

REMARKS  
Communities In Schools of Virginia to:

Education Subcommittee of Senate Finance

January 26, 2012  
3:30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you this afternoon about Communities In Schools.

Communities In Schools is a nation-wide organization that has been around for over thirty-five years dedicated to preventing and reducing school dropout rates and increasing high school graduation rates.

Communities In Schools of Virginia is a public-private 501(c)(3) organization with a board made up of business and education leaders from across the Commonwealth (see attached list of board members). We identify at-risk students in low performing schools. Then, we surround these students with coordinated community support services so they stay in school, graduate, and obtain meaningful postsecondary training, education or work.

Communities In Schools' thirty-five year journey has taught us that kids who don't get the necessary support services tend to drop out: those who do get these services tend to stay in school.

So to use a business term, Communities In Schools is a "leverage point" to enable access to the resources by those who need them most, and at a delivery point where we know they can be effective—in school.

We deliver these services through Communities In Schools trained school-based site coordinators who work in close partnership with the principal and school staff to reach our students.

We must be invited to work with a school division. We don't go anywhere we are not wanted. Our challenge, however, has been the demand for our services in Virginia far outstrips our current financial ability to deliver them.

This high demand may be explained by one critical component of the Communities In Schools program and that is our focus on the collection and analysis of data at the local, state and national levels.

Last year, a detailed 5-year national evaluation underwritten by The Atlantic Philanthropies was completed on the effectiveness of the Communities In Schools program. Among the findings were:

1. The Communities In Schools model resulted in the strongest reduction in dropout rates of any existing dropout prevention program.
2. That Communities In Schools is unique in having an effect on both reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. (see attached press release on evaluation with a website address containing the entire final evaluation report)

This study is the largest and most comprehensive evaluation of a dropout prevention program ever completed.

What does the Communities In Schools' data in Virginia look like?

Looking at 2010-11 school year:

- We had programs in 38 schools in Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield, Portsmouth and Hampton.
- Through these programs, we served 15,025 students.
- Of our Level 2 students (neediest)
  - 93% of eligible at-risk students graduated
  - 87% improved behavior
  - 87% improved their grades
  - 91% were promoted to the next grade

The funding in the Governor's budget will allow us to:

- Start Communities In Schools of Hampton Roads, Communities In Schools of Southwest Virginia, Communities In Schools of Northern Virginia, Communities In Schools of Southside and a Communities In Schools program in Petersburg
- Add an additional 12 Communities In Schools' school sites
- Add an additional 7,515 students at a cost of \$266 per student to the Communities In Schools program for a total of 22,540 students served in Virginia by 2014.

Communities In Schools of Virginia is a cost-effective and accountable program addressing a problem that is a drain on our economy and is an inhibitor to full and complete employment of our young work force. That problem should be tackled head on and we are confident we can do it.

Thank you for your time. We are happy to answer any questions you might have.



## News Release

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**For Immediate Release**  
February 25, 2011

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### **Five-Year Comprehensive Evaluation Ranks Communities In Schools as the Most Effective Dropout Prevention Organization in America**

*Largest and Most Comprehensive Evaluation of Dropout Prevention Programs Ever Completed*

Washington, DC – Communities In Schools, the nation's leading organization dedicated to empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life, today released the results of a five-year comprehensive longitudinal evaluation, conducted by one of the nation's foremost social science evaluation firms.

After five years of detailed evaluation underwritten by The Atlantic Philanthropies, the evaluation concluded that Communities In Schools' model resulted in the strongest reduction in dropout rates of any existing fully scaled dropout prevention program that has been evaluated; that Communities In Schools is unique in having an effect on both reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates; and that the Communities In Schools model is effective across states, school settings, grade levels and student ethnicities. Importantly, analyses indicate that the more fully and carefully the model is implemented, the stronger the effects.

The study, the largest and most comprehensive evaluation of dropout prevention programs ever completed, was designed with eight distinct interlocking phases, including:

- An implementation study that examined results from 1,766 Communities In Schools sites nationwide;
- A quasi-experimental study that compared results from 602 Communities In Schools sites against 602 matched sites without a Communities In Schools presence;
- A "deep dive" study of 368 Communities In Schools sites to identify best practices; and
- Three randomized controlled trials, the gold standard in social science evaluation, studying 573 students at nine sites.

"This comprehensive, multi-level multi-method study has provided important information about the effectiveness of the Communities In Schools approach, and I am pleased that Communities In Schools is using the findings to make their model consistent and strong across hundreds of sites," commented Kristin Moore, Ph.D., senior scholar, Child Trends, and member, Communities In Schools National Evaluation Advisory Committee.

In comparing the results to over 1,600 studies screened by the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, the evaluation concluded that the Communities In Schools model is associated with the strongest reduction in dropout rates among all existing fully scaled dropout prevention programs in the United States. Specific findings included:

- Communities In Schools' positive effect on both dropout rates and graduation rates is unique among dropout prevention programs;
- The higher the level of fidelity to the Communities In Schools model, the greater the effects, which validates the power of the model;
- Positive effects accrued to schools across states, settings (urban, suburban, rural), grade levels and ethnicities; and
- The Austin randomized controlled trial, which demonstrated a reduction in student dropout rates that was nearly three times the What Works Clearinghouse's threshold for "substantively important" effects.

"The Communities In Schools model is a powerful tool to help turn around low performing schools. In partnership with teachers, principals and superintendents, Communities In Schools is achieving impressive results in some of the most economically disadvantaged areas of our country," said Dan Domenech, executive director, American Association of School Administrators.

The results from the evaluation are already being translated into improved service delivery by Communities In Schools local affiliates. Based on the mid-point results from the Implementation Study and the Quasi-Experimental Study, Communities In Schools codified a set of program and business standards that the research revealed had the greatest effect on student improvement, and then drove those practices back into the network through an accreditation process. Approximately 108 affiliates have been accredited or are in the process, with all affiliates on track for accreditation by 2015.

"The research findings have fueled an even greater sense of urgency within our network – a commitment that we need to bring the strongest, most evidence-based and rigorously evaluated practices to the young people we serve, and that we need to do it immediately," said Daniel Cardinali, president of Communities In Schools.

In addition to taking this research to practice, Communities In Schools has identified several areas for further study, and is currently developing plans for future phases of research. "We have an obligation to the young people we serve and to the field we lead to continue to grow the body of evidence that informs our work," said Cardinali.

*N.B. In conducting this research, the evaluators adhered to the approach of the What Works Clearinghouse in measuring program effects, which recognizes the practical importance of understanding the magnitude of effects (as measured by effect size) as opposed to relying solely on statistical significance.*

A copy of the final evaluation report is on our website at:  
<http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/>

### **About Communities In Schools**

Communities In Schools surrounds students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Through a school-based coordinator, Communities In Schools connects students and their families to critical community resources, tailored to local needs. Working in more than 3,400 schools, in the most challenged communities in 25 states and the District of Columbia, Communities In Schools serves nearly 1.3 million young people and their families every year. It has become the nation's leading dropout prevention organization, and the only one proven to both increase graduation rates and reduce dropout rates. Visit our website at [www.communitiesinschools.org](http://www.communitiesinschools.org)

### **Special Thanks to Pearson**

The release of the Communities In Schools National Evaluation is supported by a grant from Pearson, the global leader in education and education technology, and an innovator in the development and implementation of early warning indicator systems, one of the fundamental elements of effective dropout prevention efforts.



Virginia

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