



Communities
In Schools

Kansas

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Testimony Before the
House Committee on Appropriations

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee about one of the most critical public policy issues facing Kansas today, public school students obtaining a high school diploma ready to continue their education or begin a career. When a student drops out of school in Kansas, it has a huge impact on the state's economy, on the quality of the Kansas workforce, on the social programs the state must provide, and the quality of the dropout's life. It makes economic sense for the state of Kansas to join the private sector in investing in a proven solution to the dropout epidemic in our state.

Along with highlighting the importance of student academic achievement and dropout prevention, my testimony also details there is a highly effective private sector solution to the dropout epidemic in Communities In Schools of Kansas. Communities In Schools is working each and every school day with young people facing daunting challenges in some of the most challenging economic environments in Kansas. Communities In Schools is a private sector solution to a very public problems. However, with greater support from the state of Kansas, there is much more that could be accomplished.

THE DROPOUT EPIDEMIC

In America, it is estimated that this May there will be 1.2 million young people who will not graduate with their peers when they celebrate receiving their high school diploma. To put that number in context, the population of greater Kansas City (Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and Jackson and Clay

counties in Missouri) is about 1.4 million people. The number of high school dropouts is enormous, around 25% of the public school population and close to half of minority students. However, more alarming is the impact each and every dropout has on our country and state.

Economic Impact

According to the US Census, the average college graduate earns around \$54,000 a year, while the average high school dropout earns less than \$23,000 a year. At that earning level and with the potential for income growth slim, the high school dropout is the recipient of the state social service programs this Committee struggles to fund with Kansas tax dollars.

The Alliance for Excellent Education took this point a step further by preparing an economic impact report on the economic impact boost Kansas should see if it reduced the number of dropouts in half. The report is included in the materials I provided you, along with my testimony. It suggests dropout prevention will lead to job creation, economic increase, and increased state tax revenue.

Impact on the Kansas Workforce

There was a time not long ago when our workforce had a place for young men and women who had dropped out of school. Our country's booming manufacturing sector in urban settings and agricultural economy in rural America depended on low-skill workers who could earn a decent wage, raise a family, and retire after decades of labor in their community.

Today's employment climate is vastly different. Low-skill manufacturing businesses have left America and those jobs are now in foreign lands. Today's workforce needs in the United States and Kansas demands education and skills the high school dropout does not possess. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 90% of new high-growth, high-wage jobs that are now being created will require some post-secondary education. In short, the long term employment potential for the high school dropout is bleak at best, and every year a million more dropouts are chasing those few available jobs.

Social Costs

For our state, each dropout means the expense borne by taxpayers will go up. It is undeniable that students who don't finish school increase state social service costs. Young people who drop out are disproportionate users of government programs, such as welfare and government health care services.

There is also a clear correlation between students who fall through the cracks of the public education system and the development of socially negative behavior. Idle time, poor self-esteem and low employment opportunity lead to a host of bad decisions the drop out often chooses. The drop out population experiences a disproportionate percentage of unwanted pregnancies, as well as higher percentage of alcohol and drug abuse than the high school graduates. Far too often, the high school dropout makes behavioral decisions that lead to criminal activity and correctional programs. Across the country and in Kansas, a large majority of our prison population did not attain a high school diploma. One in eight white men who do not graduate from high school will end up in prison. For black men, the rate of incarceration is one in three.

Communities In Schools – The best solution to the dropout epidemic

Stated simply, the best way to combat the dropout epidemic is Communities In Schools. That bold statement can be supported by the results of a five-year comprehensive evaluation of Communities In Schools, conducted by an independent and prominent social science evaluation firm. The evaluation, performed to meet the highest level of research rigor, demonstrated the following about Communities In Schools:

- Communities In Schools has a positive effect on both dropout rates and graduation rates. This finding demonstrates that our program is not only successful in engaging students in school but also is effective in improving academic performance. This finding makes Communities In Schools unique among dropout prevention programs.
- Communities In Schools accomplishes outstanding results everywhere. The program's model is effective in urban and rural settings, in all grade levels and with students of all ethnicities.

- When implemented with fidelity, the Communities In Schools Model results in higher percentage of students reaching proficiency in 4th and 8th grade math and reading. In a randomized trial in Austin, Texas, there was a demonstrated reduction in student dropout rates that was three times what the “*What Works Clearinghouse*” established as a threshold for “substantially important” effects.

The results of the independent evaluation has validated that Communities In Schools is uniquely the answer to the dropout epidemic. Implementation with “high fidelity” will produce amazing results.

