



Communities In Schools National Evaluation School-Level Report

Summary of Findings

Prepared by:

Caliber, an ICF International Company
10530 Rosehaven Street, Ste. 400
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-3200
www.icfi.com



April 2008

Communities In Schools National Evaluation

School-Level Report¹

In this report, we focus on the key findings from the CIS National Evaluation’s three school-level studies.² Relative to comparison schools, CIS was found to have positive effects on a number of outcomes, including dropout rates, graduation rates, attendance rates, and academic achievement.

Key Findings:

Core Finding #1: The CIS model provides a structure within which local need and local innovation drive common processes and outcomes.

Core Finding #2: The adaptability of the CIS model is demonstrated when we look at its effectiveness across various settings (by locale, demographics, and school level).

Core Finding #3: Compared to other youth-serving organizations, CIS’s performance on dropout prevention and improving graduation rates is strong.

This report includes the first scientific evidence to date of CIS’s impact. We describe our study, as well as key findings that will help the reader understand how CIS is making a difference in children’s lives. Precious Oliver’s story, published on CIS National’s website, provides a starting point for understanding how CIS works.

Precious Oliver was born in Harlem. When she was just four months old, her mother was killed and she went to South Carolina to be with her grandparents. Precious’s grandfather died when she was seven years old, which was a particularly traumatic and pivotal moment in her childhood. Upon entering sixth grade, Precious was connected with a grief group through CIS, and in subsequent years was connected to a number of services, including counseling on pregnancy prevention and self-esteem, as well as tutoring and homework assistance. Not only did she graduate from high school, Precious has now been offered a full scholarship to college, where she is leaning toward a major in pharmacology.

¹ In this report, the evaluation team pulled selected vignettes from Bill Milliken’s new book, *The Last Dropout*: Milliken, B. (2007). *The Last Dropout: Stop the Epidemic!* Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.

² Supporting detail on the Evaluation Team’s findings is included in a separate technical volume.

These kinds of success stories have been reported many times since CIS was founded in 1977. While these stories have provided anecdotal evidence that CIS works, the CIS National Office wants to support this evidence with scientific results demonstrating the program's effect. By understanding not only the effects of CIS and how it brings about these effects across the network, the National Office can engage in a process of continuous improvement to ensure that CIS students are being served in the most effective manner possible.

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

"What we do is a combination of providing services and improving how the system operates. Our role is not only to offer direct services, but to connect kids with the right resources. This makes them go the furthest and be most efficient."

- Judy Frick, cited in *The Last Dropout*, p. 73

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.

The story of Precious Oliver helps us understand how CIS works in one community:

- ❖ **Precious was sent to a nearby church school for seventh grade. "It was too small and I didn't learn anything," Precious recalls, "And I didn't have anybody there for me like Ms. Lessor (Precious's CIS case manager) had been before.":** A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult can make a big difference in a child's life.
- ❖ **"I have learned a lot about myself and about life because of CIS-Charleston. Ms. Lessor makes sense and stays on our cases – even when we don't want her to," Precious said with a smile.:** Through constructive one-on-one relationships, adults can

not only provide a role model for students, but can also give students the supervision and motivation they need to succeed.

- ❖ "I don't think only about the future and going to school. I think about it all: my mother, nearly being kicked out of school, talking with Ms. Lessor every day, and making my dreams come true.": CIS gives kids an orientation toward the future, and the skills to achieve their future aspirations.

