

**Communities In Schools of Texas:
Case Study Profile Report**

CIS of North Texas

December 2008

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Communities In Schools of Texas

Communities In Schools (CIS) champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Founded in 1977, CIS has now grown into the Nation's largest stay-in-school network, serving just over one million youth in the District of Columbia and 27 States across the United States, including Texas.

CIS of Texas helps young Texans stay in school, successfully learn, and prepare for life by coordinating community resources in local schools. The Texas CIS program (CIS State office) is managed by the Texas Education Agency. Through 28 local programs (affiliates) across the State, including CIS of North Texas, CIS Texas provides services in more than 761 schools in 123 school districts, serving more than 82,000 students.¹

1.2 Texas Education Agency Evaluation of CIS of Texas

As part of a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Education Agency's CIS program, ICF International conducted five case studies to understand how local CIS affiliates operate; the services provided by CIS to students within each school or campus; the benefits of CIS for schools, students, and families; and the factors that contribute to or hinder the success of CIS in meeting student needs. The cross-affiliate results are presented in the Communities In Schools of Texas Evaluation Technical Report. The aggregated findings specific to each local CIS affiliate are included in individual profile reports.

1.3 Approach to the Case Studies

Five local CIS affiliates were selected by the Texas Education Agency for inclusion in the case study component of the evaluation. The local CIS affiliates selected were CIS of El Paso, CIS of Northeast Texas, CIS of Houston, CIS of North Texas, and CIS of the Big Country (Abilene). The local CIS affiliates represent widely diverse geographic locations and program operations across the CIS of Texas network.

Multi-day site visits were conducted to each local CIS affiliate. During the site visits, ICF staff conducted interviews with key CIS staff, such as the executive director, board members, program director/coordinators, program trainer, data specialists, program financial officers, and campus/case managers. Individuals were asked questions regarding their roles and responsibilities, working relationships, implementation of CIS at the affiliate and school or campus level, challenges and successes, and future goals and recommendations for the future. Interviews were also conducted with principals, teachers, guidance counselors, and other service providers working with CIS at each of the schools visited as part of the evaluation. Specifically, an elementary, middle, and high school representing a feeder pattern within the same district served by CIS was identified for the case study visits. These individuals were asked questions regarding their level of involvement with CIS, the benefits of CIS, challenges, limitations, and recommendations for improvement. In addition to interviews with CIS and non-CIS personnel, the ICF staff conducted focus groups with students receiving services from CIS

¹ TEA, Fiscal Year 2007.

and parents of these students. Students and parents were asked what they liked and/or disliked about CIS, the benefits of CIS, and recommendations for improvement.

Information from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed using content analysis. This involved searching for and analyzing patterns and data saturation (recognized by redundancy in responses) that were then used to identify common themes across respondent groups, as well as perceptions unique to individuals or subgroups. Results are presented in aggregate form to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

2. CIS OF NORTH TEXAS

2.1 Description of CIS of North Texas

In response to the growing dropout problem in Denton and surrounding counties, CIS of North Texas was founded in 1994. Serving 19 schools in four school districts,² CIS of North Texas provides mentoring, one-on-one tutoring, summer programs, community service activities, career awareness activities, and other programs to students in elementary, middle, and high school. During the 2006-07 academic school year, 2,206 children and their family members had received case-managed services from CIS of North Texas. Of the case-managed students, 99.3 percent of the students in grades 7–12 stayed in school, 92.8 percent were promoted, and 95.3 percent showed improvement in attendance, behavior, academics, or social service needs according to CIS of North Texas campus/case managers. The average annual cost for providing services to a single case-managed student was estimated at \$544.74.³ According to the 2006 annual financial report, CIS of North Texas had total revenues of \$1,324,811, of which 56.7 percent came from Federal and State grants and the balance from local support. Over 80 percent of the revenues were spent on programs, 12 percent on administration, and 1.5 percent on fundraising.

2.2 Description of Case Study Schools Served by CIS of North Texas

All three public schools visited as part of the case study for CIS of North Texas were from the Denton ISD. The schools were Borman Elementary School, Calhoun Middle School, and Denton High School. These three schools represent a feeder pattern for CIS within Denton ISD. The demographics for Denton ISD and each of the three schools are presented in Table 1.

