



## Communities In Schools Performance Learning Centers®

Communities In Schools is the largest dropout prevention organization in the United States. The mission of Communities In Schools is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Founded in 1977, Communities In Schools has nearly 200 affiliates in 25 states and the District of Columbia, and directly serves nearly 1.3 million students and their families in more than 3,400 partner schools. By partnering with local school districts and community organizations, Communities In Schools is able to integrate needed services into schools through a dedicated staff member, the Communities In Schools site coordinator. With the help of Communities In Schools, 91 percent of students monitored for promotion risk were promoted to the next grade, 84 percent of monitored seniors graduated and 97 percent of students monitored as potential dropouts remained in school during the most recent year for which data was collected. An independent, five-year evaluation shows that Communities In Schools is one of a very few organizations proven to keep students in school and the only one proven to increase graduation rates.

Communities In Schools is guided by the Five Basics. Developed by our founder, Bill Milliken, the Five Basics are a set of essentials that every child needs and deserves: 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; and A chance to give back to peers and community.

### A Communities In Schools Signature Initiative

Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) are academically rigorous, non-traditional high schools for students who have not been successful in a traditional high school environment. Through a self-paced curriculum that involves project-based learning and flexible schedules, students who may have fallen behind in credits due to absenteeism, academic struggles or disengagement from school are often able to catch up and graduate on time prepared for college, a career and life. The PLC concept was developed by Communities In Schools of Georgia, and the first PLC began serving students during the 2002-2003 school year. Today, there are 33 operational PLCs in the Communities In Schools network, with the majority of them in Georgia. The PLC initiative expanded to additional states: Arizona, New Jersey, North Carolina, Washington, Virginia and Pennsylvania thanks to investments from school districts, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Walmart Foundation, the Nicholson Foundation and others.

### What Makes the PLC Experience Special?

Schools are small – averaging only 75-150 students. With a low student/teacher ratio, students can receive one-on-one attention. Students self-manage their performance track through authentic learning and teaching, and performance assessments that meet state education requirements. Eligible students can dual-enroll at a local community college or university, boosting their potential for post-secondary education. Every PLC is staffed by

a Communities In Schools services coordinator, who helps students address non-academic issues that could be affecting their ability to focus on learning. The atmosphere at a PLC is more like a professional training environment than a classroom; students apply strategies that require critical thinking and teamwork to their curricula.

## Effectiveness

Communities In Schools PLCs have served more than 10,000 students since 2003 and more than 4,400 students have graduated from PLCs. Most of these students said they would have dropped out or had already dropped out of school. Other results from our PLC network include:

- 91 percent of students improve academically
- 85 percent of students have fewer discipline incidents
- 83 percent of eligible seniors graduate on time
- 85 percent of students improve their attendance

## Policy Implication

Communities In Schools is a founding member of the Association for High School Innovation (AHSI). AHSI was formed in 2003 as the Alternative High School Initiative with generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. AHSI operates independently as a national network of youth development organizations, with over 275 schools and programs in 35 states and 170 cities nationwide. Together, these organizations present families, districts and policy stakeholders with a portfolio of multiple pathways to graduation. The schools are student-centered and strive to have youth voice, project-based learning and leadership development drive the educational process.

## Contact

Communities In Schools

2345 Crystal Drive, Suite 801 | Arlington, VA 22202 | 800-CIS-4KIDS | [www.communitiesinschools.org](http://www.communitiesinschools.org)

Updated December 2010