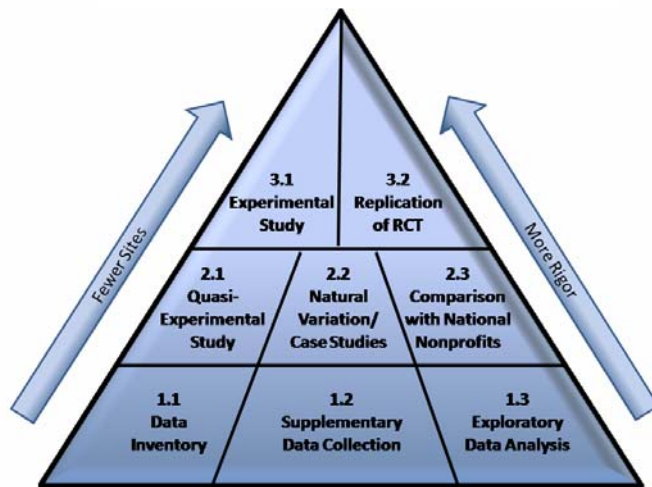
Precious Oliver received a range of services from CIS that varied as she grew and her needs changed; this continuous assessment and adjustment is a crucial element of the CIS model. Some CIS services Precious received included grief counseling and pregnancy prevention (a healthy start and healthy future), as well as tutoring and academic assistance (a marketable skill to use upon graduation).

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 Caliber, an ICF International Company, 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 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.

Exhibit 1: National Evaluation Design



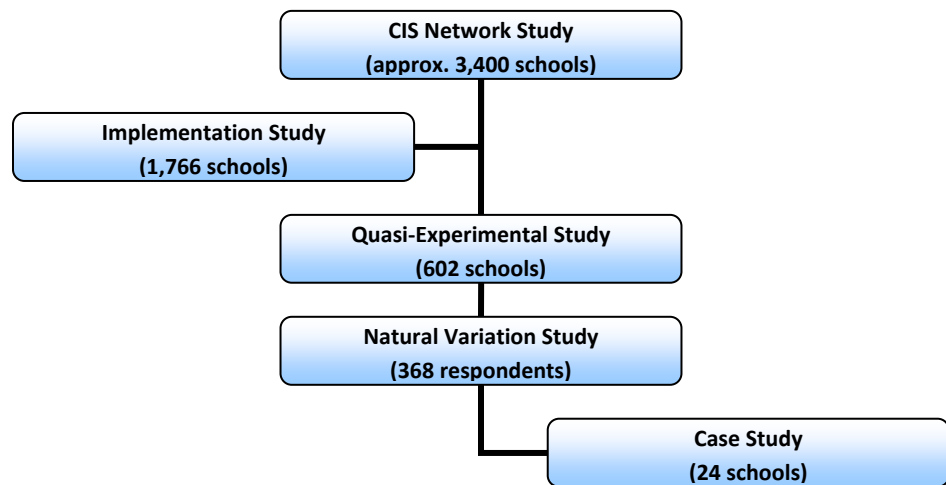
- ❖ **Mid-level studies** provide for the identification of CIS's effects at the *school level* (this report). These studies will help discover not only how much of an impact CIS is having in the schools, but also how and why those impacts are being achieved.
- ❖ **Top-level studies** provide for the identification of CIS's effects at the *student level*. Two experimental studies are currently under way in Austin, Texas and Jacksonville, Florida.

Exhibit 1 illustrates that as we move from the base to the top level of the pyramid of studies, fewer sites will be involved in each study, but the studies also become more rigorous. The power of this design is in the combined results of all the studies that allows for a comprehensive understanding of how CIS is impacting students, schools, and communities.

School-Level Studies

This report focuses on results from three separate school-level studies, described as the mid-level of the evaluation design. Each study was designed to improve the understanding of what – and how – CIS is impacting at the school level:

Exhibit 2: Number of Participants in Each School-Level Study



- ❖ An **implementation study** was designed to determine the level of implementation of the CIS program by CIS schools. This study measured how 1,766 schools implemented their CIS programs, and compared those processes to the “ideal” CIS model outlined in CIS’s Total Quality System initiative.³
- ❖ A **quasi-experimental study** compares 602 CIS schools with 602 matched comparison schools on a wide range of outcomes, including academic achievement, attendance rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates. This study was designed to determine whether CIS is having an impact at the school level, and if so, how much.
- ❖ A **natural variation study** examines CIS schools that had the most positive outcomes on the quasi-experimental study in order to identify promising practices. Altogether, 368 schools were included in this study.