	Denton ISD	Borman Elementary School	Calhoun Middle School	Denton High School
Number of Students 2006-07	19,661	607	771	1,528
Did the District/School Meet Adequate Yearly Progress in 2006-07?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Economically Disadvantaged	38.0%	70.5%	61.6%	39.7%
English Language Learners/Limited English Proficiency	15.5%	47.9%	18.2%	10.9%
Students per Teacher	13	12	13	12

² The four school districts are Denton Independent School District (ISD), Lewisville ISD, Little Elm ISD, and Northwest ISD.

³ Source: CIS of North Texas.

Reading Proficiency*	90.4%	81.1%	85.9%	85.4%
Math Proficiency*	77.4%	73.9%	61.9%	64.3%

Data Source: SchoolDataDirect for 2006-07

*Represents the percentage of students proficient in subject based on TAKS

Based on data maintained by CIS of North Texas, 268 students were case-managed across the three schools in 2006-07. The demographics of the case-managed students as reported in CISTMS (the data tracking and management system for the entire CIS of Texas network) are presented in Table 2. In 2006-07, CIS of North Texas provided documented case-managed services to 15 percent of the Borman Elementary student population, 11 percent of the Calhoun Middle School student population, and 5 percent of the Denton High School population. Eighty percent or more of the case-managed students across the three schools were considered at risk according to the Texas Legislature criteria. When comparing the demographics of the student population with the case-managed students, economically disadvantaged and minority students appear to be more represented in the case-managed group. That is, CIS of North Texas is serving the higher risk population of students within these three schools.

	Borman Elementary	Calhoun Middle School	Denton High School
Number of Case-Managed Students	91	83	94
Economically Disadvantaged	82.4%	86.7%	78.7%
Special Education	4.4%	15.6%	16%
At Risk	83.5%	79.5%	79.8%
English Language Learners	50.5%	44.6%	37%
White	29.7%	6%	19.2%
Black	11%	8.5%	25.5%
American Indian	0%	0%	0%
Asian	4.3%	85.5%	55.3%
Hispanic	55%	0%	0%

Data Source: CIS End of Year (EOY) Report for 2006-07

3. CASE STUDY FINDINGS FOR CIS OF NORTH TEXAS

From May 12 to May 15, 2008, ICF staff conducted 163 interviews with stakeholders from the local affiliate office and the three case study schools. The number of interviewees by role is reported in Table 3.

CIS Affiliate/Campus Staff	6
School Personnel	20
Community Partners	11
Students and Parents	126
Total	163

Data Source: Site visit during May 2008

3.1 Implementation of CIS Within Schools

Before understanding how CIS is being implemented within schools, it was important to obtain a definition or interpretation of what CIS means for key stakeholders. Across all roles and levels of involvement, CIS of North Texas stakeholders suggested that CIS helps students with many kinds of problems, both in and out of school, that stand in the way of graduation and success in life. Many acknowledged that CIS supports not only students but also their families. CIS was described as a resource; a support system; a source of hope; a one-to-one relationship; a link between schools, families, and the community; and an inviting place where youth can trust and feel safe.

“They help you with goal setting and finding what you want. They help you make it possible when you think it’s not possible. They’ll take away the rocks in your path.”

-- Former Student

The next step was to understand how CIS was implemented within schools.

CIS Process

Several processes were described as making up the CIS model across the schools visited as part of the case study of CIS of North Texas.

Needs Assessment. Campus managers determine the needs within each school on a campus-by-campus and student-by-student (case-managed) level. They use feedback from principals and counselors to create their campus plans, which can be modified at any point if new needs arise or take priority over old ones. While campus managers have the freedom to use their own personal philosophies in interpreting needs assessment results, principals and CIS affiliate staff must approve their final plans. Specific needs for students in the CIS of North Texas community include academics and grades, peer relationships, access to social services, and parent involvement.

Identification and Referral. School counselors, teachers, and other students such as friends and siblings make most of the student referrals to CIS. Some students also learn about CIS through other school staff (e.g., secretaries) and well-informed parents, but most parents were not aware of CIS until their children were already having problems in school and referred to CIS for services. As students must re-register each school year, the majority of case-managed students are those who have returned from the previous year. Students are primarily referred for tutors and mentors based on academic need, but many students choose to participate in CIS activities because they have heard from their friends that CIS is fun and they can receive help with their problems.

Programs and Services. Based on the results of the needs assessment, campus managers identify services that will meet the needs of their schools and students. These services represent the six components of CIS: supportive guidance, health and human services, parental and family involvement, career awareness/employment, enrichment, and educational enhancement. Specific services provided by CIS of North Texas include:

“CIS lets you mix academics and social aspects and I think meshing the two works a lot better. That’s what makes CIS different because CIS intertwines with a lot of things kids have to deal with in and out of school.”

