

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 366

UD 031 901

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TITLE Keeping Young People in School: Community Programs That Work.  
INSTITUTION Department of Justice, Washington, DC. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.  
REPORT NO NCJ-162783  
PUB DATE 1997-06-00  
NOTE 13p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Community Programs; \*Disadvantaged Youth; Dropout Programs; \*Dropouts; High Risk Students; High School Students; High Schools; \*Partnerships in Education; Prevention; \*Urban Schools; Urban Youth

ABSTRACT

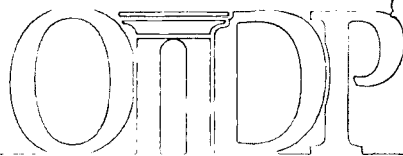
The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 1992 approximately 4.5% of all high school students dropped out of grades 10 through 12, and 11% of all persons in the age group 16 through 24 had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled. The Communities in Schools (CIS) network is a web of local, state, and national partnerships that work together to fight the dropout problem and to bring the basics every child needs to at-risk youth. Most CIS programs take place inside traditional schools, but some are delivered through a CIS academy, a free-standing facility that is sponsored largely by an individual organization. The CIS classroom model allows students to sign up for the program as an elective class, while the academy model is organized as an alternative school. The Urban Institute conducted an evaluation of CIS from 1991 through early 1994, tracking 594 CIS enrollees and evaluating the CIS programs as they existed 5 years earlier. The evaluation found that CIS had effectively promoted its model of social service delivery and had provided leadership that led to the expansion of CIS from 26 programs in 128 school sites to 93 programs with 612 schools by the end of 1993. High proportions of CIS students remained in school or graduated. The majority of students interviewed believed that participation has helped them. Five other programs that work with high-risk students are profiled, and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network is described. Local, state, and federal agencies, through programs like these, are making strides to keep youth in school and support them through graduation and beyond. (Contains eight references.) (SLD)

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Shay Bilchik, Administrator

June 1997

# JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

## Keeping Young People in School: Community Programs That Work

Sharon Cantelon and Donni LeBoeuf

### The Ripple Effect of Dropping Out of School

#### What Do the Statistics Say About Dropout Rates?

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 1992 approximately 381,000 students (4.5 percent of all high school students) ages 15 to 24 dropped out of grades 10 through 12. In addition, approximately 3.4 million persons in the United States ages 16 to 24 had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled in school, a figure that represents about 11 percent of all persons in this age group (McMillen et al., 1993).<sup>1</sup>

The dropout problem is not confined to high school. Some 6.8 percent of 1988's eighth graders dropped out of school between 1988 and 1990, and another 7.6 percent dropped out of school between 1990 and 1992. Male and female eighth graders dropped out at comparable rates, but Hispanic and African-American students in the 1988 eighth grade cohort were more likely to drop out than white and Asian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1991).

#### Why Do Young People Drop Out of School?

Four in ten dropouts said they left high school because they were failing or they

did not like school, and just as many males as females reported they were leaving school because of personality conflicts with teachers. More males than females dropped out because of school suspension or expulsion.

The dropout rate among 16- to 24-year-olds who had repeated more than one grade was 41 percent, compared with 17 percent of those who had repeated only one grade and 9 percent of those who had not repeated any grades. Dropout rates were highest among those who had repeated grades 7, 8, or 9.

Although most dropouts reported school-related reasons for leaving school, most female dropouts reported family-related reasons. Twenty-one percent of females and 8 percent of males dropped out because they became parents. Twenty-six percent of white female dropouts reported pregnancy as a motive



### From the Administrator

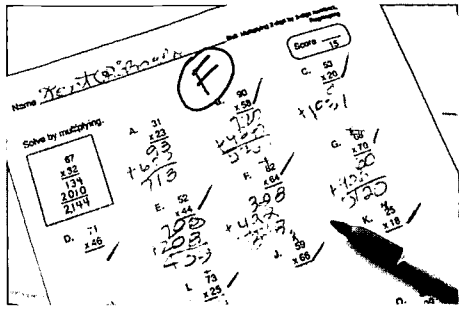
A 1992 study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 3.4 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school before earning a high school diploma. What leads to such a sobering statistic?

The answer is complex. Many children come to school as composites of the broken pieces in their lives—divorce, homelessness, learning disabilities, and mental illness—and from homes in which they must become self-sufficient at an early age. Some must deal with crime, drugs, and gangs in their neighborhoods; suffer abuse and neglect from adults; or become parents while still children themselves.

These problems must be addressed comprehensively to deliver needed services. As Attorney General Janet Reno told the 1994 Communities In Schools (CIS) National Conference, "We cannot take just one fragment of a child's life and make a difference. We have to look at the whole of a child's life." When all necessary systems work together, change can happen.

This Bulletin highlights dropout prevention initiatives, with a particular focus on the CIS initiative and its evaluation conducted by the Urban Institute.

Shay Bilchik  
Administrator



for dropping out, compared with 31 percent of Hispanic and 34 percent of African-American female dropouts.

More than a quarter of those dropping out of grades 10 through 12 reported job-related reasons for withdrawing. Male dropouts (36 percent) were more likely than female dropouts (22 percent) to report finding a job as the motive for leaving school (Snyder and Sickmund, 1995).