Together, these studies provide information about whether CIS is having an impact at the school level (quasi-experimental study), what sites having the greatest impact are doing

³ Communities In Schools, Inc. (2007). Total Quality System for CIS Affiliates.

(natural variation study), and whether sites implementing the CIS model with more fidelity are having a greater impact (implementation study).

Eight case studies at 24 schools will be conducted in April/May 2008, and will provide additional information about *how* CIS is changing students' lives. Details from these case studies will provide valuable information for CIS to encourage the adoption of best practices that have been proven to have an effect on schools and students.

Findings

Looking across results from the quasi-experimental study, the natural variation study, and the implementation study, the National Evaluation team has identified several core findings. These findings are described below.

Core Finding #1: The CIS model provides a structure within which local need and local innovation drive common processes and outcomes (dropout rates, graduation rates, attendance rates, and academic achievement).

The CIS model is in transition—moving from a history of success as diverse, locally tailored drop-out prevention programs to a consistent model based on the program's Total Quality System (TQS) initiative. The TQS initiative outlines a series of core practices that constitute the CIS model, while maintaining flexibility to provide for local innovation.

At the core of TQS is a strategy for the delivery of community-based, integrated student services (CBISS). Community-based integrated student services are interventions that improve student achievement by connecting community resources with both the academic and social service needs of students. Such interventions focus programmatic energy, resources, and time on shared school and student goals.⁴ The TQS and CBISS are mutually beneficial processes: one informs the other.

The CIS Network is, without a doubt, highly diverse – and this diversity has resulted in a long history of local adaptation and innovation. Over the course of conducting the three school-level studies, however, the National Evaluation team found that there were core consistencies that suggested a systematic approach is being taken to address needs. Highlights of these consistent practices follow.

⁴ Communities In Schools, Inc. (2007). A National Educational Imperative: Support For Community-Based, Integrated Student Services In The Reauthorization Of The Elementary And Secondary Education Act.

■ **Finding 1.1: Outcomes at the school level were positive and consistent.**

Across a range of outcomes, CIS schools outperformed their comparison schools. Outcomes evaluated include dropout rates (promoting power), graduation rates, attendance rates (for elementary, middle, and high schools), and academic achievement in both math and reading (for grades 4, 8, and 10). The quasi-experimental study investigated the difference between CIS schools and matched comparison schools over a four-year period, from the year prior to the beginning of the program in each school until three years post-implementation. Across all outcomes, except reading achievement (in all grades), CIS schools outperformed their comparison schools (Exhibit 3). For example, on average, promoting power increased by 2.0 percent more in CIS schools than it did in non-CIS comparison schools.

When interpreting these outcomes, the reader should consider that achieving school-level change is very difficult, particularly when many students in the school are being provided different services. This is the essence of the CIS model – services are tailored to identified needs. Viewed in this light, an average net increase of, for example, 1.7 percent in graduation rates represents a sizeable number of graduates, and a sizeable shift in direction.

Most importantly, results from the quasi-experimental study were consistently in favor of CIS schools, suggesting that CIS was having a systematic, positive effect on multiple aspects of students’ academic and social lives. This finding will be investigated further in the student-level experimental studies.

Exhibit 3: School-Level Outcomes from the Quasi-Experimental Study

Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Four-Year Period		
Outcome Type	Outcome	Net Change: CIS Over Comparison
Dropout/Graduation:	Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	+2.0%
	Graduation Rate	+1.7%
Attendance Rates:	Attendance: Elementary	+0.1%
	Attendance: Middle	+0.3%
	Attendance: High	+0.3%
Elementary Achievement:	Grade 4 Math	+2.2%
	Grade 4 Reading	-0.1%
Middle School Achievement:	Grade 8 Math	+2.0%
	Grade 8 Reading	-0.1%
High School Achievement:	Grade 10 Math	+0.4%
	Grade 10 Reading	-0.3%

■ **Finding 1.2: The nexus of services and the program model makes CIS powerful.**

CIS schools that fully implement the CIS model with a high level of integrity had more successful outcomes than those that did not (Exhibit 4). This provides validation of the CIS model, and helps us understand the link between processes and outcomes.