-- Community Partner

- **Case Management.** Some students participating in CIS are case-managed, meaning that their goals and progress are tracked individually in the monitoring database (CISTMS). Students must receive CIS services for at least 2 months before being considered for case management.
- **Social Services.** The CIS campus manager sometimes acts as a school social worker by maintaining a closet stocked with school uniforms if students violate the dress code. CIS also provides school supplies, such as binders or pencils, to students in need. CIS can assist with financial barriers to success, which may involve helping pay a late fee to raising funds for a student to take a summer course and graduate in time to enroll in college in the fall. In general, the campus manager serves as a resource and, if necessary can direct students and families to other agencies and services offering assistance with housing, medical needs, and employment.

“We cannot survive without [the campus manager] and CIS. Because she has the resources.”

-- School Staff
- **Mentoring and Tutoring.** Campus managers spend most of their day managing volunteer mentors and tutors from around the community. Most of the mentors are residents of a local retirement community and retirees from a nearby university. Mentors are matched carefully to students and help them with their homework, read with them, ask questions and give advice, eat and play with them, and discuss life.

“[Our mentors] are like our family.”

-- Elementary Student
- **Individual Supportive Guidance.** Campus managers provide supportive guidance, a form of counseling that can be conducted with students who are having trouble getting through the day. With teachers’ permission, students may speak with the CIS campus manager when they have problems that they need to talk about in order to participate effectively in classroom activities.
- **Saturdays/Field Trips.** Students may participate in CIS of North Texas enrichment activities outside of school hours. Saturday and summer activities include trips to the university to experience college life, participation in painting and reconstruction activities to improve the school building, and working in the environmental station in the school courtyard.

“Nine o’clock Saturday morning, what kid would want to go to school? This room is full of kids every time. They love the program.”

-- Community Partner

Feeder Patterns. Students, families, and CIS programs alike benefit from the feeder pattern through the school system in Denton. Campus managers stay in close communication with each other and have at least a general understanding of each other’s programs, which facilitates students’ transition between schools, particularly between middle and high school CIS.

Campus managers reap the benefits of an established base of incoming students who are already seeking out CIS on their own. Parents may have the most to gain from the feeder patterns because a connection with CIS in elementary school ensures that parents will be more

"I believe a lot of our parents are informed because our feeder middle school has CIS too. A lot of our parents already know about it."

-- School Staff

involved in their children's education from the outset of middle school. Consequently, a feeder pattern connection results in more parent involvement in CIS and students' school lives.

In a large area such as Denton, not all schools have CIS. While some students will be able to proceed through each CIS school in turn, others may not be able

to maintain CIS enrollment throughout their schooling.

Monitoring and Adjustment. Monitoring of CIS services occurs both formally and informally at the site level. CIS campus managers provide written status reports to the principal one to two times per month and present them at periodic meetings, in addition to providing monthly and end-of-year reports on their programs. Informally, principals and campus managers work together to meet and communicate if there is a need. Other monitoring at the school level takes the form of measuring whether basic student needs are met, parent involvement has increased, and student performance, especially on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test, has improved.

Campus plans are made at the beginning of each year, including goals and a mission statement. These plans are upgraded annually, but they can also be adjusted throughout the year to add programs and events as new needs become apparent. For example, if gang violence in the community increases sharply, a campus manager could schedule a speaker on the dangers of gang membership.

Relationships

Across all stakeholders and campuses, relationships were identified as critical to the implementation of CIS within the schools and communities.

CIS Staff and Students. The relationship between on-site CIS staff (and volunteers) and their students has been described as very positive, open, caring, loving, mutually respectful, and non-judgmental. This relationship is strengthened by the fact that CIS staff are not employed by the school and can consequently engage in a direct relationship with students without first passing through school authorities. The CIS staff-student relationship has also been explained as the core of a larger network of relationships, including parents, teachers, and counselors, that work together to help students succeed. A potential drawback of this relationship is that students, and sometimes parents, can become too reliant on the campus manager or take advantage of his or her kindness; however, CIS staff are aware of these tendencies and are taking steps to prevent them.

"If you're capable of building a relationship with a student, that in itself is a success."

