixon's company, ICAP, is the world's leading online trading company, and one day each year, all broker commissions are donated to charitable organizations. To help increase commissions, celebrities visit the trading floor at ICAP, and some even perform stock trades. The December event raised more than \$16 million for 100 organizations across the world. CIS has been a recipient of ICAP Charity Day proceeds for the past three years. Academy Award-nominated actress Amy Adams appeared on behalf of CIS. ■



Daniel J. Cardinali, president, Communities In Schools, Inc., and Debbie Veney Robinson, vice president of communications at CIS, are shown with Academy Award-nominated actress Amy Adams (far right), who appeared on behalf of the CIS national office. Academy Award-winner Meryl Streep (second from left), a past participant in CIS' Lunch With A Leader online charity auction, also supported this event.

Photo by Theresa Silk

An Idea That's Bigger Than the Sum of its Parts

Collaborative School Initiative Brings Together Best of Three Models

The core concept behind the Diplomas Now Model is to create small learning communities within a school to foster an atmosphere that will allow students to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Developed through a partnership of Communities In Schools, City Year and the Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) at Johns Hopkins University, this initiative offers a reform model for schools that are facing serious problems with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores and dropout rates.

It began with the idea that one plus one sometimes adds up to a lot more than two. When CIS asked Dr. Robert Balfanz, associate research scientist for CSOS, to consult on its five-year national evaluation study on the CIS Model for integrated student services, he agreed. In the process, he became a supporter of CIS' work.



CIS of Philadelphia's Young Men's Club meets regularly at Feltonville Middle School. Students at the school heard from high school students in a program focused on accountability, career preparation and life skills development.

Photo by Todd Milhollen

Soon after, Balfanz and Daniel J. Cardinali, president, Communities In Schools, Inc., began to explore how the work CSOS was doing might intersect with the work CIS was doing. "We looked at the value of integrating Dr. Balfanz's research-based model, which focuses on instructional practices, and the CIS research-based model, which focuses on student support services, to enhance the impact of both models," said Cardinali. "It became clear that if the research-based results yielded by our model were combined with the research-based results yielded by CSOS – two organizations with significant reach – then a serious impact could be made on the dropout epidemic."

The two organizations approached City Year to provide additional support through its research-based approach to tutoring and mentoring.

Initial funding for the initiative has been obtained through a multi-million-dollar grant from the PepsiCo Foundation. The grant supports the development of a model program for an alternative school in Philadelphia.

Today, 750 sixth- through eighth-grade students at Feltonville Middle School in Philadelphia benefit from the collaboration. "We know that dropout prevention needs to start in middle school or even before then," said Cardinali. "Though the model program has only been in place since the beginning of the school year, it's gotten off to a wonderful start."

The model includes organizational and management changes to establish a positive school climate; curricular and instructional innovations to prepare all students for high-level courses in math and English; parent and community involvement to encourage college awareness; and professional development to support the recommended reforms.

Each partner is responsible for different aspects of putting the model to work. The Talent Development group from Johns Hopkins restructured the school day and works on staff development with teachers. City Year provides tutoring both in the classroom and after school.

CIS' role is to provide case management for students who need one-on-one attention and services that decrease student behavior that may lead to dropping out. A CIS site coordinator and social worker are at the school full-time.

The core operating concept of the model is the creation of "mini-schools" within the larger school. Because this model gives the students and faculty a chance to establish close relationships, it fosters student and teacher engagement, providing a forum for the students to perform well. Faculty can collaborate and figure out what works best for each student because they get to know the students so much better.

"This is the first project of its kind," Cardinali said, adding that the three partners plan to replicate the school in six cities across the country. ■

Network Aligning with Total Quality System

Early Adopters Embrace New Standards

More than 40 Communities In Schools local affiliates – in every state within the network – are well on their way to implementing the CIS national Total Quality System (TQS), which was rolled out in July 2008. Complete network transition to TQS will take place over the next few years.

TQS is a comprehensive and integrated set of organization and business operation standards, policies and procedures that serve as a blueprint for the CIS Model. These standards articulate how CIS conducts its work; define the stages of CIS affiliate development; ensure CIS affiliates receive assistance and support as they progress toward accreditation; and provide accountability and brand protection.

