



The Communities In Schools National Evaluation: Mid-Level Findings

In July 2008, Communities In Schools announced the first set of findings from a five-year longitudinal evaluation, the CIS National Evaluation. This study, which was conducted by ICF International, was designed to determine whether CIS has an impact on student-level and school-level outcomes. The initial results provide third-party, independent confirmation of what Communities In Schools has been proving for more than 30 years—the organization has a positive effect on keeping kids in school and helping them graduate prepared for life.

The CIS National Evaluation explores the impact of the CIS Model for integrated student services*, and the contribution of the national, state and local CIS organizations in support of this impact. The study meets the highest level of research rigor and, at its conclusion, will yield results that meet the “gold standard” of scientifically-based evidence established by the U.S. Department of Education. Now at the mid-point of the study, the research confirms the effect of the CIS Model on school-wide outcomes. Research continues with randomized control trials to determine student level impact.

Overview of Findings

Results from the newly released school-level evaluation confirm that, compared to other dropout prevention programs listed in the Department of Education’s best practice website, the “What Works Clearinghouse,” CIS is:

- One of a small number of dropout prevention organizations with *scientifically-based evidence of effectiveness*
- Of these, one of a handful proven to *decrease dropout rates*, and...
- The only organization proven to *increase graduation rates*

Results also confirm:

- CIS performs better than comparison schools in increasing the percentage of students meeting or exceeding math and reading proficiency in fourth and eighth grade.
- When the CIS Model of integrated student services is implemented with high fidelity, it correlates much more positively with school outcomes than mere service provision alone.
- Having a site coordinator on site more than 50 percent of the time correlates to much stronger positive school outcomes than when a site coordinator is present less than 50 percent of the time.

Specifically, when outcomes of CIS schools that have high fidelity to the CIS Model were compared with closely matched comparison schools:

- 3.6 percent fewer students dropped out
- 4.8 percent more students graduated on time with a regular diploma
- 5.3 percent and 6 percent more students reached proficiency in fourth- and eighth-grade math, respectively

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- 2 percent and 4.9 percent more students reached proficiency in fourth- and eighth-grade reading, respectively

Significance of the Findings

Based on the numbers listed above, in a high school of 1,000 students, 36 more will remain in school and 48 more will graduate on time with a regular diploma. However, without a frame of reference, it is difficult to interpret these numbers, when compared to other research findings. To determine the magnitude of these numbers, CIS uses a system employed by the U.S. Department of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education uses a measure called “effect size” to compare on a common scale the strength and magnitude of outcomes from different initiatives. According to the Department of Education standards, an effect size of .25 or higher represents a very positive outcome. Among CIS schools where the CIS Model is implemented with high fidelity, the effect size of CIS’ dropout and graduation rates are .36 and .31, respectively. In addition, among these high implementing CIS schools, the effect size of eighth-grade math and reading proficiency rates is .53 and .36, respectively.

National Implications

The initial results of this study make a compelling case for the CIS Model of integrated student services to anyone who works on behalf of children. Leaders in public policy and education can use these findings with confidence to support improved school reform efforts. Practitioners in the youth development sector can now adapt these evidence-based strategies with proven results into their programs. Philanthropists and foundations can use this data to support the strategic investment of resources; this cost-effective model will leverage far greater results.

The CIS Model

The CIS Model is CIS’ unique approach to providing community based, integrated student services. The CIS National Evaluation measures the impact of this model. Components of the CIS Model include:

- Active engagement of a school-based, CIS site coordinator
- Comprehensive school- and student-level needs assessment
- Community asset assessment and identification of service partners
- Annual school- and student-level plans for delivery of prevention and intervention services
- Delivery of appropriate prevention and intervention services
- Data collection and evaluation for reporting and modification of service strategies

The Third-Party Evaluator

ICF International (formerly Caliber Associates) is one of the top research firms in the United States with a reputation for high quality, comprehensive evaluations. ICF spent two years with CIS developing a ground-breaking research design specifically addressing the complex nature of the CIS network. This design has gained national attention.

For more information and to view the complete study, go to www.communitiesinschools.org.

**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. Through a single point of contact, individual student needs are assessed and research-based connections made between students and targeted community resources.*

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