Since the “high implementers” were identified using a scoring system that was based on the Total Quality System standards, these findings also provide a validation of the TQS. We can see that positive outcomes appear more likely in schools following the CIS model.

“As valuable as all these mentoring efforts are, it’s the way they’re done that makes the difference. The matches are made *at the school* and, under the auspices of CIS, are part of a *coordinated personalized response to children’s specific needs.*”

- Bill Milliken, cited in *The Last Dropout*, p. 67

Exhibit 4: School-Level Outcomes from the Implementation and Quasi-Experimental Studies: High vs. Partial Implementers⁵

Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period*		
Outcome	Net Change: High Implementers Over Comparison	Net Change: Partial Implementers Over Comparison
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	+3.6%	+1.5%
Graduation Rate	+4.8%	+2.5%
Attendance: Elementary	+0.2%	-0.4%
Attendance: Middle	+0.1%	+0.2%
Attendance: High	+0.3%	+0.1%
Grade 4 Math	+5.2%	-2.3%
Grade 4 Reading	+2.3%	-5.8%
Grade 8 Math	+6.0%	+0.7%
Grade 8 Reading	+5.1%	+0.3%
Grade 10 Math	+0.8%	-0.4%
Grade 10 Reading	-0.3%	+2.5%

* Findings presented in Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4 are drawn from two different samples: Exhibit 3 is based on all CIS sites in the quasi-experimental study while Exhibit 4 is based on participants of the Implementation Study. Findings between these two tables are therefore not directly comparable.

⁵ High Implementers are defined as CIS schools that scored 70% or higher in our implementation study, which assessed how thoroughly CIS sites employed the domains of planning, needs assessment (which includes site coordination), services, and monitoring and adjustment in their programs. High implementers are implementing the CIS model with a high degree of fidelity.

These results raise the question: What makes a high implementing CIS school successful? To answer this question, which gets to the heart of what makes the CIS model effective, we examined our data to see which types of activities had the strongest relationship to positive outcomes.

Exhibit 5: Correlations between Implementation Domains and Outcomes

Implementation Domain	Correlation with Overall Average Effect Size
Whole Model (all domains)	0.16**
Needs Assessment/Site Coordination	0.15*
Planning	0.20**
Service Provision	-0.06
Monitoring and Adjustment	0.05

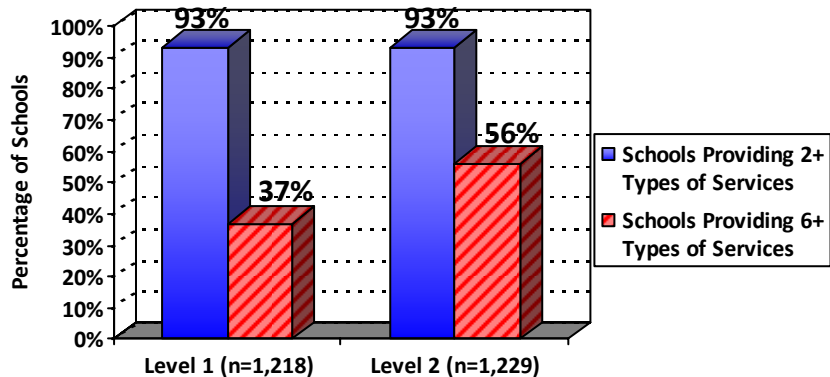
* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level
 ** Statistically significant at the p<.01 level

As shown in Exhibit 5, the CIS sites implementing the entire model (processes plus service delivery) had stronger outcomes than CIS sites delivering services alone. This result indicates that the strength of the CIS model lies in the process of regularly identifying needs and connecting students to the right services.

Finding 1.3: A school-wide CIS strategy may involve focusing on a particular problem, but very few CIS schools address problems with a single service strategy.

