

CIS OF CHICAGO COMPLETES TWO-YEAR, GOLD-STANDARD EVALUATION OF ITS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Results Verify Significant Improvement in Students' Math and Reading Scores

Communities In Schools (CIS) of Chicago is a dropout prevention organization that works. We help students stay in school, do well academically and graduate. For the 2015-2016 school year, our model is active at 122 Chicago public schools.

In fall 2015, CIS of Chicago learned results from an in-depth evaluation of our Partnership program, which focuses on connecting a range of support services and programs provided by community partner organizations to the city's public school students. The program was evaluated via a randomized control trial study – the gold standard of social science research. It was conducted by Professor David Figlio, director of the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University and a leading expert in the evaluation of education policies and practices.

CIS of Chicago has carried out the Partnership program work evaluated in Professor Figlio's study for more than 20 years.

The Partnership program, along with the Intensive program, constitute the core of our organization's programmatic work. The Intensive program places a full-time CIS of Chicago social worker in a school to coordinate support programs for all students and to provide in-depth case management to targeted students at serious risk of dropping out.

The central question of Professor Figlio's multi-year evaluation of the Partnership program asked: What impact does CIS of Chicago's Partnership program, which focuses on linking a variety of social, emotional, health and enrichment support programs and services to schools, have on students' core academic achievement and attendance?

All student data examined in the study were for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. Following are key findings.

MAIN FINDING The main finding from the study is that CIS of Chicago's program of connecting non-academic support programs and services to schools improves student achievement in math and reading. The term "achievement in math and reading" means that schools included in the study, and which partnered with CIS of Chicago during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years, saw an educationally and statistically significant greater proportion of their students perform proficiently in math and reading on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) compared to a group of schools that were examined in the study, but which did not partner with CIS of Chicago during 2012-2013 or 2013-2014. Students performing proficiently in math and/or reading in elementary school are considered by the Illinois State Board of Education to be on track for future academic success.

**MORE THAN 850,000
CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL
STUDENTS HAVE BEEN POSITIVELY
IMPACTED BY CIS OF CHICAGO
AND ITS WORK CONNECTING
NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORT
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SCHOOLS.**

MAJOR OBSERVATIONS At the end of the two-year study, schools in partnership with CIS of Chicago saw almost 45 percent of their students score proficiently in reading on the ISAT compared to less than 40 percent for schools not partnered with CIS of Chicago. Similarly, almost 53 percent of students at CIS of Chicago partner schools scored proficiently in math during Year Two of the study, compared to only 47.3 percent of students in non-CIS of Chicago schools. These findings were statistically significant at the 95 percent and 90 percent confidence levels respectively.

CIS OF CHICAGO MODEL All 122 Chicago public schools in partnership with CIS of Chicago in 2015-2016 will benefit from our Partnership program, whose impact on student math and reading achievement has now been verified by the rigorous evaluation outlined in this paper. Five of these partner schools will also benefit from the work of a full-time CIS of Chicago social worker. This CIS of Chicago staff member will implement the full Intensive program of case managing at-risk students and linking all students to a variety of support services.

PROGRAM COSTS CIS of Chicago's core program model, which was analyzed in this evaluation study and found to improve student performance in math and reading, is highly cost-effective. During the 2015-2016 academic year, for example, CIS of Chicago will connect an estimated 50,000 Chicago public school students to the same types of support programs and services in which students attending the 18 schools analyzed by Professor Figlio participated.

With CIS of Chicago's FY16 operating budget anticipated to be \$2.4 million, this translates to a per-student cost of \$48. Other educational interventions that deliver similar results to the CIS of Chicago program, often cost \$1,000 or more per student.

CIS NATIONAL CIS of Chicago's national organization, Communities In Schools, has commissioned two independent studies of the impact of our Intensive program. An initial five-year longitudinal study by the research group ICF International found that the full Intensive program of service linkage and case management results in a statistically significant increase in students: (a) graduating on time from high school and (b) staying in school. As part of CIS National's ongoing evaluation, a second study of the Intensive program, undertaken by MDRC, is expected to be released in 2016.

NEXT STEPS CIS of Chicago intends to use the findings of Professor Figlio's study for a variety of purposes. During the next year, the organization will share the results of the study with our funders, school and community partners, and Communities In Schools affiliates across the country. CIS of Chicago also intends to leverage the study's findings to inform long-term strategy and resource allocation decision-making.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CIS OF CHICAGO PROGRAM EVALUATION

Here are the responses to the most frequently asked questions about the formal evaluation of CIS of Chicago's Partnership program.

How were schools chosen to participate in the study?

