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I have been a CIS site coordinator at Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, KS for the past year and a half. Wyandotte High School is a wonderful mix of diversity with representation of students from all over the globe who speak (at last count) 25 plus different languages. English as a second language makes up over half of Wyandotte's student and family population which Wyandotte High School serves with a variety of Sheltered classes and Newcomer classes for those students who have not had formal schooling before. Despite these students' variety of backgrounds and cultures one of the common things these students share is that they have a strong understanding of what it is to live in poverty and know that money is not something to be taken for granted.

As a site coordinator it is my role to help alleviate some of the stressors and barriers that can come between students and their success in high school which leads them to the ultimate goal of receiving their high school diploma. I do this through collaboration with various community groups and organizations who serve the healthcare, mental health, college and career readiness, and basic needs of our students. I also advocate for individual students and their needs and connect them and their families with resources in times of crisis. The students I meet with individually on a regular basis are considered Level 2 or case-managed students. These students represent 5% of Wyandotte's population and receive more specific goal-based services.

There is no typical day as a Communities In Schools site coordinator, but I'll give you a preview of a day that I had recently just a few weeks back. My day often begins with students checking into my office, often times I will check their grades and they will let me know how their week is going at home and school. On this particular day, I had a teacher and our truancy officer refer a new student to me who was in need of clothing because she had recently been living on the streets. As the Communities In Schools site coordinator, I had established our school's first clothing closet this past year, and I was able to dress this student from head to toe with a warm coat for the winter as well as boots and shoes. After visiting with her, she let me know that the family she was staying with was struggling to get food and that she herself was also needing hygiene items and school supplies. These are all basic needs that I have available to students here at school, but I also made arrangements to help this student get signed up for the Harvesters mobile food pantry and reconnect her with our McKinney-Vento homeless liaison.

All the while I was working with this student, a local children's health clinic I had collaborated with was in the school building performing free dental cleanings and sealants for Wyandotte High School students. These services were available to all students who completed a permission slip, and the majority of the students who were seen had never had the opportunity to have their teeth cleaned before, let alone for free.

This same day I helped a student to navigate insurance pathways and resources to get free glasses, helped a local community organization to recruit student volunteers to complete community service outreach for them, and met with school district professionals about an upcoming translation program where high school students will have the opportunity to interpret for families at local elementary schools. At the end of the school day, our Harvesters mobile food pantry was set to begin, and I organized 30 student volunteers to run hand-out stations with hundreds of pounds of food available to needy families. After approximately 200 families drove through and received food, I delivered food to a couple of families who were unable to drive to the pantry. As my day was just finishing, I received a phone call from the mother of two of my Level 2/caseload students who was so excited to share that she had gotten a job and was going to be able to provide for her children on her own! I had helped her and her children with a variety of different resources, and it was wonderful to know that this support had helped to keep them going!

Every day I am able to do my work as Communities In Schools site coordinator, I see the direct impact that I am making on students, and it is wonderful to be able to contribute to their success as individuals that will one day lead them to be high school graduates. The student that you are about to hear from now is a student who I have worked with since October of 2013, and while she has overcome a great number of trials and tribulations, she currently holds the number one spot in her sophomore class of 378 students and I could not be more proud of her.