Given the wide range of programming offered by CIS schools, it is interesting that very few CIS schools offer only a single type of service (Exhibit 6). Only 7 percent of CIS schools offer a single type of

Exhibit 6: Diversity of Services Offered by CIS Schools



service (e.g., tutoring, counseling), while 93 percent of CIS schools are offering multiple services.

When broken down by whole-school services (Level 1) and targeted, sustained services (Level 2), it is apparent that more intensively case managed students (i.e., Level 2 students) receive a larger number of interventions. If it is assumed that these services are being delivered based on identified needs, we can conclude that CIS is serving the most needy students with a range of services.

By bringing together community resources to address needs, CIS is helping schools achieve consistent, measurable, and positive change in students' academic lives.

Core Finding #2: The adaptability of the CIS model is demonstrated when we look at its effectiveness across various settings (by locale, demographics, and school level).

As mentioned in Core Finding #1, the consistency of positive outcomes among all CIS schools – and especially high implementing schools– is striking. Taken a step further, it is apparent that consistently positive outcomes remain no matter the context or setting. CIS sites outperformed their comparison sites across urban, rural, and suburban locations; across elementary, middle, and high schools; and across the primary demographic make-up of the school (i.e., race/ethnicity). In other words, CIS appears to work no matter where it is located.

“With the benefit now of 30 years of national replication, I can say that the CIS model is demonstrably adaptable to just about any location that wants it – urban, suburban, or rural. The key is to retain the *form* – integrated student support services delivered at the school site – while leaving the *content* flexible, depending on each community's particular strengths and challenges.”

- Bill Milliken, cited in *The Last Dropout*, p. 153

■ **Finding 2.1: Urban and suburban sites focused on different service models, which drove different outcomes.**

As shown in Exhibit 7, when we separate the outcomes of urban, suburban, and rural sites, some interesting patterns emerge. Most importantly, CIS sites – regardless of their location – outperformed their comparison sites on most outcomes. However, we found that greatest improvement varied by setting across the outcomes of interest as follows:

Suburban schools had the most success in lowering dropout rates, while urban schools had the most success in improving graduation rates. Compared to their rural

counterparts, urban and suburban schools employed relatively more intensive site coordination, needs assessment processes, and monitoring of student progress.

Rural sites performed best on academic outcomes, which is not surprising considering that they offered more targeted and sustained academic assistance to students in need than did urban and suburban sites.

Exhibit 7: Quasi-Experimental Study Outcomes: Urban vs. Suburban vs. Rural Schools

Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period

Outcome	Urban Schools: Net Change	Suburban Schools: Net Change	Rural Schools: Net Change
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	0.6%	4.9%	0.4%
Graduation Rate	2.8%	1.8%	-0.2%
Attendance	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
Math (All Grades)	2.5%	-0.6%	3.3%
Reading (All Grades)	-1.0%	0.8%	1.4%

■ **Finding 2.2: CIS schools that were predominantly Hispanic/Latino reported gains in academics; these sites also were implementing the CIS model at a high level.**

The National Evaluation team broke down the results of the quasi-experimental study by the predominant race/ethnicity at a school. Using a 60 percent cutoff, we categorized each school. For example, if 62 percent of the students in the school were African-American, we categorized the school as “African-American”.

The results of this analysis are presented in Exhibit 8. Predominantly Hispanic/Latino and Diverse schools (i.e., schools without a 60 percent majority of any race/ethnicity) showed the most positive change in most outcomes. These schools also had the strongest implementation of the CIS model. Still, schools that were predominantly African-American posted gains in increasing graduation and reducing dropout. Schools that were predominantly White had, on average, the least positive change above their comparison sites.

**Exhibit 8: Quasi-Experimental Study Outcomes:
By Predominant (60%+) Race of Students in School**

Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Three-Year Period

Outcome	African-American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Diverse
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	1.8%	0.9%	1.7%	1.8%
Graduation Rate	2.1%	2.8%	-1.6%	4.6%
Attendance	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Math (All Grades)	0.6%	2.6%	-0.7%	4.0%
Reading (All Grades)	-2.2%	0.3%	1.0%	0.3%

- **Finding 2.3: Elementary and middle schools reported gains in academic achievement, which underscores the importance of reaching students early.**

Overall, CIS schools reported gains in math scores at the elementary, middle, and high school levels – but gains in reading were mixed (Exhibit 9). Consider, however, what happens when schools fully implemented the CIS model with fidelity: academic improvements were strong, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. This finding underscores the importance of reaching students early to maximize their chances of future success.