“TQS offers a framework for consistency within the CIS network,” said Susan Siegel, vice president of research education and learning management (REALM) at the CIS national office. “While no two affiliates are exactly alike in their community demographics, student needs and available resources, TQS assures uniformity in how affiliates achieve the CIS mission,” she noted.

The CIS national office has been working directly with state offices and local affiliates and their boards of directors to address any unanticipated challenges to full implementation of the new standards. “We are committed to helping all CIS affiliates move toward TQS alignment, and particularly focused on affiliate organizations positioned to achieve accreditation in fiscal year 2009,” said Gary Chapman, interim deputy vice president of field operations for the CIS national office.

The REALM team at the CIS national office is also assisting in this effort. New CIS data management tools were launched in August, and will help affiliates improve both the quantity and quality of their data collection and reporting. The REALM team has successfully used a number of training strategies for the new data management tools, including pre-rollout demonstrations and planning; migration of existing data; and post-rollout technical support via conference calls, webinars, online help features and face-to-face meetings.

All of these efforts are paying off. Approximately 35 CIS affiliates will meet the standards and be ready for TQS accreditation by fall. ■

“TQS offers a framework for consistency within the CIS network.”

Susan Siegel
Vice President, Research
Education and Learning
Management, Communities In
Schools, Inc.

Economic Stimulus Bill Hits Home for CIS

On February 17, President Barack Obama signed the \$787 billion stimulus package into law, marking the passage of one of the biggest pieces of economic legislation in history. Prior to the bill passing, Communities In Schools advocated for funding to support site coordinators – the backbone of the CIS network in delivering integrated student services.

The final stimulus bill contains close to \$100 billion for education funding, including the following:

- \$40 billion in state stabilization funds to help avert education cuts
- \$12 billion in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (special education) funds
- \$13 billion in Title I funds to help economically disadvantaged students

In addition, the bill includes an Innovation Fund of \$650 million to provide incentives for partnerships between nonprofits and local education agencies that are making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

Some of these funds could be used for CIS site coordinators, enabling our network to provide additional support in response to the increased need for our services. The funds should become available at the local level by July 1. CIS affiliates will be working with their local education agencies to discuss contracting to add site coordinators and other personnel in CIS schools. ■

Performance Learning Centers Recognized

Continue to Set the Standard for Non-Traditional Education

The Communities In Schools Performance Learning Center® (PLC) network recently observed two milestones: expanding to a new state and holding its first awards ceremony – illustrating its importance in the CIS portfolio of initiatives.

Last summer, the CIS national office held its inaugural PLC Awards program in Atlanta. Ten PLCs from across the network were honored for their academic outcomes in areas such as number of graduates, number of college acceptance letters and number of credits earned by students.

Honorees received their awards at the annual PLC Summer Training Institute. The Institute, sponsored by CIS of Georgia, brings together PLC staff to explore best practices in meeting students' needs as well as general issues surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act.

PLCs are small, academically rigorous, non-traditional high schools where students – many of whom have already dropped out, or who may have fallen behind in credits due to absenteeism, academic struggles or disengagement from school – are often able to catch up and graduate on time, prepared for college and life.

“We are tremendously proud of this year’s award recipients,” said Neil Shorthouse, state director, CIS of Georgia. “They – along with the alumni of these successful alternative schools, are living proof that the PLC Model is working and producing results for students who may feel they have few, if any, educational options.”

In September, the newest CIS PLC – the Newark Workforce Development Institute, in Newark, N.J., opened its doors. Sixty students attended the first day of school.



Americus-Sumter (Americus, Ga.) PLC staff members enjoy the awards ceremony in July to honor excellence among PLC professionals. (l-r) Lisa Harry, language arts facilitator; Jane Butler, science/electives learning facilitator; and Peaches Davis, administrative assistant.

Photo by Ken Johnson

In establishing this particular PLC, CIS staff realized they would need to step “outside the box” in order to accommodate students, some of whom had been out of school for as many as three years. Classes were shifted to the hours of 3:00 – 7:00 p.m., allowing students to fulfill their daytime work and family responsibilities.

PLCs have expanded in large part due to a multi-million dollar grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to the CIS national office in 2007. Originally developed and implemented by CIS of Georgia, PLCs affirm CIS’ commitment to non-traditional education. There are currently more than 30 PLCs in the CIS network, with 45 expected to be operational by the end of 2009. ■

Coming Full Circle

A Student Success Story

Eve McKinsey isn't just a CIS of Miami employee and tutor. She is a CIS of Miami alumnus. At 21, she is soft-spoken and friendly. She has worked very hard to get where she is in life, despite personal struggles which threatened to derail her education and future plans.