### What Are the Costs of Dropping Out?

Dropping out of school can have profound effects on a young person's life. The relative earnings of high school dropouts are lower than those for students who complete high school or college. Similarly, high school dropouts experience more unemployment during their work careers (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Young women who drop out of high school are more likely to become pregnant at young ages and more likely to become single parents (McMillen et al., 1993).

In 1992 the unemployment rate among those dropping out of school was 11 percent, compared with 7 percent for those who graduated from high school but did not attend college. The median income among dropouts who were employed full time was only half that of high school graduates. While the real income (income adjusted for inflation) of college graduates has increased during the past 20 years, the real income of dropouts has declined dramatically (Snyder and Sickmund, 1995).

These are sobering statistics when considered in view of the reality of a workplace that continues to require increased literacy, more education, enhanced technological skills, and the ability to embark on careers that require lifelong learning. Without the skills and training that schooling should provide, those who do not complete their education face a lifetime of limited

opportunities—or even worse—should they choose a life of delinquency and crime.

As the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families put it, "The test now is whether we are motivated to promote policies that we know can reverse these alarming trends in the 1990s, or whether we will enter the 21st century besieged by the worst effects of our failure" (U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, 1989).

## Communities In Schools: A Collaboration at Work for Youth

### The CIS Model

Formerly known as Cities In Schools, the Communities In Schools (CIS) network is a web of local, State, and national partnerships working together to bring at-risk youth four basics every child needs and deserves:

- ◆ A personal one-on-one relationship with a caring adult.
- ◆ A safe place to learn and grow.
- ◆ A marketable skill to use upon graduation.
- ◆ A chance to give back to peers and community.

As statistics have shown, a student's "decision" to drop out of school might be the product of many factors, including family problems, drug and alcohol abuse, illiteracy, and teenage pregnancy. Therefore, the entire community, not just the schools, must take responsibility for preventing youth from dropping out of school. CIS brings together businesses and public and private agencies in communities—welfare and health professionals, employment counselors, social workers and recreation leaders, the clergy, and members of community groups—and puts them where they're needed—in the schools. CIS treats the student and his or her family in a holistic manner, bringing together in one place a support system of caring adults who ensure that the student has access to the resources that can help him or her build self-worth and the skills needed to embark on a more productive and constructive life.

While most CIS programs take place inside traditional schools, CIS, Inc., has pioneered another method of service delivery that has resulted in the CIS

academy, an easily identifiable freestanding facility or wing of an existing school, sponsored largely by an individual corporation or organization.

### Organizational Structure

The CIS model allows flexibility in organizational structure as long as that structure results in services delivered at an education site in a personalized, accountable, and coordinated manner to at-risk youth and their families (figure 1). Three elements are essential, however, to the establishment of a local CIS program:

- ◆ A 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation with a board of directors that represents the public and private sectors of the community and that is chaired by a member of the private sector.
- ◆ A management team led by an executive director.
- ◆ A new education, health, and human services delivery system that repositions or reassigns the community's service resources and focuses them on at-risk students and their families.

### The CIS Delivery System

In general, CIS projects are grouped into three broad categories:

- ◆ Projects at traditional school sites that pattern themselves as closely as possible after the normal classroom routine.



- ◆ Projects in which repositioned health and human services staff assume the primary role.
- ◆ Projects that function as alternative schools.

The first two categories apply to the classroom model and the third to the academy model, which are described below.

**The classroom model.** The CIS classroom model allows students to sign up for the program as an elective class. Instruction focuses on life-skills education, such as employment topics, remedial education, and tutoring. CIS classrooms often involve community volunteers who mentor and tutor students. The classroom model also can provide inschool activities such as conflict resolution, violence abatement, and community service.

Patterned closely after a normal classroom routine, these activities are led by

teachers assigned specifically to the CIS program by the school district. In certain situations, repositioned health and human services staff assume the primary leadership role.

**The academy model.** The CIS academy model has all the basic elements of the CIS classroom model but is organized as an alternative school, where all students are part of the CIS program. These academies can be "schools within schools," located in a separate wing or section of the school where the CIS students attend classes together, or can occupy a completely separate building.

A student who meets CIS program eligibility criteria and has parental permission is assigned a case manager who assesses the student's needs. The case manager then contacts the proper agencies to provide the specific services needed. Through the CIS program, the

young person can receive counseling either individually or as part of a group. If the CIS program cannot provide a needed service directly, the student, and sometimes parents and family members, are referred to an appropriate service agency.