During the winter and spring of 2012, CIS of Chicago conducted a search for Chicago public schools to join its network, starting in the 2012-2013 academic year. A total of 92 Chicago public schools applied for consideration. A team of CIS of Chicago staff reviewed each of these 92 schools' applications; team members also conducted follow-up interviews with the principal and other key leaders at each school that applied. Of the 92 applicant schools, 47 were determined to be good fits for CIS of Chicago partnership.

What factors were used to determine if schools were well matched for CIS of Chicago partnership?

The selection team relied on a set of related criteria that it had used to guide similar new partner searches in previous years. Each school was rated on a combination of important factors, including: its vision for partnering with CIS of Chicago; the need of its students and school community; the strength of leadership demonstrated by the principal and other key staff; and evidence of strong communication channels between the school and external partners.

Were all 47 good-fit schools ultimately selected to join the CIS of Chicago network in 2012-2013?

No. Twenty of the 47 schools were randomly chosen to join the CIS of Chicago network in fall 2012. The other 27 schools in the pool were not selected.

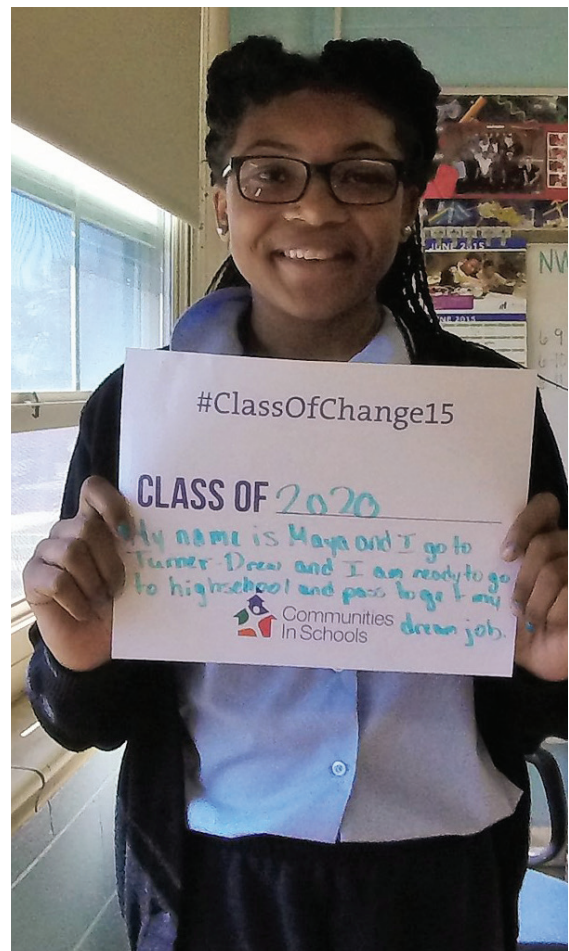
Why were the 20 partner schools chosen randomly? Why not just choose the 20 best schools from the pool of 47 good-fit schools?

CIS of Chicago, with the assistance of Professor Figlio of Northwestern University, designed a lottery to choose CIS of Chicago's 20 new partners from the larger group of 47 schools. Through this Randomized Control Trial approach, the 20 schools randomly selected to join the CIS of Chicago network effectively became an "Experimental Group" that the Northwestern researcher used to gauge the impact of the CIS of Chicago "treatment" on a variety of student outcomes. The other 27 schools not selected to work with CIS of Chicago served as a Control Group. Student outcomes between the 20 Partner Schools (Experimental Group) and the 27 Control Group schools could thus be compared and, through advanced statistical analysis, enable Professor Figlio to pinpoint the impact of CIS of Chicago partnership on student outcomes. Schools

in the Control Group were invited to re-apply for CIS of Chicago Partnership in the future, through an expedited process, if/when funding became available to further expand the organization's school partner network.

What is the benefit of using a Randomized Control Trial design for the study?

Randomized Control Trials (RCT) are the gold standard of research. They have long been used in medical trials and more recently have been adopted by social-science researchers and education scholars. The reason RCT studies are considered to be best practice in research is because they are able to show causality between an intervention and an outcome. In the case of this study, the treatment that Professor Figlio tested was whether CIS of Chicago partnership improved student outcomes.



