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Report finds Communities In Schools provides positive support to almost 90,000 students a year

AUSTIN – Communities In Schools (CIS) of Texas, a best practices dropout prevention program, annually provides positive support that helps keep almost 90,000 at-risk students in school, a new study found.

The report titled *Evaluation of Communities In Schools (CIS) of Texas* conducted by ICF International of Fairfax, Va. found that “For middle and high school students, CIS was clearly making a difference. It was common to hear students express how CIS helped them with their attitudes and behaviors both within and outside of school. As a result of CIS, students indicated they were fighting less with parents and peers, making better decisions, taking more responsibility for their actions and accepting the consequences of their actions, doing better in school on homework, grades and even tests and that they understood why going to school was important.”

CIS provides personalized case management services to students and coordinates community resources in schools. Begun in 1979 in Houston, CIS of Texas now has 28 affiliates located in 55 counties throughout the state. The state invests more than \$20 million annually in CIS dropout prevention efforts. The CIS program is part of a national organization that operates in more than 30 states. Communities In Schools of Texas is managed statewide by the Texas Education Agency.

The evaluation, required by the 80th Texas Legislature, found that TEA “provides significant management and technical support to local affiliates. This support is credited with the implementation of a statewide CIS program that is well managed and of high quality.”

The evaluation looked at data through the 2006-2007 school year. During that year, CIS of Texas served 86,836 students in 741 schools. Those students received 2,233,719 hours of service or an average of 26.6 hours of service per student per school year.

Services provided through CIS include supportive guidance and counseling; health and human services, parental and family involvement, career awareness and employment, enrichment and additional educational services. The evaluation found that through both direct and brokered services, CIS provides the necessary services to address risk factors for preventing school dropout.

The report found that supportive guidance, such as having an adult advocate or mentor, was one of the most successful aspects of the program. “Providing more hours of general supportive guidance is associated with lower odds of dropping out of school, greater odds of

being promoted to the next grade level and greater odds of staying in school,” according to the evaluation.

This type of assistance can be helpful as students transition to a new school, such as moving from elementary school to middle school as this is a period of great adjustment for students.

Regarding parent involvement in education, the report found that “CIS has been successful in engaging parents, which is a necessary ingredient to a child’s success.”

The report concludes that “If CIS can serve more students within a school for a longer period of time, the impacts, both immediate and long term, are expected to be greater.”

The full report is available at:

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/DropoutPrevention/CIS_of_Texas_Final_Evaluation_2008.pdf.

Another recent report called *Best Practices in Dropout Prevention* also cited CIS as a “program that had meaningful effects on high school graduation, dropout, attendance and math achievement.” That report can be found at:

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/comm/leg_reports/bpdp_finalreport_20081219_toTEA.pdf.

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