



CIS: YOUR PARTNER IN TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR LOUISIANA'S VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Response to Request for Information

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Partner Background - The impact of poverty is immense, not just on the educational aspirations of our children but on their health as well as the economic and social fabric of the United States. Our challenge as a nation is to invest strategically in proven solutions to create social change. **Communities In Schools (CIS) is a proven evidence-based solution, one that is effective, cost-efficient, and sustainable and works in any type of school or community. CIS is the nation's leading and most effective dropout prevention and student support organization at scale in America.** The CIS model recognizes that too many traditional education reform strategies fail to address what kids deal with every day: poverty, lack of adult role models, and the absence of such basic needs as food, shelter, and health care. These disadvantaged students often endure toxic stress that impedes their ability to learn even though they are fully capable of achieving in school, trapping them in a cycle of underperformance and more often than not leading to high dropout rates. Last year, the CIS network of more than 160 communities in 25 states and Washington, D.C. connected valuable resources to 1.5 million students and their families in 2,300 schools. **CIS currently operates in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Shreveport) and surrounds nearly 10,000 students with a community of support in 21 schools, empowering them to graduate and succeed in life.**

CIS works inside charter schools and traditional school systems with superintendents, principals, educators, and other personnel to forge community partnerships that bring resources into schools and help remove barriers to student learning. CIS addresses both the total student—physical, psychological, and social needs—and the whole school environment. Our research has shown that this attention to the needs of individual students and the school is critical to reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. Comprehensive and integrated student supports (ISS) are provided in each participating school through a single point of contact—the school-based Site Coordinator. Site Coordinators are skilled professionals who tailor services to the needs of individual students. Services may encompass academic help, provision of health care, counseling, transportation, donated goods, mentoring, afterschool programs, and much more. For nearly 40 years, the CIS Model has proven to be a cost-effective model that district leaders recognize as a critical component of successful school turnaround. **CIS' model of integrated student supports works in ANY school, no matter the governance structure or locale, where children are struggling, by removing non-academic barriers to success and creating equity through guided access to services.**

CIS has been a ten-year partner in Louisiana's efforts to turn around outcomes for students in chronically low-performing schools and has contributed to the impressive progress of students and teachers noted in the Louisiana ESSA Framework, in partnership with more than 14 LEAs including the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board. **CIS is positioned to support Louisiana in ways that will favorably impact, either directly or indirectly, all five challenges articulated in its framework.**

1 – CIS will be a resource to LEAs as they enlist partners to achieve academic and graduation goals, increase the success of English language learners, meet nonacademic goals to improve school climate, engage parents and families, and promote college and career readiness. With its significant experience working with students heavily impacted by chronic poverty, CIS will draw upon evidence-based approaches produced by the network of CIS communities and be a partner in the planning and implementation strategies chosen by Louisiana districts and charter schools. We will help inform impactful practices in assessing needs at the school and student level,

developing school and student support plans, brokering and providing evidence-based interventions, monitoring and adjusting supports, and evaluating school and student progress.

2 – CIS will support the Louisiana DOE and LEAs with accountability to close the achievement gap among students and increase success for chronically underperforming schools. CIS will implement evidence-based interventions, integrate student support for chronically struggling subgroups of students, and partner with the state to bring comprehensive supports to the lowest performing five percent of schools in the state. CIS is not only skilled in seeking out and connecting community resources to students and families, it has particular expertise in creating value by combining service providers to create new or more effective services and creates intervention services when there is insufficient capacity to do so. Bringing national and regional service providers into not only urban, but the mid- and small-sized cities and rural areas will be a key focus of our work.

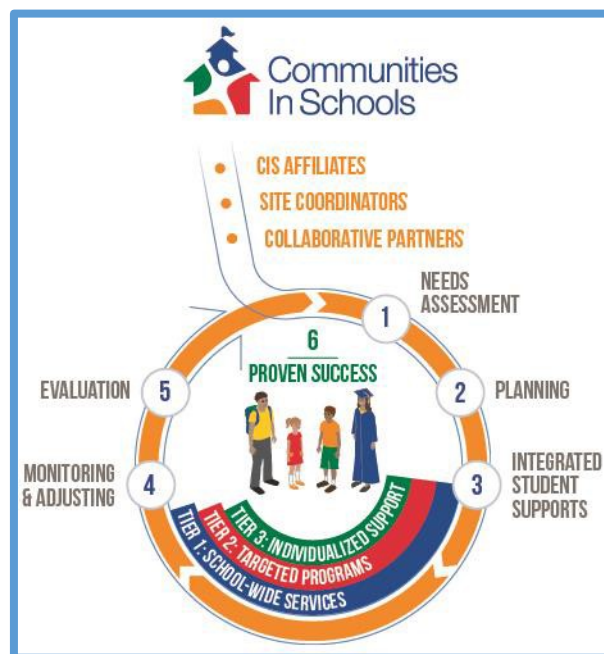
3 – CIS will demonstrate with LEAs how to use financial resources effectively and efficiently to produce a significant return on the investment. CIS will advocate for effective use of federal, state, and local dollars for academic and nonacademic resources for schools in poverty and with subgroups of vulnerable students. With an aligned public and private partnership model, CIS allows state education agencies and school districts to use their resources most effectively by integrating external partners in an impactful way. In fact, an external study of CIS demonstrated that every dollar invested in our work creates over \$11 in value to the community (see evidence section below). For instance, in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, CIS has leveraged the \$5.6 million invested by schools in CIS services to generate another \$9 million in public and private support to provide its intervention strategies since Hurricane Katrina. Economies of scale will be a consideration of any strategy considered by a district outside the major cities. The CIS model is scalable and efficient beyond what LEAs can achieve on their own, especially when considering the ability of CIS to motivate charitable dollars from those who want to support students and public education.