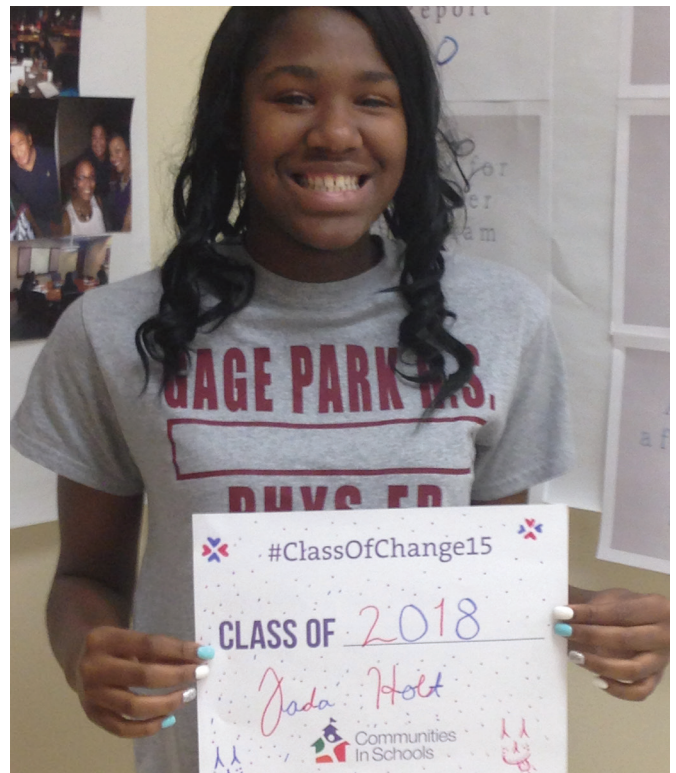
What specific student outcomes did the study measure?

The study focused on measuring two main outcomes: (1) student proficiency in math and reading, as reflected on the spring 2013 and spring 2014 Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT); and (2) student attendance rates during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. ISAT testing data from more than 10,000 students was examined in both years of the study to gauge CIS of Chicago's impact on math and reading; data from more than 16,500 students was collected from Chicago Public Schools for both years of the study to determine CIS of Chicago's impact on student attendance. Note that only students in grades 3-8 participated in ISAT testing in spring 2013 and 2014, whereas attendance data is collected for all elementary school students.

Even though the 20 CIS partner schools in the study were randomly selected from the larger pool of 47 good-fit schools, isn't it possible that those 20 selected schools were substantially different from the 27 Control Group schools — potentially biasing the results of the study?

Yes. To guard against that possibility, the study analyzed the 20 CIS of Chicago partner schools against the 27 Control Group schools that were not selected to be CIS of Chicago partners. That analysis showed that at the start of the study period, in fall 2012:

- All 47 schools were K-8 institutions;
- The 20 CIS of Chicago Partner Schools and 27 Control Group Schools were nearly identical in terms of their:
 - Low-income student percentage;
 - English as a Second Language population;
 - Percentage of students meeting reading and math proficiency standards on standardized tests the year before the study began (i.e., 2011-2012); and
 - Percentage of Special Needs students.
- The 20 CIS of Chicago Partner Schools differed somewhat (but not at levels determined to be statistically significant) from the 27 Control Group Schools in the following ways:
 - CIS of Chicago Partner Schools had a higher percentage of African American students; Control Group Schools had a higher percentage of Latino students; and,
 - CIS of Chicago Partner Schools had a higher percentage of students new to the school at the start of the 2012-2013 academic year than Control Group Schools did.



Were any other safeguards built into the evaluation to further limit the chance of the study reporting inflated benefits of the CIS of Chicago program model to students at the 20 Partner Schools?

Yes. The study took an Intent-to-Treat approach in reporting all student outcomes. This means that the ISAT math and reading outcomes examined in the study related to any student who was enrolled in one CIS of Chicago partner schools on the 20th day of school during the 2012-2013 academic year. Thus, even if a student was present on the twentieth day of 2012-2013, but then transferred later in the year and did not return to that school or another CIS of Chicago partner included in the study during the remainder of 2012-2013 or 2013-2014, his/her ISAT results were nonetheless included in calculating the impact of the CIS of Chicago "treatment." Using an Intent-to-Treat approach is a standard of social science research. Applying this conservative approach led to a moderate reduction in the observed benefit of CIS of Chicago partnership on students' math and reading achievement.

Did the historic closing of more than 50 CPS schools during the 2013-14 academic year impact the study?

Yes. Two of the 20 CIS of Chicago partner schools included in the study, as well as one of the 27 Control Group schools, closed before the start of the 2013-2014 academic year (Year Two of the study). Although Professor Figlio was able to obtain student test score data and attendance data (*Continued on page 6*)