-- CIS Staff

CIS Staff and School Personnel. CIS staff and school personnel generally have strong relationships characterized by good communication, clarity, and collaboration. While principals have specific goals they want CIS to help them meet, they are flexible in how campus managers choose to meet these goals. Most teachers and campus managers have a mutual respect for the efforts each is making to help students succeed, and both parties communicate well to ensure that they have their needs met. For example, campus managers remind teachers

"[CIS] is helping teachers by helping the students."

-- School Staff

when mentors will be present at school, and are respectful of teachers' requests should a certain class period be inconvenient for a student to miss. Campus managers also facilitate communication between teachers and mentors by providing folders of current class work with which mentors can help their students. Campus managers send weekly e-mails to teachers and monthly newsletters to school staff, and are generally regarded as very accessible for communication by phone and e-mail, or in person.

Good communication can always be improved, and some staff have suggested that the campus managers make more effort to attend teacher meetings and reach out to each teacher at the school; this can be difficult in schools where turnover rates are high and new teachers comprise large percentages of the staff. Campus managers also face the challenge of reporting to two supervisors who may have competing interests: CIS affiliate staff and school principals.

CIS Staff and Partner Organizations. CIS of North Texas staff have secured enough community partners that the resources available through them are almost limitless; however, increasing community awareness of what CIS does is an important goal in North Texas. More community partners mean more resources to which campus managers may refer families in need, such as health services, mentors, and agencies providing financial assistance. CIS of North Texas hopes to build partnerships in particular with the Hispanic community, which has been challenging in the past. CIS hopes to show successful Hispanic role models in the community to provide encouragement and hope for the large Hispanic student population in the schools.

Another challenge to the relationship between CIS of North Texas and community members is the quick turnaround for processing volunteer mentors. Mentors must be processed, placed, and matched within 2 weeks, which is difficult for one campus manager who may receive 40 volunteers to process at once. Consequently, many good mentors may lose interest while waiting and CIS could lose credibility in the community. This issue could be rectified by adding part-time staff to help process volunteers when necessary.

CIS Staff and Parents. CIS staff have proven to be an important resource for parents, helping bridge the gap between parents and the school and increasing parent involvement. Campus managers are honest with parents about the fact that they may need to report certain information to other agencies, which contributes to a relationship characterized by trust. Parents feel comfortable contacting the campus manager to help them and are grateful for all the campus managers have done for their children.

"[The campus manager] cares about everybody. It didn't say anything in the book about having to stop and talk to the parents in the halls."

-- Parent

Benefits of CIS Within the Schools

From all perspectives, CIS of North Texas has been a great success with room for more growth. On-site CIS and school staff have noticed countless changes in their students, both tangible and immeasurable. Staff report that more students are graduating specifically because of CIS, and many are going to college and even earning scholarships. Students have better grades and are more focused on academics and their futures. They have more confidence, less trouble with peers, and better behavior in school. While some

"There are [some] girls paired with mentors, and two of them particularly I've seen bragging when they get a 90 on a test and I hear them saying things that give me hope."

-- School Staff

students come around more easily than others, CIS has even helped some of the very toughest cases “come out of their shells” and make the commitment to attend CIS events.

Parents and students have also enumerated many positive changes in their children and themselves. Parents note that CIS is not just a program for kids, but for whole families. Family life is more pleasant as children have more respectful attitudes, better behavior, and help out more around the house. Youth are more relaxed when they get home from school because they have had an opportunity to organize their lives with a caring and trustworthy adult.

“Through volunteering with the programs...I’ve learned English and I’ve learned to play a role in the school and see what my children are doing in school.”

-- Parent

The CIS campus manager functions as a liaison between parent and child, and encourages dialog, especially when parents are unsure how to relate to their children in certain ways (e.g., single fathers and daughters, parents who do not understand their children’s schoolwork). Parents appreciate that CIS has encouraged them to participate more in their children’s schooling; kept them up to date on events at the school; and provided a comfortable, welcoming channel for communication.

Students recognize many of the same changes in themselves that their parents, teachers, counselors, and campus managers noticed: more confidence, a concept of future, better relationships with their families, better grades, improved academic skills, increased motivation, and respect for others. They also cite honesty, self-control, openness, thinking before acting, making new friends, conflict resolution, and making better choices as skills and attributes they have developed as a result of participation in CIS.

“I think if it wasn’t for [my campus manager] I wouldn’t be in college.”