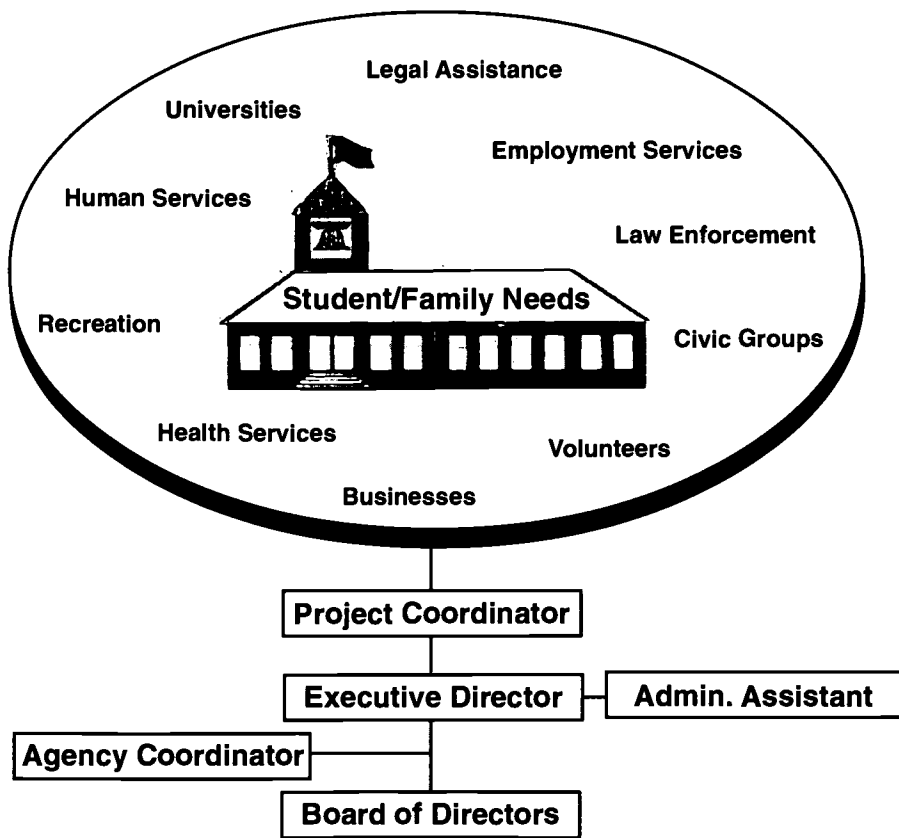
## The CIS Network

The foundation of the CIS network consists of the local CIS programs that are independently incorporated, nonprofit community-, city-, or countywide public-private partnership organizations that adapt the CIS process to their urban and rural communities. Several CIS school-based projects can be implemented within a CIS local community program.

State CIS programs, like the local programs, are independently incorporated and led by their own boards of directors. Staffed by State management teams, their mission is to replicate the CIS process as widely as possible throughout a State and to secure State-level resources and enhance networking for the individual CIS communities within the State.

CIS, Inc., with its national headquarters based in Alexandria, Virginia, is committed to helping communities build a self-sustaining structure to provide these basics for their youth. CIS, Inc.'s headquarters and five regional offices serve as an anchor to the CIS network by creating and supporting local and State CIS programs through, among other things, the CIS training system. In response to the day-to-day needs of local programs, training has evolved to a body of standardized but flexible training practices. The CIS Training Institute at Lehigh University has helped spur a proliferation of new local CIS programs, expanding program growth from 160 project sites serving 21,000 youth annually in 1989 to 1,025 project sites serving 262,596 youth and their families at the end of the 1995-96 school year.

Figure 1: Needs-Based/Collaborative-Driven Organizational Chart



## CIS Evaluation

### Evaluation Design

The Urban Institute (UI), a policy research organization, conducted an evaluation of CIS, funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The Federal agencies supporting the evaluation requested that UI provide:

Source: Cities In Schools, Inc. (1995). "Cities in Schools: A History of Partnerships."

- ◆ A study of the CIS national organization and its replication activities, focusing on the effectiveness of training and technical assistance.
- ◆ A study of a representative sample of CIS sites to assess local implementation of the CIS prototype, the extent to which local programs are serving the designated target group of at-risk students, and the effects of local programs on student outcomes.
- ◆ Case studies of CIS programs selected for their innovative features, adherence to the CIS model, or other features of interest.

UI examined CIS efforts and results from the fall of 1991 into early 1994, looking at CIS replication, training and technical assistance, procedures, and local program components. The assessment of student outcomes tracked a sample of 659 students who had been enrolled in CIS during the 1989–90 and 1990–91 school years, evaluating effectiveness of the community programs as they were 5 years earlier. By looking back, the study provided a long-term review of the program's effects on educational attainment without having to wait for several years to track what would happen to current CIS enrollees. In addition, because many of the 659 students were no longer involved in the CIS program, the study

examined the effects during or immediately after enrollment.

## Evaluation Methodology

**Replication, training, and technical assistance.** The structure and effects of CIS's replication, training, and technical assistance activities were assessed using several techniques. Interviews were conducted with senior-level CIS headquarters staff and with staff in five regional and six State offices. Secondary data analyses included a review of documents describing the functions, responsibilities, and communication patterns within the national, regional, and State offices. Site visits to 17 communities provided data on replication, training, and technical assistance from the perspective of older, more mature CIS projects. Detailed telephone discussions were completed with staff of newly operational programs or programs undergoing the replication process.

**Local program implementation and outcomes.** Data collection activities associated with the evaluation of local programs included the site visits to 17 CIS programs selected to be representative of geographical diversity, various program strategies, and service configurations. CIS community program and school-based staff and key affiliates were surveyed and interviewed to document program strate-

gies and implementation, barriers encountered, and perceived results in terms of systemic change and client outcomes. Interviews also were conducted with students enrolled in CIS projects at middle and high schools and with a small number of parents. Data on student characteristics and outcomes—primarily school attendance, course grades, and grade point averages (GPA's)—were extracted from CIS project files and school records on individual participants. Questionnaires were used to augment these data with self-reported information on student profiles, school- and nonschool-related difficulties and outcomes, and client satisfaction (tables 1 and 2).

## Critical Elements of the CIS Community Prototype

UI identified the following critical characteristics of the CIS model:

- ◆ The CIS model is a process that involves how services are provided rather than the content or domain of the service (e.g., youth leadership development). There are no prescribed activities or services that community programs *must* offer. CIS community organizations have the flexibility to take local needs, resources, and political factors into account.

