

FACT SHEET

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AT SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

New Mexico currently ranks 49th in the nation for child welfare, well-being, and quality education. New Mexico has a 35 percent dropout rate and 29 percent of New Mexico's children live in poverty¹. Dropping out of school de-stabilizes the lives of young people and communities. Dropouts are more likely to end up living in poverty and are also more likely to suffer poor health, be dependent on social services, and enter the juvenile justice system.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2012), if we were able to graduate half of the students who drop out of school each year, New Mexico would see the following economic benefits annually:

- \$58 million in increased spending put back into the local and state economy;
- \$96 million increase in the New Mexico gross domestic product (GDP) and creation of 600 new jobs; and
- \$4.9 million increase in New Mexico local and state tax revenue.

Key findings from a Legislative Finance Committee performance evaluation on Public Education Department and Higher Education Department Cost-Effective Options for Increasing High School Graduation and Improving Adult Education found:

- graduating 2,600 more students annually would produce \$700 million in net benefits to New Mexico over the lifetimes of these students;
- each additional high school graduate produces roughly \$267,000 in benefits, including \$100,000 to taxpayers and other beneficiaries and \$178,000 to participants, compared to non-graduates; and
- an increase in the state's four-year graduation rate of 10 percent, or an additional 2,600 students annually, would result in net benefits of \$700 million for each cohort year increase over the lifetimes of the students.

These benefits come primarily from increased earnings, crime reduction, and healthcare benefits. New Mexico can increase the number of students who graduate annually by reducing the number of students who drop out before completing high school.

Communities In Schools Program

Communities In Schools (CIS) has worked with local communities since 1977 to address the dropout epidemic. The program has brought 5,000 professionals, 13,000 community partners, and 50,000 volunteers into more than 2,700 public schools in the most challenged communities, in 26 states and the District of Columbia. The program has served nearly 1.5 million of the nation's most at-risk students and their families.

Communities In Schools uses a Model of Integrated Student Services (ISS), which positions a dedicated school-based coordinator inside partner schools. CIS coordinators work with the

¹ Data reported from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book.

school's principal, counselor, nurse, and classroom teachers to develop intervention and prevention plans that will help children who are at risk of falling behind in school or dropping out to stay on track, through:

- assessing school and student needs;
- establishing relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, healthcare providers; and
- parent and volunteer organizations to harness needed resources.

Communities In Schools wrap around services 'framework' relies on the following five key indicators to determine if a child is at risk to establish the right strategy to mitigate the challenges preventing the child from succeeding:

1. academic performance;
2. attendance/truancy;
3. behavioral issues;
4. lack of parental engagement/involvement; and
5. basic needs.

Communities In Schools of New Mexico

Currently, CIS of New Mexico is serving 4,500 prekindergarten through high school students in 10 of Santa Fe's most underserved and challenged public schools. CIS of New Mexico has become well known for providing for the needs of students facing challenges and is widely sought after as a primary solution to helping kids stay in school. These students received integrated student supports from CIS of New Mexico. More specifically:

- Attendance: 77 percent of students who had attendance goals met their goal. For some students, the objective was to increase the number of days they attended and for others it was to maintain their attendance levels;
- Academics: 86 percent of students with an academic performance goal met their target. Services are tailored to each student and may have included improving class grades, overall grade point average (GPA), standardized test scores, or homework completion;
- Behavior: 83 percent of students met their behavioral improvement goals; and
- Basic Needs: over 75 percent of students received assistance including food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical care, and emergency funds.

Eighty-three percent of students in the program that were promoted to the next grade level.

Independent Program Evaluation

Inner City Fund International (ICF), an internationally renowned social service research organization conducted a five-year evaluation of the CIS model. The ICF study of CIS was the largest and most comprehensive evaluation of dropout prevention programs in history. Their conclusion was that the CIS model demonstrated the strongest reduction in dropout rates among all existing fully scaled dropout prevention programs in the United States.

- Specific findings included:
 - Communities In Schools' positive effect on both dropout rates and graduation rates is unique among dropout prevention programs;
 - the higher the level of fidelity to the CIS model, the greater the effects, validating the power of the model;
 - positive effects accrued to schools across states, settings (urban, suburban, rural), grade levels, and ethnicities;
 - The Austin randomized controlled trial, demonstrated a reduction in student dropout rates that was nearly three times the What Works Clearinghouse's threshold for "substantively important" effects; and
 - In the Jacksonville Florida randomized control trial, reading scores increased on the FCAT test for CIS case-managed students the first and second year of participation. They also increased in the second year. For math scores, CIS case-managed students improved their performance over a two-year period, in comparison to noncase-managed students.

- Additional comments from the evaluation include:
 - CIS schools demonstrated positive effects on both dropout and graduation relative to their non-CIS comparison schools. Among high implementers, effect sizes were over the US Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse's threshold for a "substantively important effect";
 - fewer CIS students drop out of school during their ninth grade year. This is typically a year with high dropouts;
 - for sixth graders, CIS had a sizable and statistically significant impact on students' performance in reading. For ninth graders, the greatest impact was found on overall GPA;
 - improvement in attendance was strongest for CIS students in ninth grade; and
 - middle school students showed decreased disciplinary referrals and out of school suspensions, both decreasing by the end of sixth grade.