



## **THE CASE FOR CIS**

### **THE CRISIS**

Every school day 7,000 students drop out. That's one million annually or one of every three students. These are young people, who, with minimal interventions, have the potential and ability to make substantial societal contributions. Yet in the current climate, they stand a better chance of going to prison, receiving social services or ending up on the streets.

Life as a dropout is pretty bleak; half the adult prison population has not finished high school. For those dropouts who do manage to find employment, job choices are very limited. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that 90 percent of new high-growth, high-wage jobs will require some post-secondary education, in comparison to decades past, when even a high school dropout could find a manufacturing or agricultural sector position that would support a middle-class family. Today, the average high school dropout earns about \$17,000 annually compared to almost \$53,000 for a college graduate.

However, this crisis impacts not only dropouts, but all of society. Dropouts impose a heavy financial burden on taxpayers and local, state and federal governments. Each dropout costs society approximately \$260,000, due to lost income and taxes, increased need for social supports, higher criminal justice costs, costs associated with an inadequate workforce and the lack of social mobility. Multiply these costs by one million students each year, and the result is a staggering \$260 billion. Our society cannot possibly continue to absorb this. Stopping the dropout rate is not a bail-out; it is a way out, of this crisis. This is a crisis that transcends social, political, economic and moral boundaries.

### **THE ANSWER**

Communities In Schools (CIS) is the nation's largest dropout prevention organization, founded more than 30 years ago on the concept that students can and will achieve academically, when the resources to address their academic and social service needs are tailored, coordinated and accessible. A CIS site coordinator supports students by facilitating the delivery of essential community resources requested by schools and parents. Whether a student needs a mentor, eyeglasses, help with homework, a nutritious meal, assistance with college applications or just a safe place to be, CIS finds the resources and delivers them inside schools, where students spend their days. This unique model, known as integrated student services, serves 1.2 million students in 3200 schools in 27 states and the District of Columbia.

### **THE OPPORTUNITY**

Policymakers will face many challenges during the coming months and years, but few will have a lasting impact like reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. Congress and the new Administration should: (1) fund student support coordinators in all low-income schools and schools with significant performance gaps; (2) require consistently struggling districts and schools to conduct a student resource-need analysis and identify prospective community-based student support providers, such as CIS, to meet those needs; and (3) identify and support a national, research-based, technical assistance provider to ensure effective implementation of the integrated student services model.

## **THE FACTS**

### **CIS WORKS**

A rigorous, independent, scientifically-based evaluation recently concluded that CIS is the only dropout prevention organization in the nation that increases on-time graduation rates and increases the number of students reaching proficiency in fourth- and eight-grade reading and math.

### **CIS IS ACCOUNTABLE**

CIS affiliates are accountable on many levels, with several points for measurement and evaluation. This accountability includes measuring students' academic results, behavior, promotion to the next grade level and attendance. If a local CIS is not supporting a school district, they are not going to serve that school district for very long. Local and state CIS networks' and affiliates are accountable to the national office. They report data annually in compliance with national CIS standards. These standards are based on research from best practices.

### **CIS IS FLEXIBLE AND SCALABLE**

CIS creates comprehensive, locally controlled and owned support systems around schools. In partnership with local schools, CIS site coordinators identify the most critical needs of students and families, then locate and coordinate available community resources. The schools served by CIS range from large urban settings like Atlanta, Chicago, Las Vegas, New Orleans and Los Angeles to smaller rural areas like Cedar Valley in Iowa, Clay County in North Carolina, Orting, Washington and Western Pennsylvania. CIS affiliates are locally controlled and reflect the unique character of the communities they serve.

### **CIS IS INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE**

CIS harnesses tremendous power and support from businesses, communities and individuals. With more than 16,000 local partners and 49,000 volunteers, CIS' workforce is nearly 95 percent volunteer. These volunteers provide more than \$50 million in time, services and support for students. CIS provides services at an average cost of only \$180 per student. CIS effectively leverages public dollars against in-kind donations, and financial support from individual donors, private foundations and the business community.

**Source: "Locating the Dropout Crisis", Balfanz and Letgers June 2004; "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts", Bridgeland et. al. March 2006; "The Crisis in America's High Schools", Alliance for Excellent Education 2007; American Youth Policy Forum, "Dropouts, Diplomas and Dollars" Alliance for Excellent Education 2008.**