## Qualities of Strong CIS Community Programs

Case studies of 10 CIS programs describe examples of collaborative partnerships, strategic planning, effective management practices, case management, employment training, substance abuse prevention, mental health services, crime and violence prevention, and parental involvement. Lessons learned from the study of these programs are as follows:

- ◆ **Community support and multiple sources of funds** are critical to the success of community programs.
- ◆ **Early and continued strong private sector involvement** with the active involvement of CIS program staff members in community efforts is important for generating continued support and awareness.
- ◆ **An involved and trained board** is important for raising resources to support the program.
- ◆ **A strong, periodic strategic planning process**, including determining the program's expansion strategy, focus, and criteria for both site selection and student involvement, supports development of program strategies closely related to needed services.
- ◆ **Strong top-down support from the school district** and/or principal enables CIS to be more than an "add-on" social service program and promotes schoolwide reforms.
- ◆ **Good working relationships with the schools**, established by surveying staff opinions, serving on school management teams, and providing training and assistance for teachers assigned to work with CIS, help ensure that the program operates smoothly.
- ◆ **Integration of services**, achieved through formal agreements that stipulate roles, responsibilities, and working conditions, is a key factor to program success.
- ◆ **Joint selection and evaluation of staff** repositioned or assigned to CIS through agreements by schools and service agencies to strengthen the program's partnerships.
- ◆ **Strong oversight and accountability** maintained through a comprehensive records and reporting system allow directors to plan and implement program improvements and to demonstrate effectiveness to stakeholders.
- ◆ **Ongoing case management** is particularly important to successful service coordination in locations where high levels of community and/or family disorganization exist.

**Table 1: Student Assessments of Assistance Provided by CIS**

"The CIS Program helped me..."	Percentage Response for Students Who Rated the Items as Salient				Nonsalient Responses	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Number Reporting Non-Salience	Percentage of Total Respondent Sample*
1. Feel better about myself	53.5	36.8	8.2	1.5	48	12.3
2. Improve my health	30.7	48.1	16.4	4.9	86	22.0
3. Get along better with other students	36.8	46.9	10.7	5.5	67	17.1
4. Get along better with my family	39.3	38.9	16.4	5.4	79	20.2
5. Reduce drug or alcohol use	39.9	21.3	27.0	11.8	188	48.1
6. Become drug or alcohol free	38.7	28.3	20.9	12.0	179	45.8
7. Improve my attendance at school	42.8	39.6	13.1	4.6	88	22.5
8. Get better grades	44.6	43.7	9.0	2.4	38	9.7
9. Stop skipping school or classes	39.8	37.2	16.8	6.2	128	32.7
10. Improve my classroom behavior	35.4	46.9	14.8	3.0	84	21.5
11. Like school more	36.2	39.0	16.5	8.3	60	15.3
12. Learn job skills	48.6	38.4	9.4	3.6	42	10.7
13. Learn about preventing HIV/AIDS	50.2	39.1	8.2	2.5	68	17.4
14. Learn about preventing substance abuse	42.8	40.2	14.0	3.0	87	32.3
15. Talk about my family's problems	38.8	36.9	18.3	6.1	91	23.3
16. Talk with someone about pregnancy or teen parenting	38.7	30.0	25.3	6.0	134	34.3

\* N = 391 students

Source: S.B. Rossman and E. Morley (1995). "The National Evaluation of Cities In Schools: Executive Summary."

## DOJ Partnerships With CIS

In 1984, OJJDP provided CIS, Inc., with resources to complete and refine its replication efforts already in process in a number of cities and to set up regional offices to expand its technical assistance capabilities. Beginning in 1985, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education joined with OJJDP in support of this effort, with OJJDP as the lead agency. Participating agencies transferred resources to DOJ, consolidating program administration while ensuring accountability. In 1990 the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) became a partner, and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)/Department of the Army joined the partnership in 1994.

Currently OJJDP and DOC, with OJJDP as the lead agency, are supporting CIS, Inc.'s implementation of the Federal Interagency Partnership initiative. CIS, Inc., tasks include facilitating Federal agency access to CIS network products and enhancing

and expanding CIS training capabilities. Certain initiative tasks reflect OJJDP's interest in expanding and enhancing CIS programs for youth involved in the juvenile justice system, training community practitioners to replicate CIS programs, and strengthening families. Other tasks reflect DOC's focus on introducing entrepreneurship opportunities to CIS youth by establishing student-run entrepreneurial activities and supporting technical assistance. CIS is also helping to train and organize leaders in a Native American community in Rapid City, South Dakota. These tasks also enhance the ability of CIS, Inc., to integrate and provide information, resources, and training to its network and to improve community collaboration efforts on behalf of youth and families.

DOD resources for CIS, Inc., were transferred to OJJDP in 1994 to support the CIS, Inc., Partnership With the Department of Defense/Army grant initiative to help troubled youth. Initiative objectives include improving local CIS

program access to Army resources, providing CIS training and resources to enhance Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) collaboration with health and human service agencies at the local level, and integrating joint Army/CIS initiatives into CIS operations at the local, State, and national levels. Enrolling JROTC cadets in CIS programs at the same site allows CIS to provide counseling and programs on conflict resolution, health and medical issues, alcohol and other drug abuse prevention, family and classroom violence, teen pregnancy, and minority male initiatives. The objectives also include developing, through local CIS programs, up to eight partnership academies with a career focus and social service delivery, enhancing existing and future JROTC programs and DOD-established career academies through CIS training and technical assistance, and developing collaborations to improve CIS and JROTC programs.