The “How & Why” Communities In Schools Works

There is a structural reason why studies have shown that Communities In Schools is uniquely effective at helping children in danger of dropping out of school. Communities In Schools has refined a process to bring needed community services into school buildings. Partnering with public school districts, Communities In Schools places in schools site coordinators who serve as a bridge between schools and businesses, faith groups and not-for-profit agencies to mobilize local resources to provide a range of services. Those services include mentoring, tutoring, health care, summer and after-school programs, family counseling, vocational learning and much more. Site coordinators work with teachers and administrators to identify students with needs. Next, they help those student address those needs so they can successfully learn, stay in school and become prepared for life.

Communities In Schools Site Coordinators deliver two forms of social services in the school buildings where they are assigned. First, the Site Coordinators develop programming that will benefit an entire student body. These “whole school” programs are very important in amplifying important issue for school students. The second service form performed by Site Coordinators is case management. Case management involves identifying students who have demonstrated behaviors that indicate they statistically are heading towards dropping out of school, such as poor academic performance or truancy. Communities In Schools Site Coordinators work with and provide individualized services for students identified for case management, and produce outstanding results.

The Communities In Schools Network in Kansas

Nationally, Communities In Schools was founded in 1977 on the tough streets of New York City. The program came to Kansas in 1990 with Communities In Schools beginning to provide services in Wichita, which has become a nationally celebrated affiliate. Along with Wichita, today's Communities In Schools of Kansas network includes programs in Kansas City, Ottawa and Ulysses. At the start of the 2011 school year, our Kansas network expanded when new programs were introduced in Topeka and Garden City. This August, Communities In Schools will open its first program in Lawrence.

In the 2010-11 school year, Communities In Schools of Kansas operated programs in 53 Kansas schools, where more than 1,600 volunteers provided vital services to nearly 16,000 students. This includes nearly 1,900 students receiving intensive case-management services. We were able to operate our Kansas program at an average cost of \$164 a student.

In order to measure and determine our effectiveness, Communities In Schools of Kansas closely monitors how our programs are impacting children in Kansas public schools. In 2010, 98% of students who received CIS case management services stayed in school, 89% were promoted to the next grade, 88% had a demonstrated improvement in behavior, 74% were documented to have improved their school attendance, and 80% showed academic improvement. It is important to note these statistics were of "case managed" students, meaning these students were identified for case management because they were already demonstrating tendencies, behaviors and/or outcomes consistent with students who decide to drop out of school. To take a closer look at our network's performance, please review our Annual Report, which is included in our information packet.

Communities In Schools of Kansas Appropriation Request

Communities In Schools of Kansas has experienced significant and exciting growth in the past year towards its mission to 'surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.' To be impactful in our state, Communities In Schools of Kansas is targeting our dropout prevention activities in the ten school districts in our state that annually produce the highest number of students who decide to drop out of school. As a result, this requested appropriation would focus state resources where we can most effectively address the problem of students dropping

out of school in our state. Specifically, the \$611,398, if approved, would permit Communities In Schools Site Coordinator operations to be in place during the school year beginning in August, 2012 through May, 2013 in the following communities:

- In Kansas City, Kansas/Wyandotte County public schools, we would continue to provide Communities In Schools Site Coordinator programs at M.E.Pearson Elementary School and Whittier Elementary School and provide greatly expanded Site Coordinator programs at Central Middle School and Wyandotte High School.
- In Lawrence, we would have our first full year of Site Coordinator programs at Kennedy Elementary School and initiate a new program at Central Middle School.
- In Garden City, we would continue the program we initiated this past year at Garden City High School, which in terms of student population is one of the largest public school in Kansas.
- In Topeka, we would initiate a new Communities In Schools Site Coordinator program in a new school in the USD 501 school district. In 2011, we began service for the first time at Highland Park High School and two elementary schools in the district.
- To support this expansion of services to all these new schools and communities in Kansas, along with support our long-standing programs in Wichita, Ottawa, and Ulysses, there will be funds dedicated to provide administrative support for our Kansas Communities In Schools network operation.

Getting many more of our Kansas public school student population to graduate from high school ready for higher education or an employment career is a critically important public policy issue. It will inject millions of dollars into the state's economy, drastically improve the quality of the Kansas workforce, and dramatically reduce the need for expensive government programs. Communities In Schools is structured to successfully surround students with a community of support they need to achieve in school and life. Thank you for considering our request for a \$611,000 state appropriation of towards our work in Kansas. I would be happy to answer any questions.