Further information from the case studies and randomized controlled trials will help to determine why academic performance lagged at the high school level. One possible explanation is that, since CIS is keeping more students in school, lower overall school averages in academic achievement may result simply because more students at lower performance levels are staying in school. By keeping students in school, CIS is giving them a better chance to succeed in life.

Exhibit 9: School-Level Outcomes from the Quasi-Experimental Study

Net Change between CIS Schools and Their Comparison Schools Over a Four-Year Period

Outcome	Net Change: CIS Over Comparison	Net Change: CIS High Implementer Over Comparison
<i>Elementary Schools</i>		
Grade 4 Math	+2.2%	+5.2%
Grade 4 Reading	-0.1%	+2.3%
Attendance: Elementary	+0.1%	+0.2%
<i>Middle Schools</i>		
Grade 8 Math	+2.0%	+6.0%
Grade 8 Reading	-0.1%	+5.1%
Attendance: Middle	+0.3%	+0.1%
<i>High Schools</i>		
Grade 10 Math	+0.4%	+0.8%
Grade 10 Reading	-0.3%	-0.3%
Attendance: High	+0.3%	+0.3%
Dropout Rate (Promoting Power)	+2.0%	+3.6%
Graduation Rate	+1.7%	+4.8%

Core Finding #3: Compared with other youth-serving organizations, CIS’s performance on dropout prevention and improving graduation rates is particularly strong.

Compared with other large-scale or well-known dropout prevention programs, CIS reported very respectable reductions in dropout. CIS stood alone, however, in its impact on high school graduation. Details of these findings are presented below.

The National Evaluation team used outcomes reported by the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse to benchmark CIS against other large-scale or well-known dropout prevention programs.⁶ Our results are summarized in Exhibit 10.

⁶ National Evaluation staff have been engaged in the What Works Clearinghouse Dropout Review since 2003, and while CIS has not yet been reviewed, Caliber has staffed leadership positions for this review as well. Effect sizes for CIS outcomes in this report contain statistical conversions based on methods used in similar What Works Clearinghouse reviews.

■ **Finding 3.1: Among dropout prevention programs using scientifically-based evidence, CIS demonstrated the strongest impact on high school on-time graduation rates.**

For the past several years, the What Works Clearinghouse has been engaged in a review of dropout prevention programs. One of the interesting findings from this review has been that, although many programs have been able to lower dropout rates, only a handful of programs have had an impact on high school completion. The What Works Clearinghouse review has not found any program that has had a marked impact on high school graduation rates. The only programs that have been proven to have an effect on high school completion did so by helping students earn their GEDs, not graduate from high school with a regular diploma, as CIS has done.

This fact makes the findings in Exhibit 10 all the more compelling. Compared with large-scale or well-known dropout prevention programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse, CIS had the strongest effect on students' on-time graduation rates.

"Yesenia Lupian is the third of seven children and the oldest daughter in her family. After she was expelled from her junior high school in Baytown, Texas, she was placed in a hospital program for 30 days due to severe depression and family problems and was treated for suicidal thoughts and repeated runaway attempts. She was then put in the educational-alternative school for the local district, where she enrolled in Communities In Schools of Baytown.

Today, Yesenia plans to attend college and become a certified nurse working with troubled teens. She currently has a job as an aide with CIS of Baytown's Gang Activity Prevention after-school program for elementary students. Since participating in CIS, she has received many high school academic and leadership honors and achievement awards. She'll graduate this year with honors, a year ahead of her class, and has received a \$1,000 college scholarship.

