



Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee Hearing Communities In Schools Integrated Student Supports June 12, 2018

Good morning,

Thank you to Senator Langerholc and the Senate Education Committee for inviting me today to offer a few words about something I am passionate about ... Communities In Schools (CIS). I am Tim Mulligan, President of Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley. In September, our affiliate will be serving in 37 schools in 6 districts in Northampton, Lehigh and Berks Counties and reaching 30,000 children. Our job is to change lives, families, schools and communities. Let me begin with how one young woman's life is looking much better than it did just 3 years ago.

Maria, like so many children, grew up in a difficult home situation. She did not know her father. Her mother was an alcoholic and Maria says that at 8 years old, she was taking care of her siblings and her mother. When Maria entered her teen years, she wanted to get away from her situation and unfortunately, she made a pact with herself that she would kill herself in order to do this. She made 3 suicide attempts and each one landed her in psychiatric care but nothing really changed for her. Her failing grades, disciplinary issues at school, and poor attendance were reason to refer her to CIS.

CIS began to meet Maria one-on-one in a case managed relationship to build a trusting relationship. Maria found CIS site coordinators who cared for her and wanted her to succeed. They connected. Her Site coordinator helped her to deal with her depression and trauma through Social Emotional group supports including grief and loss, decision-making, art for relaxation, mindfulness training and Service Leadership groups. Maria began to see hope in her life, improve her outlook and begin to succeed in school. There is so much to say about Maria and her turnaround. Today Maria has a 3.5 GPA at a 4-year college. She is a leader on campus and has goals to own her own business and give back to the community to help young women like herself. She is on the way to success.

Why are so many students are not succeeding in school?

Students like Maria must have essential needs met before they can succeed in school. Before a child can succeed in Algebra, she has to have food, a decent place to live, health care and transportation. Then there is the mental health issues in our kids,

trauma and what we call adverse childhood experiences or ACES. Surely we can't take pain out of anyone's life but we need to make sure kids have help to get through them. These are just a few of the many barriers that inhibit student success.

CIS understands that students do not always come to school ready to learn. We need to understand the root cause and ensure that students and their families have access and opportunity to help. That is where CIS steps in. CIS is both a human service agency and educational nonprofit that surrounds students with a community of support and empowers students to stay in school and achieve in life. We deliver services and connect students to solutions. Below are a few of the unique aspects of the CIS approach and philosophy.

1) IN Schools to help kids succeed

One of the unique aspects of CIS is that our staff have offices in the schools during all hours of school operation. This allows CIS unique access to students and to create strong relationships with building staff including teachers, administration and guidance counselors.

2) Holistic approach

The CIS approach addresses the whole child. Students are referred to CIS site coordinators based on poor academics, truancy and behavior issues. However, we realize that the root causes are often one or more nonacademic barriers affecting the student or his home situation. Many times the student is already receiving one or more services from various providers. CIS serves as a router—connecting the partners to ensure efficient and effective delivery of service.

3) Evidence Based Integrated Student Supports model

CIS has a national record of accomplishment 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. A national research advisory council that continuously reviews the research agenda anchors CIS evidence-based practices.

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 school wide 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.

4) Trauma and Mental Health Component

CIS site coordinators are counselors and social workers who understand school systems, community resources and family dynamics. They focus their attention on the mental health needs of students including the effects of Trauma and ACES. CIS site coordinators are leaders in addressing MH needs and building resilience skills in students and families.

5) Our Foundation: Trusting Relationships with a Caring Adult

We believe that every student deserves a one-to-one relationship with a caring adult in his/her life. Often the CIS site coordinator fills this role and offers a vision of a future full of hope and a pathway to get there. Our commitment to forming trusting relationships is the central ingredient to our success.

6) When you have CIS, you have our Partners too!

CIS site coordinators not only provide direct service but we do some of our most important work by connecting students and families to our vast partnerships and community resources. By forming vital relationships with businesses, faith communities, law enforcement, higher education, and foundations, CIS leverages financial and non-financial resources that create cost effective strategies engaging academic and nonacademic concerns. Resources include mentorship, tutoring, health care and mental health services, basic needs, college and career readiness, family engagement, truancy supports, school safety, bullying, and address trauma. The result is a better-resourced school and a community that has taken ownership of its schools and its children.

7) Leveraging Funding and Resources

CIS blends various sources of public and private funding in order to expand our reach to serve more students and schools while driving high impact. Funding streams include various federal resources such as CDBG as well as Title I and Title 4 funding from the Dept. of Education. CIS Integrated Student Supports are called out in the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) and in the PA State ESSA plan as an important School improvement strategy. Because ISS is an evidence-based practice, it is eligible for other grants and public funding in both education and human services. CIS is also an approved provider for EITC as a School Improvement Organization for our ISS supports.

8) Tailored Approach for Elementary, Middle and High Schools

Communities In Schools model of Integrated Student Supports is not a one-size-fits-all approach. After conducting an annual needs assessment, the CIS site coordinator develops a school support plan with goals and strategies to address needs of the whole school. Strategies include small group and individual case managed supports. The goals and strategies vary by school needs, size and setting. A large urban high school will have different goals than a rural middle school or a suburban elementary school.

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