- ◆ The CIS process has prescribed elements: existing community services are brought into the schools; services are integrated and coordinated, rather than fragmented and duplicative; all CIS staff, whether brokered or employed by CIS, are accountable to the students, families, schools, communities, and each other for establishing and delivering effective services;
- ◆ and a personal relationship between the student and a caring adult, a critical component of effective service delivery, is built and maintained.
- ◆ The program targets at-risk youth and their families, and community programs are free to determine how these groups are defined and identified. Over time, CIS has broadened its focus from youth who demonstrate a need for intervention to include youth, particularly young children, who may benefit from preventive efforts.
- ◆ The community program is structured as an independent, nonprofit corporation, with a board of directors composed of public and private community leaders.
- ◆ The CIS management team is composed of an executive director, an

**Table 2: Student Perception of Future Outcomes**

Future Outcomes	Percentage Responses			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Want to stay in school until graduation	79.2	17.7	2.2	0.8
Less likely to get into trouble with the law	41.5	28.7	17.9	11.9
More likely to do school work on time	38.4	40.4	16.4	4.8
Plan to go to college or technical school	64.8	22.3	8.7	4.2

Source: S.B. Rossman and E. Morley (1995). "The National Evaluation of Cities In Schools: Executive Summary."

## In-School Programs for At-Risk Youth

### Communities In Schools (CIS) Program in Columbia, South Carolina

CIS made a positive difference in the life of Jermaine. Some middle school teachers had labeled him a trouble-maker because of his aggressive and confrontational behavior. As he continued through school, he became a nonproductive and disinterested student. Headed for school failure, he was in desperate need of guidance to help him turn his life around.

In the middle of his senior year, Jermaine learned from a friend about the opportunities available in the CIS program. He decided that he wanted to turn his life in a positive direction. He has since credited the CIS program

with raising his confidence level and encouraging him to reach out, stretch his abilities, and express himself. He learned that having the right attitude about himself and having a positive attitude about what he could accomplish could get him ahead in life. He became excited about school and his classes because the CIS teachers linked classroom learning to daily life experiences. His grades began to improve as did his attitude and attendance. For the first time in his life, he was able to talk with teachers about his hopes and dreams for the future. The teachers, he felt, really cared and showed it—by spending the time to listen and guide him to opportunities available to help him to

succeed. Additionally, he gained a new respect for himself and others and, through a conflict resolution program, learned strategies for avoiding confrontations that can lead to violence.

Through the CIS program, Jermaine was able to graduate during the summer. Because of his academic and personal progress, he earned a Burger King \$3,000 renewable college scholarship. The CIS program also helped arrange interviews for a summer job, and Jermaine secured a summer job with AT&T that helped with household expenses for his mother and younger siblings.

agency coordinator/resource coordinator, an administrative assistant, and the project director for the first project site. As additional projects are developed, the project directors are to be repositioned or assigned school staff.

- ◆ The functions of the community CIS program include strategic planning, effective community network and collaboration building, services integration and coordination, fundraising, and program and project monitoring for accountability.

### Major Findings Regarding CIS, Inc.'s National Programs

- ◆ CIS, Inc., has successfully promoted awareness of its model of social service delivery and provided leadership and support that led to considerable expansion of the CIS network. The evaluation of CIS covers its growth from 26 community programs and 128 school sites in 1988 to 93 programs and 612 schools by the end of 1993.
- ◆ CIS has developed and refined its centralized training and a set of core courses, a key factor in promoting replication of the CIS model.
- ◆ CIS has strengthened its organizational structure by establishing five regional offices, with potential for a sixth.
- ◆ New State CIS offices have been established. In 1993 there were eight "operational" CIS States and four more were in development.

- ◆ Regional and State offices have contributed to the expansion of community programs through the provision of training and technical assistance.
- ◆ The national organization and CIS board have turned their attention to quality control issues, establishing a Quality and Standards Committee in 1993.

### Findings on Student Outcomes

CIS programs serve a target population of at-risk youth and youth who have already crossed the line into risky behaviors and consequences. Most of these students would be expected to leave school before graduation. The UI study found the following:

- ◆ High proportions of CIS students remain in school or graduate.
- ◆ Eighty percent of the students who participated in CIS services during the 1989–90 or 1990–91 school year were still in school or had graduated 3 years later, in 1992–93.
- ◆ The cumulative dropout rate for these students was 21 percent over 3 years, or about 7 percent annually.
- ◆ CIS students with serious and moderately severe problems in attendance and academic performance improved their performance in these areas.

Although not all programs and students in the study met their stated objectives, 70 percent of students with high

absenteeism prior to participation in CIS improved their attendance, and 60 percent with low initial grades improved. Of those students with the lowest grades (GPA below 1.0), 79 percent raised their GPA, with an average increase of a full grade point. The majority of the students believed they had benefited from CIS and expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program.

### Evaluation Examples of CIS Challenges and Responses

CIS, Inc., is challenged to establish and maintain quality control among its extensive network of autonomous programs. Recommendations made by the Quality and Standards Committee are resolving some of the issues identified with respect to accountability. During 1995 and early 1996, CIS further centralized its training staff to ensure more proportional distribution of staff resources and a better match to community needs. In addition, multitrack training conferences at five locations around the country are being offered in 1997 to bring the training nearer to all CIS communities.

