

Communities In Schools of New Mexico

Supporting Santa Fe Public School students in K – 12 academic and life success
2014-2015

CIS Site Coordinators work in schools beside the school's principal, counselor, nurse and classroom teachers to develop intervention/prevention plans that will help children who are at risk of falling behind in school or dropping out, stay on track.

CIS's wrap around services 'framework', relies on five key indicators to determine if a child is at risk and to establish the right strategy to mitigate the challenges preventing the child from succeeding.

Academic performance, attendance/truancy, behavioral issues, lack of parental engagement/involvement and/or basic needs are the issues that help us determine where to begin to help a young person struggling in school. Developing a plan for each student ensures we attend to the depth and breadth of need and adjust each child's plan as it is implemented. Working closely with staff, volunteers and community agency partners, CIS Site Coordinators work to ensure each student's needs are met quickly and efficiently so every child may arrive at school rested, nourished and ready to learn.

This year, CIS completed its second full year at El Camino Real Academy (formerly Agua Fria Elementary), Salazar and César Chávez Elementary Schools. We completed our first full year at Capital High School, Ortiz and DeVargas Middle Schools, Aspen Community Magnet School, Engage Santa Fe and phased in mid year at Nava and Kearny Elementary Schools. During the 2014-15 school year the total population of the 10 schools served was approximately 4,500 students (this includes Freshman only at CHS). 4,522 students received integrated student supports from Communities In Schools of New Mexico.

Of those, 385 students received individualized targeted and sustained interventions.



Stephanie Walther, CIS Site Coordinator with student

Building relationships takes time. Second year schools saw the largest number of students who received individualized interventions. Schools in which we completed one full year saw the second highest number of individualized interventions and partial year schools received primarily school wide prevention services.

- **Attendance - 77%** of the 97 students who had attendance goals met their goal. For some students, the objective was to increase the number of days they attended and for others it was to maintain their attendance levels. **Successful strategies:** peer mentor programs, Big Brother Big Sister Lunch Buddies, Site Coordinator mentorship, Parent Engagement through phone calls, school meetings and home visits.
- **Academics - 86%** of the 156 students with an academic performance goal met that target. Services are tailored to each student and may have included improving class grades, overall GPA, standardized test scores, or homework completion. **Successful strategies:** CIS volunteer tutor support in classrooms, high school tutors for younger students, after school tutoring, Site Coordinator mentorship, weekly check-ins.
- **Behavior - 83%** of the 257 students who had a behavioral goal met their goal. Interventions were designed to improve behavior in school including: improving classroom behavior, reducing disciplinary referrals for fighting, disruptive or disrespectful behavior (bad language, poor attitude, etc.), improving self confidence and social skills. **Successful strategies:** after school soccer club, Girls on the Run, Big Brother/Big Sister Lunch Buddies, Site Coordinator mentorship, peer groups with school counselors or Girls Inc and Santa Fe Mountain Center. **Basic Needs - over 75%** of the 385 students received assistance around Basic Needs including food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical care, emergency funds. **Parent Engagement** – Parent Engagement strategies are designed based on the unique needs/challenges of individual families. Some families with whom CIS works are experiencing severe crisis and trauma, perhaps involving violence. These families are few but require much attention and support due to the intensity and severity of their situations. More commonly, our parents are overwhelmed with issues around food security, immigration, housing, literacy, finances, etc. Combined, when CIS steps in to help a family, they become more engaged and involved in their child's education and school life. **Successful strategies:** Parent Coffees, emergency funds, homework help sessions, Parent Academies, Immigration Clinics, Food Pantries.

ACADEMIC Improvement:

Hilda, CIS Site Coordinator at César Chávez began working with a fourth grade student in January. The student was referred to CIS because her mother had a concern about her daughter's stress level around schoolwork and was afraid that the girl had hit an academic "brick wall". In February, the student began after school tutoring with Hilda, the Site Coordinator and Capital High School students who were part of a tutoring program coordinated by CIS. When she started her first words were, "I have like, a brain problem... so I can't remember much." She was given positive support, allowed extra time to complete tasks and reminded that she was as capable as anyone else. Her Capital High School tutor was extremely proud one afternoon after teaching Ashley how to tell time and stated "I don't think I've ever taught anyone how to tell time before!" Two months later the student's teachers reported that her academic level had advanced by 3 months in reading and 6 months in math over the course of the 2 month tutoring period and on that same day she had scored a perfect 100% in her accelerated reader test. Her mother was extremely proud and stated that her daughter's stress level with homework had disappeared since she began after school tutoring. The student is now more confident and her teacher reports that she is growing academically as she never has before.



César Chávez Students in their new coats from CIS

"Our work supporting children and families takes time. This year I saw a significant increase in parents coming to me for basic needs support which helped me gain their trust and forge more supportive relationships."

Jessica Mauler, CIS Site Coordinator
Ortiz Middle School

Basic Needs/Family Support/Behavior/Academics:

A 4th grader at Salazar experiencing challenges with basic needs, academics and behavior was referred to the school's Wellness Team and CIS's Site Coordinator, (a member of the school's Wellness Team) Elizabeth, was tapped to help. The student had been struggling academically with extremely low proficiency in reading and math. Because of his lack of academic success, he had low self-confidence in the classroom, and was acting out and disrupting the entire class. He also had a very narrow definition of masculinity and what it meant to be strong – he had decided that the kind of person he wanted to be was a tough guy and a "gangster," and although he really did not fully understand what that meant, his "gangster" attitude led him to make poor choices, victimize and bully other students, and engage in violent behavior.

After meeting with the student and his family, Elizabeth learned of some of the significant challenges the entire family was facing. In addition to supporting the student and family with some of their basic needs like food and clothing, Elizabeth regularly met with or called the family to build good will. After forging a relationship with the student and family, Elizabeth was able to connect him (through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program) with a big brother who had himself been a gang member and had left gang culture behind to make a better life for himself. The student's big brother visited him weekly at school to eat lunch and play sports. The big brother continues to be a tremendous help in guiding the student to understand what it means to be strong and tough without being a "gangster," drawing on personal experiences that connect him on a deeper level with the student. The school counselor also engaged him in a boys' group to work on developing a sense of personal power without threatening others. The student no longer engages in violent behavior and although he still makes mistakes from time to time, he is willing to own up to his actions and make it right. Not only has his teacher reported huge improvements, his classmates and peers describe him as a person that has changed for the better.

CIS also paired the student with an after school tutor who has helped to build his academic confidence; the student is actually excited to see his tutor after school every week. He doesn't need to be reminded of which days are his tutoring days – he comes to tell Elizabeth that it's his tutoring day and he is visibly happy to get extra attention and help. After a month or so of working with the tutor, the teacher reported that he experienced tremendous academic growth, and more importantly, he now turns in his homework and is excited to participate in class – no more goofing off or deliberately causing a disruption! This student started out pretty far behind, so he's not caught up to his class yet, but his progress can be measured in how quickly he is improving and how engaged he now is in learning.