Eve became unhappy when she had to leave American High School in Miami – which she loved – because her mother's financial situation made it necessary to move to a different school district. At the new high school, Booker T. Washington, Eve felt out of place, and it became clear that she was at risk academically. She was referred to Corporate Academy North, part of CIS of Miami's Bridges to Graduation program, during her junior year at Booker T. Washington.

Melinda Hoder, then project director for CIS of Miami, identified Eve as a student needing individual attention and coordinated the interventions for her. "Eve was one of my favorite students," said Hoder. "She felt lost at the larger school she had been attending...like a 'little fish in a big sea.'" Hoder worked with the Corporate Academy North staff and CIS community partners so that Eve would have the help she needed to get back on track.

"Eve came up the 'classic road' of hardships we see with so many students. But once she found her niche at Corporate North, she was on a trajectory," Hoder explained. Eve received tutoring to help her pass the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) required for graduation. She participated in a leadership class and became involved in a community service after-school program. She also was matched with a mentor from the Burger King Corporation, one of CIS' partners.

On the first day of her senior year, Eve was dealt a setback when she was assaulted in her neighborhood on her way to school. It was a very difficult time, and CIS was there to help. Hoder said that the one new outfit Eve could afford for school was ruined that day, so CIS donated \$300 toward clothing. CIS staff also shored her up with emotional support, and arranged for Eve to receive counseling services.

Despite everything, Eve continued to thrive during her senior year. She served as an aide to Donna Hodes, her leadership and math class teacher. CIS of Miami put her to work helping out in the office



Eve McKinsey (left) with leadership and math class teacher Donna Hodes at her high school graduation. Eve is pursuing an Associate's degree in criminal justice.

and placed her in an after-school job with the CIS affiliate, tutoring elementary school students. She eventually became head tutor.

"Eve just kept going. She won awards in so many arenas and subjects, as well as a Bright Futures (Florida Department of Education) scholarship," said Hoder.

Eve is proud to say that she was valedictorian of her graduating class of 2005 at Corporate Academy North. She is grateful to CIS of Miami (where she is still working) and especially to Melinda Hoder. "If it wasn't for Melinda and my teachers at Corporate North, I wouldn't have gotten through school," she said.

Currently, Eve is working toward her Associate's degree at Miami Dade College. She has been studying criminal justice but intends to change her major to early childhood education, so that she can become a teacher. ■

"Eve just kept going. She won awards in so many arenas and subjects, as well as a Bright Futures (Florida Department of Education) scholarship."

Melinda Hoder
Project Director, CIS
of Miami

Spotlight on Success

News Briefs from the CIS Network

CIS of East Chicago, Ind., was recently awarded a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant for three years. The grant program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. In addition to aligning well with the CIS Model of providing integrated student services, the program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

CIS of the Midlands, S.C., teamed up with the Department of Juvenile Justice and United Way of the Midlands on a holiday service project to bring gifts to sick children. More than 30 students working with the CIS affiliate through the Department of Juvenile Justice made more than 75 cards to give to young patients at Palmetto Richland Children's Hospital. The patients received hand puppets that were donated by Nationwide Insurance Company.

CIS of Los Angeles West received a one-year grant from the Annenberg Foundation for dropout prevention program support and site coordinators at Venice and Hamilton high schools. The grant will also provide enrichment field trips to theaters and museums as well as career/college exploration opportunities. The Foundation exists to advance the public well-being through improved communication, providing support for

projects within its grant-making interest areas of: education and youth development; arts, culture and humanities; civic and community; health and human services; and animal services and the environment.

CIS of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., was endorsed by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman in a recent article that ran in the *Charlotte Observer*. Gorman cited CIS as an example of effective dropout prevention work that should be expanded. The story focused on revising a system that counts hundreds of diploma-holders as dropouts.



Students attend class at the Newark Workforce Development Institute, which opened in September. Three more CIS Performance Learning Centers will open in New Jersey over the next two years.