Chart 1

Study Year	Measure	18 Partner Schools [CIS of Chicago]	26 Control Schools [non-CIS of Chicago]	Percentage Point Difference: Partner Schools vs. Control Schools	Relative Difference: Partner Schools vs Control Schools
Year One 2012-2013	Spring 2013 ISAT READING Proficiency	44.7% ¹ of students proficient	41.4% of Students proficient	+3.3	8.0%
Year Two 2013-2014	Spring 2014 ISAT READING Proficiency	44% ² proficient	39.7% proficient	+4.3 PPT	10.8%
Year One 2012-2013	Spring 2013 ISAT MATH Proficiency	48% ³ proficient	44.8% proficient	+3.2 PPT	7.1%
Year Two 2013-2014	Spring 2014 ISAT MATH Proficiency	52.9% ³ proficient	47.3% proficient	+5.6 PPT	11.8%

¹Statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level

²Statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level

³Statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level

(Continued from page 5) from 2012-2013 for students who attended these three schools when they were still open, he chose to not include that data in his final analysis. For this reason, the study results reported in this paper are based on student outcomes observed at 18 CIS of Chicago partner schools and 26 Control Group schools that were open during both 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. That said, the fundamental positive benefits of CIS of Chicago partnership held even when closed schools were included in the evaluation analysis.

What specific positive student outcomes were observed at the 18 CIS of Chicago partner schools that were included in the study’s final analysis?

As noted above in Chart 1, the study found that a higher percentage of students at CIS of Chicago partner schools performed proficiently in math and reading on the spring 2013 and spring 2014 ISAT tests.

In addition, several distinct groups of students continued by the second year of the study to derive even greater benefit from their schools partnering with CIS of Chicago†:

- More African American students – 11.4 percentage points greater – achieved proficiency in math on the spring 2014 ISAT compared to all African American students covered in the study that year.

- More Latino students – 4.3 percentage points greater – achieved proficiency in reading on the spring 2014 ISAT, compared to all Latino students covered in the study for that year.
- More low-income students – 4.7 percentage points greater – achieved proficiency in reading on the 2014 ISAT, compared to all low-income students included in the study for that year.

†All results presented in this section are statistically significant at the 95% confidence intervals.

Chart 2

Study Year	Measure	18 Partner Schools [CIS of Chicago]	26 Control Schools [non-CIS of Chicago Control]	Percentage Point Difference: Partner Schools vs. Control Schools	Relative Difference: CIS Schools vs Control Schools
Year One/2012-2013	% of students attending ≥ 95% of all school days	63.5% ¹ meeting/exceeding threshold	60.5% meeting/exceeding threshold	+3.0 PPT	+4.9%
Year Two/2013-2014	% of students attending ≥ 95% of all school days	63.1%	63.9%	-.9 PPT	-1.3%

¹Statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level

What impact did CIS of Chicago have on student attendance?

The study confirmed that CIS of Chicago partnership improved student attendance rates during year one of the study; however, these benefits were not observed in the second year of the study. Similarly, no distinct group of students (e.g., African American, Latino, low-income backgrounds) enjoyed attendance benefits in both years of the study as a result of attending one of the 18 CIS of Chicago partner schools analyzed in the study. See Chart 2.

Overall, why are the results of the study important?

The results of Professor Figlio’s study suggest that schools in partnership with CIS of Chicago for two years can expect four additional students per every 100 participating in standardized testing to achieve at proficiency levels in reading compared to schools not in partnership with CIS of Chicago. In mathematics, the comparable figure is 5 additional students achieving proficiency per 100 tested.

Because the partnership program is so cost-effective, it is possible for our organization to serve 1,000 students—close to the total enrollments of two average-size CPS elementary schools—for less than \$50,000 a year.

Note that the Illinois State Board of Education considers achieving proficiency in math and reading an important indicator of future academic success.

OF THE 40,000 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GRADES 3 THROUGH 8 AT SCHOOLS SERVED BY CIS OF CHICAGO’S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, 1,720 MORE GAINED PROFICIENCY IN READING AND 2,240 MORE GAIN PROFICIENCY IN MATH.



Communities
In Schools

Chicago

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Does CIS of Chicago have other impact data from formal evaluations?

Yes. As noted on page two, our national organization has commissioned two independent studies of the impact of our Intensive program. This program places a CIS of Chicago social worker full-time in schools to do two key things:

1. Implement CIS of Chicago's Partnership program of linking students to a variety of support services, which is the program whose impact Professor Figlio at Northwestern analyzed in the separate study outlined in this report; and
2. Case manage students identified by their teachers, principals and parents—up to 10 percent of a school's population—as being off track academically and significantly at risk of dropping out. Case management includes providing ongoing counseling, goal-setting sessions, academic and career counseling and extra-curricular opportunities to help targeted students improve their grades, attendance and behavior in school.

An initial five-year longitudinal study by the research group ICF International found that the full Intensive program of service linkage and case management results in a statistically significant increase in students: (a) graduating on time from high school and (b) staying in school. A second study of the Intensive program, undertaken by MDRC, is expected to be released in late 2016.