Yesenia says, "The CIS of Baytown program has helped me to remain in school and graduate. My desire was to be the first female in my family to graduate from high school. Without CIS, I would have probably quit school and never tried to go to college. I would like the opportunity to work with teenagers with family problems like myself because it gives me the chance to give back – to help them like others helped me."

-- *The Last Dropout*, p. 205

Robert Guy, on his experience at the Classic City Performance Learning Center (PLC) in Athens, Georgia: "I have teachers who genuinely care about me and who would do anything to make sure I succeed...I am at a place where people care about my dreams, goals and future...Without this school, CIS, and Classic City PLC, I doubt I would have made it."

-- *The Last Dropout*, p.209

Results in Exhibit 10 are shown in terms of effect sizes.⁷ CIS high implementers reported the highest effect sizes for graduation rates, compared to other large-scale dropout prevention programs. The effect sizes for CIS may be conservative, considering that CIS's effect sizes are reported at the school level and the other What Works Clearinghouse reviews were done at the student level (i.e., the greater the aggregation of results, the more difficult it is to show impact). As the National Evaluation team obtains student-level results from the experimental study (i.e., using students who received intensive, sustained case management), these effect sizes may very well expand.

Interestingly, the programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse with the largest effects on high school completion demonstrated little or no effect on high school graduation rates. At the time of this writing, the three dropout prevention programs shown to have the greatest effect on high school completion were:

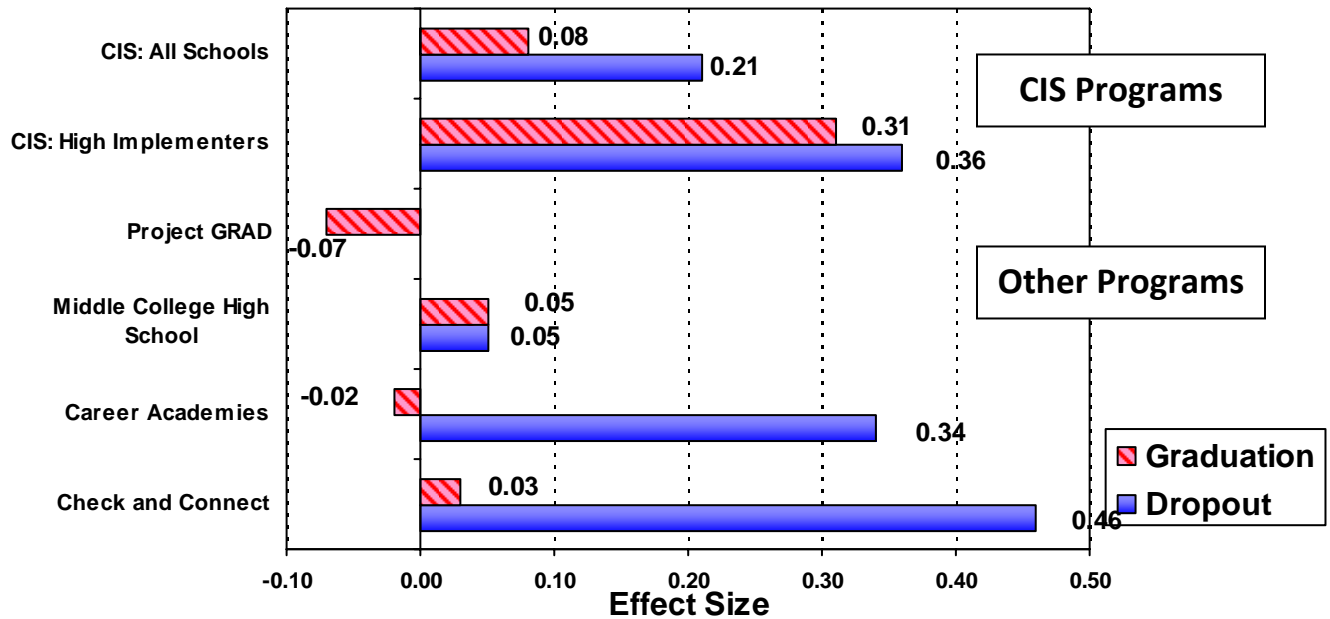
- ❖ *Talent Search*: Positive effects on high school completion (effect size: .43); however, no data were presented on high school graduation vs. GED completion.
- ❖ *JOBSTART*: Potentially positive effects on high school completion (effect size: .36), but a negative effect on high school graduation rates (effect size: -.36).
- ❖ *New Chance*: Potentially positive effects on high school completion (effect size: .20), but a negative effect on high school graduation rates (effect size: -.27).