UI observed that fundraising was an ongoing challenge for all CIS programs, not because CIS is unable to demonstrate its effectiveness but because most funding for nonprofit organizations is directed toward demonstration programs. In addition, in small communities that have relatively few human service agencies and in communities where a large proportion of



## The CIS Program in Georgia Juvenile Detention Centers

Since 1992, CIS of Georgia has trained teachers, changed students' behavior, and brought mentors and human service providers to young people who came into contact with the juvenile justice system. CIS brought its program to the State's youth development campuses (detention centers where youth 11 to 18 years of age are incarcerated) and to "community schools," which serve as transition sites for juveniles leaving the juvenile justice system. In 1995, CIS helped more than 150 of these young people learn to set goals, improve communication and study skills, succeed in a team environment, and engage in community service.

For Rodney, the CIS program changed his life. While in the DeKalb County juvenile detention center, Rodney attended a CIS personal development seminar that motivated him to decide that change was possible in his life. He also got the message that change would only happen through his efforts. Impressed by the dynamic presentation of the CIS volunteer who delivered the seminar, Rodney also turned to this individual as a mentor. The CIS volunteer became a confidant whom Rodney could trust and talk with about his desire to change his life. Rodney no longer felt alone and now had someone who would work with him to overcome past mistakes and help him

learn to make positive decisions in his life. Rodney's attitude about the school classroom was significantly altered. From a place with dusty old books that held no interest for him, school became a place with ideas and activities that required daily effort and hard work on his part in order to fully participate. While Rodney was in a community school, he realized that he must work hard each day to succeed and stay crime free. After graduating from high school, Rodney obtained a good job and is working with his CIS mentor to decide whether to go on to college or a trade school.

the population is in need of services, CIS programs were unable to secure more than a few repositioned staff, generally from only one or two agencies.

A major contributor to preventing young people from dropping out of school, CIS, Inc., is committed to expanding its capabilities and building on its many strengths as it works with communities to provide at-risk youth with a personal one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a marketable skill to use upon graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and community. To achieve these basics, the community must be involved as a key player in helping children help themselves toward a brighter future.

## Other Programs Working To Keep Young People in School

Although the largest, CIS is just one of many programs that have responded to the challenge of working with young people who either are at risk of dropping out of school or have returned to complete their education after leaving the school environment. The sampling that follows reflects the diversity of program approaches designed to keep young people in school.

## The Associated Marine Institutes

The Associated Marine Institutes (AMI) was formed in 1969 when a Florida businessman put some young boys who were wards of the court to work on his marine research vessel. As of January 1997 AMI has established 43 institutes throughout the United States and in the Cayman Islands, all dedicated to turning troubled young people's lives around. AMI's main objectives are to encourage further education and develop positive attitudes in the 14- to 18-year-old boys and girls that will help them meet their responsibilities, develop employable skills, and increase their self-confidence.

AMI offers a range of programs including nonresidential and residential programs for serious, violent, and chronic offenders; expanded service programs; and aftercare. Depending on the type of program and the needs of the young people, a youth may be involved in a program from 6 months to 18 months. With the exception of the aftercare program, all programs require full-time involvement and are therefore offered in lieu of public school education. In the aftercare program, AMI personnel work with the school or job site to provide activities and/or services after school or work and on weekends. The extended services program works with youth from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

The majority of funding for AMI programs is provided by the local and/or State juvenile justice agency and the local department of education in those States where AMI is being implemented. Most AMI programs are also enhanced by private sector donations. AMI tailors each program to the geographical strengths of each community, using the ocean, wilderness, rivers, and lakes to develop exciting curriculums that challenge and motivate youth to attend. Oceanography, earth sciences, diving, seamanship, aquatics, and physical, academic, and vocational education are some of the classes found in a weekly schedule.

Aftercare coordinators pick up where the staff of the local AMI leave off. In 1982 the Florida Environmental Institute started its first aftercare program for serious and violent offenders. Aftercare is now a vital part of each institute's components.

After attending a program appropriate for his or her needs, each participant is placed in school, a job, or the armed forces. AMI staff monitor the youth for 3 years after they graduate from the program to offer assistance and compile statistics on their progress. Based on AMI statistical data verified by the local and/or State department of education, department of corrections, and the juvenile justice agency, more than 70 percent of the youth who attend AMI programs were successful in not being convicted of any crimes within the 3 years following their AMI experience.

In September 1993 President Clinton and Attorney General Reno visited the Pinellas Marine Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida. In a nationally televised program where he announced the proposed Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (passed in 1994), the President said, "These programs are giving young people a chance to take their future back, a chance to understand that there is good inside them."

For further information, contact:

Associated Marine Institutes  
5915 Benjamin Center Drive  
Tampa, FL 33634  
813-887-3300

## Families and Schools Together

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a program that involves parents in circles of support so they can more easily help their children succeed.

FAST's goals are to:

- ◆ Prevent the at-risk child from experiencing school failure.
- ◆ Enhance family functioning.
- ◆ Prevent alcohol and other drug abuse in the family.
- ◆ Reduce the stress that parents and children experience from daily life situations.

FAST's values and structure are based on carefully selected therapy, child psychiatry, group work, and stress and social support studies. The core component, "Special Play," involves coaching parents in one-on-one, nonjudgmental, nondirective play therapy with the at-risk child. Parents continue Special Play daily at home. This technique was adapted for multifamily usage from an individualized approach developed at the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and identified by National Institute for Mental Health studies as successful in quickly altering interactional behaviors. Therefore, program results are predictable.