-- Former Student

Students overwhelmingly enjoy participation in CIS and spending time with their mentors, and often the only “complaints” from students are that they want more: more time with campus managers and mentors, more field trips and activities, and more time being with friends at CIS. They appreciate that they can have a good time at CIS without getting in trouble and feel comfortable being themselves, without spending money beyond their means. Some students enjoyed their experiences so much that they even expressed interest in overnight lockins with their CIS friends and campus manager.

Especially at the elementary level, many of the activities students described as their favorites were the activities they engage in with their mentors and campus manager: reading, playing computer games, spending time with people they care about, and playing sports or other games. Students at all grade levels enjoyed building relationships with adults and having a trustworthy, caring source of advice, conversation, or just a listening ear.

Challenges to CIS Implementation Within the Schools

According to stakeholders, several challenges existed for implementing CIS within the schools. Securing funding and resources was a primary challenge. Given limitations to funding and resources, some students who need help from CIS do not receive it. Time constraints also limit the services students can receive. Teachers want their students in class, lunches are too short to spend meaningful time with students, after-school transportation is limited or unavailable, and mentors are only present in the school at specific times.

For students and parents, visibility or knowledge of CIS within the school can be a challenge. While parents appreciate what CIS has done for their children, they wish they had known about it earlier or known to seek it out before their child was having significant problems. Many parents indicated that their children's enrollment in CIS, and consequently their own introduction to the program, was a reaction to a problem; that is, students did not know about CIS until something was already going wrong academically, financially, behaviorally, or emotionally. Ideally, CIS would have the funding to be more proactive and enroll all students who wanted to participate before they had any problems.

3.2 Key Features of CIS of North Texas: Strengths and Limitations

Several features of CIS of North Texas were identified as contributing to its strengths as a local CIS affiliate. Additionally, CIS of North Texas faces several limitations or challenges.

Leadership

The current executive director of CIS of North Texas has held his position for 6 years. His past career in the corporate sphere has allowed him to lead CIS of North Texas from a business perspective, as well as to communicate with business partners in a way that indicates

"He's such a great speaker that people are starting to ask for him more and more."

-- Community Partner

he understands their concerns and interests. Several stakeholders have described the executive director as a powerful speaker and noted the impact of his presentations. While he is a powerful, outward-focused business leader, the executive director of CIS of North

Texas spends 2 hours every weekend volunteering with students in the Saturday program. He says this experience allows him to truly understand the challenges his campus managers face, and reminds him why he and his staff are really there. Leadership is a strength of CIS of North Texas.

Board of Directors

Since CIS of North Texas was founded in 1994, the board of directors has shifted from a primarily education-oriented body to primarily business-oriented. This shift has been necessary to promote the growth of CIS and awareness in the community, and the shift is still in progress. Board members are encouraged to discuss CIS and spread the word in their individual spheres of influence; but CIS is already well-known within the school and United Way community, which underscores the need for members whose influence targets the business community. Board members "advocate, open doors, and generate leads;" therefore, networks in diverse vocational areas and diverse geographical areas are necessary. CIS of North Texas could benefit from more board members in the smaller, more rural parts of the affiliate.

Resources/Funding

CIS of North Texas keeps a very specific, organized log of all revenues and expenses, as well as volunteer hours and in-kind donations received, students served, trainings provided, grant opportunities in the pipeline, and resource development events both completed and planned. The affiliate always exceeds what has been promised in the number of students served and volunteer hours received. At the time of the

"One young man...wrote to his mentor, 'I'm really going to miss you. You're the closest thing I've ever had to a father.' You can't put a price tag on something like that."

-- Community Partner

site visit, CIS of North Texas projected \$1,409,393 in revenues and \$1,422,127 in expenses for fiscal year 2007-08.

Primary funders for CIS of North Texas include the Texas Education Agency, the school districts, United Way of Denton County, and the U.S. Department of Education Mentor. Other major sources of funding include fundraising efforts, the LISD 21st Century grant, General Electric, TRS On-Behalf, Northwest High School, Denton County Juvenile Probation, CapitalOne, the City of Lewisville, LEISD Even Start, Denton Benefit League, EDS, in addition to funding from other grants and foundations.