Given that CIS has a measurable effect on high school graduation rates, the expectations for favorable findings are very promising.

- **Finding 3.2: The reduction in dropout rates reported by CIS schools in this study is strong relative to other dropout prevention programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse (US DOE).**

⁷ Effect sizes represent a standard measure to compare the magnitude of impacts between programs by comparing the net change between treatment and comparison groups in terms of pooled standard deviation units. CIS high implementers reported an effect size of .12 for graduation rates.

Exhibit 10: Dropout and Graduation Effect Sizes -- CIS Compared to Other Large-Scale Dropout Programs



Overall, CIS schools reported success in lowering dropout rates. CIS schools implementing the model with a high degree of fidelity (i.e., “high implementers” as defined in the implementation study) had considerably greater effects on reducing dropout rates than other CIS schools (i.e., “partial implementers”), suggesting that the CIS model is working.

Although CIS was not the top performer in reducing dropout rates as shown in Exhibit 10, it should be noted that Check & Connect (the WWC’s top performer in reducing dropout) uses a model similar to CIS. The program’s components of “checking” with students to ensure that they are going to school and “connecting” the student with resources is quite similar to the core CIS model. However, Check & Connect, for all of its successes in reducing dropout rates, did not have as large an effect on completing high school as CIS.

When making any side-by-side comparisons between organizations and programs, it is helpful not only to identify the most successful programs, but also the most successful programs for the price. Exhibit 11 compares the cost of implementing CIS to other peer organizations included in the What Works Clearinghouse.

Exhibit 11: Peer Organization Comparison

Program	Cost Per Student	Number of Schools	Number of Students
CIS	<\$200	3,400	1.2 million
Career Academies	\$600	1,600 high schools	48,000-96,000+
Check and Connect	\$1,400	2 currently	Not given

CIS offers services available to all students at the whole-school level (Level 1) as well as targeted, sustained services at the individual level (Level 2), while Career Academies and Check and Connect are Level 2 service programs. Consequently, the cost per student in Exhibit 11 represents more cost-intensive services for the latter two programs than for CIS. The results of this report suggest that CIS’s mix of Level 1 and Level 2 services may be comparably as effective as the more cost-intensive Level 2-only service approach of other programs.

Conclusion

As results from the other studies that make up the National Evaluation of CIS become available, we will be able to build on these school-level findings. Currently, two student-level experimental studies are being conducted in Jacksonville, Florida and Austin, Texas. These studies will provide an even higher standard of evidence for determining the effectiveness of the CIS model, and will help corroborate findings from the school-level studies.

Given that CIS is demonstrating impacts on entire schools – even when not all students are receiving intensive, case-managed CIS services – we anticipate that the student-level findings may be even more compelling. The experimental studies will allow us to say for the first time whether CIS *causes* impacts at the student level. By making this link between what CIS does and how it affects students, their families, and their schools, we will be able to determine the precise impacts of the program.

In April and May 2008, eight case studies will be conducted to help understand *how* CIS schools are achieving the impacts detailed in this report. Combined with highly rigorous studies at the student level, we will be able to produce findings that have an unprecedented level of comprehensiveness and detail.

Ultimately, CIS is not about numbers: it's about people. Precious Oliver's story is only one of many that demonstrate that CIS is having a real impact on students' lives. By gaining a thorough, scientific understanding of what make CIS work for Precious – and for millions of other students nationwide – CIS ultimately hopes to increase the number of success stories by helping more students in more schools.