Evidence of Effectiveness - CIS has a national track record of delivering local results that lower dropout rates and improve graduation rates in high-poverty schools. CIS has invested \$8.5M in third-party evaluations that include 13 independent studies. The evidence-based practices CIS deploys are anchored by a national research advisory council that continuously evolves the research agenda. Full reports are linked in the study titles, but highlights include:

- [**Randomized Control Trial Study of Case Managed Students**](#) (ICF International) – Students receiving case managed support during critical transition years had more favorable outcomes than non-case managed students. Students received more course credits toward graduation, higher grade point averages, and higher average daily attendance during their 9th grade year; students were less likely to be retained during 6th grade, and students in middle school committed fewer disciplinary infractions.
- [**Quasi-Experimental School-Level Study**](#) (ICF International) - Schools where the CIS model of integrated student supports was implemented with fidelity experienced more favorable schoolwide outcomes than similar schools without CIS. CIS model schools experienced lower dropout rates, higher promotion rates, and higher on-time graduation rates.
- [**Teacher Study**](#) (ICF International) – In a survey of more than 1,500 teachers, teachers report that CIS helps develop a greater commitment to learning among students, improves student behavior, increases students' engagement in and attitude towards learning, and connects students to resources needed for learning. Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated their job would be more difficult without the help of CIS and that they are better able to improve student achievement.
- [**Economic Impact Study of the CIS Model**](#) (EMSI) - The Economic Impact Study conducted by EMSI found that every dollar invested in CIS creates \$11.60 of benefit for the community.

The Communities In Schools Model - In many communities, fragmented support services are spread across government agencies, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations, or don't exist at all. Students and families who are successful at navigating service options arrive at their doors and then receive a specific service in isolation. Within the schools, teachers and principals are overwhelmed by the emotional, social, and health needs of students and are not sure where to turn. In contrast, the CIS Model enables students to be linked to a broad set of community resources that address a myriad of needs in a coordinated way, enabling teachers to teach and students to learn. The effectiveness of the CIS Model stems from the integration of three tiers of supports. CIS provides school-wide Tier I services geared towards specific school needs that the general student body can benefit from. Simultaneously, CIS Site Coordinators work with school leaders to identify a subset of the most at-risk students, who then receive targeted and/or individualized interventions (Tiers II & III) based on their identified needs.

Through the efforts of the school-based Site Coordinator, student needs are assessed and students are then connected to community-based educational and/or social services. As a part of the school management team, each CIS Site Coordinator conducts an assessment to determine the needs of the entire school and then maps those needs to district resources and community providers, helping remove barriers to learning. **Site Coordinators will ensure a team of professionals and volunteers provide support in academics, basic needs, behavioral interventions, college and career preparation, community/service learning, enrichment, family engagement, life skills, mental health, and physical health. Sometimes, intervention services are provided by CIS itself, an important consideration for those schools in communities with limited services.**



In addition, the Louisiana Framework acknowledges the reluctance of some district leaders to partner with external providers. **CIS has demonstrated its success at overcoming this barrier, in Louisiana as well as across the country. This year alone, CIS is working with nearly 400 school districts and 11,000 community partners as a third-party provider on building school and district improvement plans.** For example, in Caddo Parish, the superintendent is an active member of the CIS board and is deeply committed operationally and financially. Thus, ideal partner schools and LEAs will have leadership with a deep understanding of the importance of supporting the academic and nonacademic needs of students, demonstrate an openness to working with outside partners, trust the evidence behind the CIS model, and be willing to advocate for their school teams collaboratively planning and implementing strategies. They will commit to ensuring fidelity to the model, including supporting staff using the CIS data management system to track performance. To be successful, CIS seeks formal commitment from the state and LEAs that include official agreements for partnership, funding, and fidelity to implementing the CIS Model in each selected school.