Whole families participate by joining together for eight weekly sessions of carefully orchestrated, enjoyable, research-based activities. Following these sessions, they participate for 2 years in monthly family self-help support meetings called FASTWORKS.

Results after the 8-week sessions show statistically significant improvement in classroom and home behaviors, self-esteem of the children, family closeness,

and parent involvement in school and a reduction in social isolation. For example, students show a 20-percent to 25-percent increase in attention span and a similar decrease in conduct disorder. Followup studies show the changes are maintained. FAST also leads to greater parent self-sufficiency and involvement in school. FAST improves student behavior and supports family strengthening through a well-defined collaboration among parents, the school, a local mental health agency, and a local substance abuse provider.

FAST cites six reasons for the program's success. First, its strategies are research based. Second, as a prevention strategy for children ages 4 to 9, the program provides early identification of at-risk behavior. Third, school-based screening is provided through teacher identification of at-risk children for referral to FAST. Fourth, through collaboration, schools, parents, and community agency professionals work as a non-hierarchical team to plan, carry out, and evaluate the local FAST program. Fifth, total family involvement is achieved when parents and siblings join with at-risk children at FAST sessions. Sixth, parents are supported and empowered as the primary prevention agents for their children through fun, structured activities, while forming a strong social network with the other 8 to 12 families in their FAST sessions.

FAST was started in 1988 by Lynn McDonald, Ph.D., and Family Service of Madison, Wisconsin, a nonprofit mental health agency. It became a statewide program in Wisconsin in 1990, supported in local school districts with \$1 million in annual State funding. FAST was selected by Family Service America, an international nonprofit organization, for national replication in 1993, with major support from the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. By 1995, with additional support from the Metropolitan Life Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, FAST was operating in more than 200 locations in 24 States. Today, major funding sources for FAST as a family support strategy include community development block grants; county and State family support funds, departments of social services, and departments of mental health; local community foundations; and the United Way of America. FAST has been recognized by numerous national honors and awards, including recognition by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services, OJJDP, Harvard University, the United Way, and the Family Resource Coalition.

For more information, contact:

FAST: Families and Schools Together  
Family Service America  
11700 West Lake Park Drive  
Milwaukee, WI 53224-3099  
800-221-3726

## Jobs for Ohio's Graduates

Jobs for Ohio's Graduates (JOG) is a statewide program operated under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Vocational and Career Education, through local nonprofit agencies and in cooperation with local school systems. JOG is modeled after a nonprofit national program called Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG). Its mission is to identify students who are at greatest risk of dropping out of school before graduation and provide them with a support system that not only keeps these young people in school but also helps them adjust to the transition from school to work after graduation.

JOG's goals are to improve the employability skills and knowledge of the participants and impart job readiness skills that employers believe are fundamental to success, including personal motivation, ability to work in a group, and communication skills. JOG is designed to provide a structured set of services that build on one another and continue for 18 months



to ensure that the goals of the program will be met. Services include:

- ◆ Group and individualized instruction in an integrated series of 30 employment competency areas.
- ◆ Opportunities to undertake social and civic responsibilities, build leadership skills, learn how to work in a group setting, and become active in a student club or association.
- ◆ Job development and placement assistance for all graduates.
- ◆ Sustained followup services for participants and employers during a year-long followup period.

Through these services, JOG works to increase the rate of successful transition into the labor force.

JOG expects to serve 9,000 seniors from 243 high schools and 199 districts in the 1996-97 school year. Launched in the 1986-87 school year, JOG has achieved a graduation rate in excess of 91 percent. More than 80 percent of students identified as at risk when they entered JOG are on the job, in the military, or in post-secondary education 12 months following graduation. Eighty percent of those working are in full-time placement. This is accomplished at a cost of less than \$1,000 per student, \$750 of which comes from State funds. The remainder of the funding comes from a combination of private and Federal sources.

For more information, contact:

Jobs for Ohio's Graduates  
65 South Front Street  
Room 912  
Columbus, OH 43215-4183  
614-466-5718

## Mat-Su Alternative School

Judged to be one of the top alternative schools in the Nation, Mat-Su Alternative School (MSAS) is a community partnership success story in Wasilla, Alaska. The school has worked closely since its inception in 1988 with businesses and both government and nonprofit agencies to provide at-risk youth with the academic and vocational skills needed to make the successful transition from school to work.

Students at MSAS must be at least 16 years old, be unable to meet their class' graduation requirements, and be dropouts from one of the five participating high schools during the previous semester. Among Mat-Su's student body are teen parents, adjudicated youth, special education students, and self-supporting

students. Girls who are pregnant or have babies can enroll at any age.

Approximately 250 former dropouts have graduated from Mat-Su since its beginning, when 5 students moved into one end of a portable classroom in the Wasilla High School parking lot. In June 1995, students and staff moved to a 20,000-square-foot, newly converted garage large enough to handle 200 students and featuring 3 integrated learning systems, Internet access, and interactive television communication.

Mat-Su is a Tier I school for acceptance of graduates into the military. Graduates have gone on to colleges and vocational schools and have earned places on the dean's list at the University of Alaska. Students continue their employment after graduation.