Marketing

Because of its limited marketing budget and consistent with its grassroots beginnings, CIS of North Texas implements a viral marketing plan, characterized by technology-based word-of-mouth awareness building. An attractive Web site, executive director's blog, direct e-mails to partners' inboxes, and social and networking groups (Facebook and MySpace) help spread the word about CIS of North Texas work in the community. CIS of North Texas also issues press releases and has produced an emotional video, which it uploaded to its website and presented at the annual sponsor gala. CIS of North Texas prepares colorful, easy-to-read marketing materials with photographs of actual students and mentors, targeted to current partners, prospective donors, and prospective mentors. Community awareness and an understanding of the necessity for CIS in the area continue to be major goals for CIS of North Texas.

"United way has found that creating groups in MySpace and Facebook attracts a lot of interest and volunteers."

-- CIS Staff

Partnerships and Key Stakeholder Development

Developing new partnerships and increasing the availability of community resources are primary goals for CIS of North Texas. They have already secured several strong community partnerships with local organizations: United Way of Denton County, the Village Church, and several other sources of mentors, including the local university and retirement community.

"You come to give and serve and think you'll be doing this to help somebody else, but really you get a benefit for you."

-- Community Partner

These organizations collaborate with CIS for many reasons. They consider CIS of North Texas to be a forward-thinking, innovative organization that is making a real impact on graduation rates. Funding cuts in the district necessitate an alternative means for connecting the community with the school, and partners see CIS as the perfect link. Volunteers choose CIS because many of them felt comfortable working in a school environment and see CIS as a way they can make a difference. They hear how rewarding it is to mentor a child and choose to work with CIS because these schools are close to home and part of their own community.

Partners characterize their relationships with CIS as a "two-way street;" they provide financial or volunteer services to CIS, and CIS recognizes them through plaques, public awards, and participating in community events in support of volunteers. For example, CIS of North Texas staff attended a choir performance at the retirement community to show their support and strengthen their relationship with the elementary school mentors. Partners also agree that there is strong communication between their organizations and CIS of North Texas.

Community partners are proud to work with CIS because of the many strengths they see in the organization. They observe that CIS of North Texas has a real impact in the community, provides an opportunity for retired citizens to give back through mentoring, and gives youth a caring adult with whom they can talk. They see support for CIS in the community and district administration, and note that awareness of CIS has increased within the last 5 years. Volunteers have noticed that some students come to school just to see their mentors, which underscores the importance of the placement of CIS within the school. Volunteers note commitment and passion from the CIS staff they work with; appreciate the effort campus managers put into matching and training volunteers; and view CIS as an overall well-coordinated, inviting, well-run program.

“You sense an authentic spirit [in CIS]. There’s not just sizzle, there’s steak there.”

-- Community Partner

The limitations most commonly cited by community partners are lack of funding for CIS, limited time with mentees, and issues with communication and reporting. Partners would like to see a CIS campus manager in every school and more grant opportunities for funding CIS. They suggest that if CIS were to collaborate with other local organizations (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters, Younglife, Boy Scouts, programs in Dallas), they could pool their resources more efficiently instead of competing for funding. Mentors are also disappointed that they can only see students during school hours and only during the school year; they are afraid that any progress made might be lost during the summer, and they hope that efforts to put a summer program in place will come to fruition. Some mentors would like the link with teachers to be stronger, and suggest mentors sit in classroom sessions with students and teachers. They would also appreciate weekly feedback from teachers on how their student is doing and what they need to address. Organizations would appreciate a more consistent reporting system whereby they can receive updates on how their help is improving student outcomes, as well as success stories to share with other members of the organization to bolster support and encourage participation. Most partners agree that CIS needs to continue its efforts to build awareness in the community.

“You need the community in the school, but you need the school in the community.”

-- Community Partner

CIS of North Texas staff note that partnerships with businesses at local, regional, and community levels, especially those in the oil and gas industry, are currently priority targets. They find that the best way to develop partnerships with businesses is to make compromises, show them they understand their position, and work with them to determine how both organizations can best meet each other’s needs. Economic changes and mergers make secure business partnerships difficult and provide unstable funding, which can lead to employee turnover. Striking a balance between public and corporate funding can also be challenging when working with community partners.

Recruitment/Retention

Staff have worked at CIS of North Texas for anywhere from 2 to 7 years. Affiliate staff recognize that the primary contributor to turnover among campus managers is burnout, so they constantly look for ways to help campus managers “recharge their batteries,” including stress management activities such as trainings, opportunities to complete paperwork on staff meeting days, and a chance to discuss best practices with each other. CIS of North Texas also has a fiscal agent agreement with Little Elm School District that allows CIS to offer benefits to its employees, which may be a significant factor in employee retention.