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CIS of New Jersey was recognized during the recent launch of the Alternative High School initiative for the City of Newark. Over the next two years, a partnership of various organizations, including CIS of New Jersey, will aim to reduce local dropout rates by developing new student-centered alternative high schools. The partnership will open a portfolio of innovative high school models in Newark, including

four new CIS Performance Learning Centers – the first of which, Newark Workforce Development Institute – opened in September.

CIS of Florida received a Winn-Dixie Foundation investment to support the state office's efforts to increase Florida's graduation rates. The Foundation was created in 1944 and makes grants to local nonprofit organizations focused on education, health, hunger, and women and children. ■

Back to School with SAS

Company Offers Customer Discount and a Donation to CIS

SAS is a big believer in preparing students for the global economy, according to Patricia Spain, one of the company's field marketing specialists. That makes its partnership with Communities In Schools a perfect fit. The company, which produces business analytics and intelligence software, contributes to CIS corporately and also offers its employees the chance to donate time and money to CIS.

Spain and her colleague Aubrey Barfield work in the Education Division at SAS, which houses the Self-Paced e-Learning program – offering online training for the company's software. So when Spain and Barfield, who is a marketing operations specialist, were looking for a good way to promote their division's summer sale, the idea to hold a fundraiser benefiting CIS came naturally.

"Our summer sale is a sort of 'back-to-school special' that offers our customers 30 percent off learning materials during the months of August and

September," Spain explained. "We wanted to do something a little different, and tying the program to education seemed like a really good idea."

From there, Spain says, it was an easy jump to CIS. "Aubrey suggested the combination donation/discount program." And the execution wasn't too complicated either. "We contacted Janella Franklin, vice president for development at the CIS national office, and asked if we could use the logo and where to send the check," Spain laughed. Soon after she and Barfield put their idea to work, Spain met Acton Archie, a former CIS student who is now a project manager at SAS and serves on the board of directors for CIS of North Carolina.

The program began in August and concluded at the end of September 2008. Ten percent of the sales of learning materials for those two months went to the CIS national office, and Spain says she thinks the program has been a success as a fundraiser. ■

"We wanted to do something a little different, and tying the program to education seemed like a really good idea."

Patricia Spain
Field Marketing Specialist, SAS

Impact Fund Award Recipients

First Installment of Grant Invested in CIS Network

When the CIS national office received the first disbursement of a \$10 million grant from the Robertson Foundation, it immediately invested it in the CIS network of state offices and local affiliates. During the initial round of funding for CIS' new Impact Fund, \$1.5 million was made available to the CIS network through a competitive grants process. A total of 22 state offices and local affiliates submitted grant proposals, and 17 of the proposals were funded. These CIS offices will be working to develop capacity for serving even greater numbers of students. Following is the list of awardees:

- CIS of the Charleston Area (South Carolina)
- CIS of Clark County (Indiana)
- CIS of Columbus (Ohio)
- CIS of Florida (including affiliates in Miami, Palm Beach County and Nassau County)
- CIS of Georgia (including affiliates in Albany/Dougherty County, Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County, Glynn County, Laurens County and Troup County)
- CIS of Kansas (including affiliates in Kansas City/Wyandotte County, Ottawa and Wichita/Sedgwick County)
- CIS of Los Angeles West
- CIS of the Midlands (South Carolina)
- CIS of the Nation's Capital
- CIS of Nevada (including an affiliate in Southern Nevada)
- CIS of New Orleans
- CIS of North Carolina (including affiliates in Cape Fear, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Clay County, High Point, Lincoln County, Montgomery County, Moore County and Rowan County)
- CIS of Pennsylvania (including affiliates in Laurel Highlands, Lehigh Valley and Pittsburgh-Allegheny County)

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- CIS of Virginia (including affiliates in Chesterfield and Richmond)
- CIS of Washington (including affiliates in Seattle and Tacoma)
- CIS of Wayne County (Indiana) ■

In Appreciation

Communities In Schools wishes to thank MetLife Foundation for its very generous grant supporting a cross-generational talent and leadership development initiative. This important investment will not only help CIS attract and retain the talented individuals we need to empower our youth, but will also provide a tangible resource nonprofits can apply to their own organizations. ■

ATTENTION CIS LOCAL AFFILIATES!

Help us tell your story to a national audience. Send story submissions or distribution inquiries to salamatm@cisnet.org or **703-837-4567 (fax)**.



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