



Communities In Schools' Formula for Success: The 'Five Basics'

Communities In Schools believes that every child needs and deserves these "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

The Five Basics grew out of the organization's collective experience during the first two decades of its existence. Each Basic is critical to keeping kids in school and helping them prepare for life. The Basics are, quite simply, what every parent wants for his or her own children.

The 1st Basic: A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult.

In previous generations, a mother and father, living together, were expected to meet their children's need for caring relationships with adults. In many cases there was also an extended family and a religious community, both of which served as mediating structures and provided a safety net for children. But today, millions of young people don't have traditional families, and the mediating structures have weakened or collapsed. It's up to the entire community to make sure these children have someone who cares about them.

CIS affiliates provide the 1st Basic by connecting students with mentors (including family mentoring) and a wealth of community volunteers from businesses and faith-based institutions, among others. In addition, CIS staff often provide key relationships for students. In the words of CIS founder Bill Milliken: "Programs don't change kids – *relationships* do."

The 2nd Basic: A safe place to learn and grow.

In today's world, a child's neighborhood is not necessarily a safe or nurturing place. Schools, too, are not always safe and secure. Now, the extended family is much less common, and youth do not feel that they're living in a community where they are known and cared about. For many kids, it's much worse than that. They *know* they're living in a bad, unhealthy place: where violence, drugs, gangs, unemployment and multigenerational poverty are commonplace.

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The school can and should be a safe place for children, both physically and emotionally, and both during and outside of normal school hours. CIS affiliates provide the 2nd Basic by facilitating before- and after-school programs, summer programs, gang intervention and prevention, violence prevention and school safety programs, “safe streets” initiatives, and community programs during the evenings and on weekends. Moreover, research demonstrates that CIS’ presence within a school will positively affect the entire school climate.

The 3rd Basic: A healthy start and a healthy future.

How can children concentrate on schoolwork if they’re hungry, cold or having trouble seeing the blackboard? Basic health and human services are essential for every child. When families are themselves in need (and often baffled about how to get assistance from the labyrinth of public agencies), it’s up to the community to step in. CIS affiliates provide the 3rd Basic by connecting students and families with health care, vision and dental exams, child care, teen parenting resources, mental health services, substance abuse prevention and intervention, sports and recreation programs, and much more.

The 4th Basic: A marketable skill to use upon graduation.

Our children must acquire the knowledge, self-respect and discipline they’ll need in order to secure a future for themselves and their families. As the American economy has shifted from an industrial-based model to one based on service, young people need a different set of skills to be successful after they complete school – whether they enter college or the world of work. In addition to basic computer and literacy skills, today’s labor force requires workers who have problem-solving skills, analytical ability and personal qualities like adaptability and self-management.

CIS affiliates provide the 4th Basic through tutoring, literacy programs, career planning, employment training and job-shadowing, leadership skills training, and assistance with college planning and funding.

The 5th Basic: A chance to give back to peers and community.

CIS founder Bill Milliken was once asked at a Congressional hearing, “What is the difference between the kids you’ve seen make it and the ones who didn’t?” He replied, “The children I have seen succeed are the children we *allowed* to succeed. We allowed them to give something to us. We need to listen to them, and then get them involved in feeding people, tutoring other children -- that’s how they feel part of a community.”

Every child ought to have a chance to give back. The community must create environments for young people in which everyone’s gifts are nurtured, and service to others is expected and rewarded. CIS affiliates provide the 5th Basic to students by creating opportunities for community service, service-learning, mentoring and tutoring younger children, volunteering with senior citizens, special community arts projects, and much more.

Communities In Schools National Office

277 South Washington Street, Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314

Ph: 800-CIS-4KIDS ▾ 703-518-2545 ▾ Fax: 703-837-4556 ▾ www.cisnet.org

Deborah Veney Robinson, Vice President of Communications