



Communities
In Schools

Miami

CIS of Miami Is Awarded National Accreditation

CIS of Miami was recently notified that the Total Quality System (TQS) Governance Committee, based on the findings of the review team, voted to confirm National Accreditation for CIS of Miami. The following message was sent from Dan Linton, Director of Research and Evaluation, CIS National Office: "Congratulations to you, your board and staff for achieving this important milestone. You will be receiving a full report, as well as an official award letter and certificate, in the near future. Congratulations again for a job well done and for the positive differences you and your team make in the lives of young people everyday!"

Executive Director Elizabeth Mejia also thanked CIS of Miami staff and added, "I would like to extend a very special thank you to Elyssa Arroyo as our TQS Compliance Officer. She did an outstanding job working with everyone. I also would like to acknowledge Andrea Parada and Carol Gordon for their guidance and support."

To achieve national accreditation, Communities In Schools of Miami had to incorporate specific standards that applied to fiscal, board, and governance best practices. In addition, our programs had to demonstrate fidelity to the CIS National integrated student support service model.

40 Young Adults Pledge a Year of Service

AmeriCorps is a chance for a young person to apply their skills and ideals toward helping others and help meet critical needs of the community. This year, 40 AmeriCorps members are volunteering a year of service with CIS of Miami. All of our members are local residents from the same communities that we are serving. These members will be assigned to work in seven elementary schools and all three of our after-school and summer program sites. They will provide free daily tutoring at the schools during school hours and then report to the after-school sites to provide homework help, literacy-building and life-skills building activities. It is projected that they will reach approximately 1,000 children in total.



Our AmeriCorps members also benefit from their year of service. CIS of Miami invests time and resources in their professional development so they can gain important skills for future employment. Members also receive a modest living allowance during their term. At the end of their service, Corps members will earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an AmeriCorps member, please contact us at dpierre@cismiami.org.

The AmeriCorps program is a federal program that requires local match funding. We want to acknowledge and thank this year's matching donors: The Children's Trust and Miami Dade County.



Neighborhood Excellence Initiative Leadership Program

As part of the 2009 Bank of America Neighborhood Builders Award and its Neighborhood Excellence Leadership Program, CIS of Miami Executive Director, Elizabeth Mejia, and Director of Planning and Operations, Vernon Jacobs, recently completed 64 and 96 hours of leadership training respectively. The Center for Leadership Innovation (TCLI) conducted the cutting-edge trainings that consisted of professional development, innovative ideas and approaches to achieving organizations' missions and sustaining programs, and peer consulting opportunities that promoted

the successful application of high-impact strategies. "As much as I value the \$200,000 grant award from Bank of America, I am especially grateful for the vital Leadership Training they afforded us," Elizabeth Mejia affirmed.

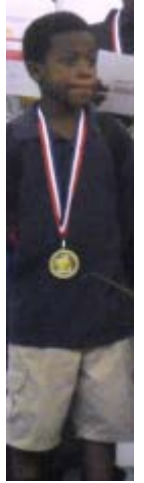
A Place for Justice – A CIS of Miami Student Success Story

Justice, a young student in CIS of Miami's after-school program at the Miami Rescue Mission, was truly a challenge. When he first arrived, program staff and tutors could hardly manage his disruptive behavior. He would fight constantly, sneak away from his assigned group, and would even try to leave the building. He needed constant supervision and one-on-one attention that was difficult to provide due to limited staff. His behavior reached the point where he had to be removed from the classroom. To keep him in the program, CIS of Miami had to find alternative solutions. Through a planning meeting with staff, partners, and parents, we came up with a strategy to help Justice change his behavior.

We met with Justice and asked him to become a program helper. Every day he was given a special role to play in the after-school program. Justice would shadow either the Site Coordinator or the Head Tutor for the day. We also worked out a behavior modification program where he would be rewarded on a daily basis if he complied. After Justice agreed to the plan, we finally started to see a positive change in his behavior.

As time progressed, Justice began to respond to all the positive reinforcements and praise when he did better. He began to work more independently, but still remained under the watchful eye of staff. He also shared how much he loved computers. In a stroke of good luck, CIS of Miami just received a fully furnished new computer lab from the Miami Heat. This room became a haven for Justice.

The transformation in Justice has been amazing. He now responds in a polite and positive manner to others around him. When it came time to choose the "Most Improved Student of the Year Award," Justice earned it hands down. It is truly an honor and joy to see young lives changed by "a safe place to learn and grow" and the love and patience "of a caring adult" – two of the "Five Basics" that CIS believes every child needs and deserves - and what we strive to provide our students every day.



A Time for Giving Thanks

Every day the opportunity to say thank you presents itself here at Communities In Schools of Miami. We are blessed to have a dedicated staff whose passion is to serve our students. On celebrating her fourth year anniversary with CIS of Miami, Site Coordinator Sharlene Castella shared, "With all the things I've done in my life, this has been my favorite. It is so rewarding. I have an awesome job." Many thanks to our staff who give so much to make sure that students always have someone to turn to and the resources they need to achieve in school.

Next in line for a big serving of appreciation is our dedicated volunteers. Whether they are taking time from their busy work schedule to mentor a youth, driving to one of our school sites to tutor a child, helping us to hold the next Stork's Nest event (a special incentive activity at COPE Center South), or providing us guidance and support as active board members – they are truly making a difference in the lives of our students. Thank you to our volunteers for giving us the gift of your time, wisdom, and skills.

Last, but certainly not least, we extend a very special thank you to both our programmatic and funding partners. Teachers, administrators, social service providers, and funders work with us to find solutions, implement programs, and help us sustain and expand our services. It is only through our joint efforts that we can make an impact in empowering our young people to achieve.

Thank you all for being part of our CIS of Miami family.

We Wish Everyone A Very Happy Thanksgiving!