CIS of North Texas affiliate staff agree that the most important characteristic they look for when hiring campus managers is passion for helping youth. While potential campus managers must have college degrees, the specific degree is not important. A CIS background or some experience working with similar types of youth is preferred, therefore recent college graduates are not always a good fit. CIS of North Texas staff also look for a campus manager who intends to stay with CIS for at least 3 years.

“The entire staff is so hardworking and so dedicated; it’s really a pleasure to work with people who share the same passion and are interested in helping kids.”

-- Board Member

While CIS staff conduct the interviews and make the primary choices for campus managers, they then refer their top three choices to the school principal, who makes the final decision after discussion with CIS staff. CIS of North Texas maintains a pipeline of potential employees and keeps aware of leads in the community. CIS of North Texas Affiliate staff are honest with potential and new employees about open positions and the high risk for burnout.

The main limitation for staffing in North Texas is insufficient funding resources to maintain enough staff. Ideally, CIS would be present in more schools and have both a full-time campus manager and a case manager, who would serve as an assistant to the campus manager.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and CISTMS

Monitoring CIS at the affiliate level is performed mostly through CISTMS, which tracks case-managed student information and whole school information separately. Tracked student information includes the amount of time spent participating in CIS services and individual student goals. CISTMS tracks improvement in goal areas and total volunteer hours provided to CIS of North Texas and provides cost-benefit analyses.

In general, reporting guidelines are stringent. CIS of North Texas hopes to transmit all its reporting correspondence electronically. The program creates an online monthly report that is automatically forwarded to all a staff and sends “Did you know?” highlights to schools. Data contained in the “Did you know?” reports, as well as caseloads, numbers of hours provided, and services provided also can be tracked with CISTMS.

CISTMS data are used in marketing materials, end-of-year reports, grant reports, and executive director reports. They are valuable to school principals and as a tool for determining campus manager pay increases. Challenges associated with CISTMS include its late availability in the school year for data entry and the limited detail of reports it can produce. Local CIS affiliates could benefit from the ability to produce custom reports, such as student rosters or service levels by funding source. A suggestion has been made for CISTMS to automatically populate with Texas Education Agency data to eliminate this time-consuming responsibility from campus managers’ workloads.

Relationship with the State Office

Affiliate staff at CIS of North Texas appreciate State Office help in managing community partners, identifying funding opportunities, and providing training. The State Office also helps identify local funding opportunities and ensures affiliates are aware of newly available funding.

The State Office could provide local affiliates with more technical training and assistance through more training sessions, workshops, and classes, and by helping affiliates set up their computerized network systems. The State office could also provide annual trainings at more flexible times; while these trainings are beneficial, many affiliate staff members have several roles and cannot attend all relevant sessions because of overlapping timing.

4. Future Direction for CIS of North Texas

4.1 Future Vision for CIS of North Texas

Stakeholders in CIS of North Texas envision their organization serving twice as many students as it does now. They hope to place more campus managers in more schools, expand the types of services and programs available, and provide more after-school programs as well. Affiliate staff hope to create a replicable process that can be successfully placed

"We feel like we have a scalable model, but you have to fund the model."

-- CIS Staff

anywhere. All stakeholders would like to see more assistance for the campus manager (potentially with the addition of a part-time staff member), more funds for CIS, and more community awareness of CIS. They want CIS to be viewed as a resource for all students, not just the economically disadvantaged.

4.2 Recommendations and Advice

Most stakeholders feel they are supported by CIS and know where to obtain help if necessary. However, across all roles, stakeholders agree that campus managers require more support: training opportunities (e.g., group play therapy), help with paperwork and filing, someone to cover for the campus manager if he or she is unavailable, funding for programs, and a higher salary.

"To have someone else have those kids [that I can't help] on their caseload would be above and beyond a fantasy."

-- CIS Staff

Parents feel they need more specific information about what CIS can do for their children and would like to receive this information before their children are referred to CIS as a result of a problem in school. They suggest that weekly flyers and monthly phone calls or parent group meetings would be helpful, and note that an added benefit of this communication would be a larger pool of parent volunteers.

CIS staff advise others who plan to implement a similar program to expect long hours and limited paychecks, be honest with themselves about their limits, and ask for help when they need it. They encourage stakeholders to be active in their communities and be aware of needs and resources. Working with CIS requires passion, patience, understanding, openness to change, confidence to make decisions, and flexibility to change them when necessary.