Honors and acclaim have come to both school and staff. Mat-Su was chosen as one of five sites in the Nation to take part in a 3-year study to identify characteristics of successful alternative schools for adjudicated youth.<sup>2</sup>

MSAS networks with 150 business owners to provide job sites. School staff and students often meet with such groups as the local Chamber of Commerce and the Elks, Lions, Moose, and Rotary clubs to solicit volunteers and job-placement support for the school. In an area with an unemployment rate of 17.9 percent, Mat-Su students have 100-percent job placement.

Sixty-one local and State agencies provide such services as shelter, food, clothing, medical and psychological help; job-placement; career information; and financial planning. The school maintains a food and clothing bank; a toy checkout library; and a daycare center, which also serves as a laboratory for teen parents; and employs a case manager for teen parents and a full-time nurse for all students.

Classes are offered year-round, with the school open from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays. Student schedules are coordinated with their work schedules. Students may earn high school credits via computerized integrated learning systems, individualized studies, small classes, and cooperative work experience. Unique requirements are the successful completion of the Life Skills/Parenting and the World of Work curriculums.

All students are required to complete district graduation requirements. In addition, they must meet the Federal guidelines under the Job Training Partnership Act for

preemployment skills and work 15 to 20 hours a week on a job site. Students are assessed extensively using various interest and aptitude tests to help identify post-high school careers and opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

For more information, contact:

Mat-Su Alternative School  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School  
District  
1775 West Parks Highway  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
907-373-7775

## Toms River Alternate Learning Center

The Toms River Alternate Learning Center has been in operation since 1983 and is a crisis intervention educational program for 8th- through 10th-graders who are unable to function in a traditional school environment. Students exhibit chronic absenteeism, tardiness, insufficient communication or computational skills, and poor self-concepts manifested through inappropriate behavior patterns. This New Jersey State Department of Education "Star" school was selected from among 600 schools in the State as one of 10 schools that provide exemplary services to students who need extra help and attention. The school has also been designated as one of the top five programs in the Nation in the category of Special Needs Programs in *Redbook* magazine's "America's Best Schools Project." Center goals include:

- ◆ Providing educational opportunities to students experiencing frustration and continued failure in their traditional schools.
- ◆ Helping students actualize their positive potential, thereby enhancing their self-esteem.
- ◆ Meeting the emotional, academic, and social needs of high-risk students.
- ◆ Facilitating the assimilation of high-risk students into active, positive participation in their communities.

The Center uses an individualized, highly structured program that stresses one-on-one instruction. The teachers selected have demonstrated compassionate natures, pedagogical competency, creativity, and strong interpersonal skills.

For more information, contact:

Toms River Alternate Learning Center  
1 Drake Lane  
South Toms River, NJ 08757  
908-505-5770

## National Dropout Prevention Center/Network!

The mission of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network! is "to reduce America's dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations through reshaping school and community environments to ensure that all youth receive the quality education and services to which they are entitled." Many people across the country are working diligently to fulfill this mission. Among a range of opportunities for information and training, the Center/Network! provides access to FOCUS, a searchable data base that brings users information on dropout prevention programs, resource materials, conferences, organizations, and consultants.

For further information, contact:

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network!  
205 Martin Street  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29634-0726  
864-656-2599

## Summary

Dropping out of school can have profound, long-term effects on a student's life. Local, regional, and national organizations, alone or with Federal Government assistance, are making strides to keep youth in school and support them through graduation and beyond.

## For Further Information

To find out more about programs that work to keep young people in school, or for additional materials on this subject, please contact the following organizations. In addition, many resources are available on line when searching *dropout prevention*, including intervention and prevention programs and strategies.

Communities In Schools, Inc.  
1199 North Fairfax  
Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314-1436  
703-519-8999  
703-519-7213 (fax)  
<http://www.cisnet.org>

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
800-638-8736  
301-519-5212 (fax)  
<http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm>  
E-mail: [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org)

National School Safety Center  
4165 Thousand Oaks Boulevard  
Suite 290  
Westlake Village, CA 91362  
805-373-9977  
805-373-9277 (fax)  
<http://nssc1.org>

U.S. Department of Education  
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
Portals Building  
Room 604  
Washington, DC 20202-6123  
202-260-3954  
202-260-7767 (fax)  
<http://www.ed.gov/DrugFree>

U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Center for Education Statistics  
555 New Jersey Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20208-5721  
800-424-1616  
202-219-1696 (fax)  
<http://www.ed.gov/NCES>

## Endnotes

1. Parts of this text were excerpted from reports submitted to OJJDP by CIS, Inc. ("Lessons Learned from the Urban Institute's National Evaluation of Cities/Communities In Schools," 1996, and "Cities In Schools: A History of Partnerships," 1995), and by S.B. Rossman and E. Morley ("Highlights of the National Evaluation of Cities In Schools," 1995, and "The National Evaluation of Cities In Schools: Executive Summary," 1995).
2. This study has resulted in a project report for the Adjudicated Youth with Disabilities Transition Project, which may be obtained by contacting Dr. Richard Pollard at the University of Idaho at 208-364-4025, or via e-mail at [rpollard@uidaho.edu](mailto:rpollard@uidaho.edu).
3. National School Safety Center (NSSC). 1996. "Mat-Su Alternative: Successful

school-to-work transitions." *School Safety Update* March 1996:5. The above descriptor taken from NSSC has been updated by principal Peter Burchell, Mat-Su Alternative School, via a telephone conversation.

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*The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.*

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