

# 2007-2008 Annual Evaluation Report Communities in Schools of Nevada

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## Executive Summary

In 2003, the national Communities in Schools (CIS) organization established a local presence in Nevada. The new affiliate, Communities in Schools (CIS) of Southern Nevada, started work with one at-risk elementary school in Las Vegas, Reynaldo Martinez Elementary, at which 20% of the student population was homeless. Since that time, CIS of Southern Nevada has expanded to work with 14 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 combined schools (K-12), 1 high school, and one community-based site in Southern Nevada, and has itself become an affiliate of the statewide CIS of Nevada established in 2007, and a partner to the CIS of Northeastern Nevada affiliate established in 2007.

Programming for CIS is designed to improve academic achievement and prevent school dropout through meeting students' basic needs. CIS of Nevada connects students with free social, emotional, health and enrichment initiatives and provides schools and service partners with strategic and tactical expertise in effective program coordination. CIS of Nevada collaborates with community agencies to bring food, medical/dental services, mental health services, clothing, mentoring programs, intensive supplementary instruction, interagency case management, parent/teacher education, birthday parties for children, and career exploration days to youth in partner schools.

CIS of Nevada works with its schools individually to determine which services are most required to meet student needs. For example, in one school, clothing may be the primary unmet need, while in another school backpacks filled with child-friendly food for the weekends may be most needed. At each school, CIS of Nevada staff develop a site plan with school staff to identify and meet these needs and coordinate and provide services to children and their families. Information on initiatives provided at each school is provided in the table on page 17 of this report.

### Evaluation Plan

The purpose of this outside evaluation is to track and summarize the services provided to students and families in the schools involved with CIS of Nevada as well as to assess the effect that these services have had on selected outcome measures within participating schools.

Organization staff will use this evaluation to pinpoint areas for improvement or expansion as well as to note areas where the organization is most effective. Additionally this evaluation presents the information regarding the costs associated with these initiatives to illustrate the value of services being received by the schools and families through generous donations coordinated through CIS of Nevada.

The evaluators have used a multi-method approach to this evaluation utilizing various sources of data, including focus groups with CIS of Nevada schools and partners, interviews with CIS of Nevada executive directors in Southern and Northeastern Nevada, Nevada state school accountability reports, as well as secondary analysis of data tracked by CIS of Nevada and their initiative partners, including estimated costs of services provided.

## Findings

### Description and School Satisfaction Surveys

CIS of Nevada served 19 schools in Southern Nevada (including 2 elementary schools directly across the Colorado River in Bullhead City, AZ) and two schools in Northeastern Nevada in the 2007-2008 school year. In addition to school sites, CIS of Nevada served youth at Nevada Partners in Clark County and also youth at Elko County Juvenile Probation.

In an attempt to understand the level of satisfaction the schools felt regarding services provided to them and their students, a satisfaction survey was completed at the end of the 2007-2008 school year. Overall, participants in this survey had a very positive view of CIS of Nevada and how its services have helped their schools. There were some methodological limitations that will be addressed when this survey is administered again at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school years. These changes will include addressing the balance of the response categories in the satisfaction questions as well as directing targeted individuals from each school to complete the survey to create a more balanced perspective from all participating schools.

### Outcome Measures

Evaluators attempted to look for trends in school-wide data from school accountability reports, however, there are not enough years of data to see any emerging trends in terms of academic performance, attendance, or retention and dropout rates. For this reason, evaluators decided to focus on individual-level data collected from specific schools and programs regarding selected students to assess the impact of CIS of Nevada programming. We hope to see trends emerge in the school-wide data as CIS of Nevada continues to be a presence in the schools, providing services to individual students in need.

For the 2007-2008 school year, student-level data were collected on a subset of 13 children attending Cunningham Elementary School to begin to evaluate the impact of their participation in the WeekEnd Hunger initiative. Data on academic achievement and attendance were collected before services and after. Findings from this study are presented below.

#### Cunningham Elementary Students (n=13)

- Average grades increased 15% in reading, 32% in math, and 26% in writing
- 99.9% attendance rate for those students participating in WeekEnd Hunger, while the school's overall attendance rate was only 94.5%

Additionally, student-level data regarding attendance and promotion rates were collected on students participating in the Fellows Academy and compared to similar students not participating in the Fellows Academy. Findings from this study are presented below.

#### Fellows Academy (Fellows n=90, Non-Fellows n=32)

- 97% promotion rate for Fellows versus 25% promotion rates for demographically matched students not participating in the Fellows Academy
- Students enrolled in the Fellows Academy had fewer absences (average of 13.38 absences) than those not enrolled (18.97 absences)

This individual-level data provides support for the impact of at least two of the initiatives coordinated through CIS of Nevada. Continued individual tracking and evaluation as well as continued monitoring of the overall school achievement through the school accountability reports will be necessary to continue to document the impact of CIS of Nevada initiatives on the students, schools and the community at large.

### Growth Strategy

CIS of Nevada completed a growth strategy prior to the 2007-2008 school year. In Southern Nevada, almost all projected goals were met. The goals that were not met included expansion to one additional high school as well as total units of service. CIS of Southern Nevada was not able to add one planned high school due to lack of engagement from school administrators at the targeted location, and was just shy of meeting the projected units of service by 3,997 units. However CIS of Southern Nevada was able to add in one additional elementary school for a total of 14 elementary schools instead of the projected 13.

However, these projections were based on a budget that was double the amount of funding actually received. Given that information, CIS should have only been able to accomplish about half of their projected goals in terms of units of service and value to the community. With that in consideration, CIS actually surpassed all projected goals. In the last biennium there was no funding allocated to serve Northeastern Nevada, however CIS was able to leverage funding and surpass the projected goals for the 2007-2008 school year by coordinating services for one additional site and coordinating an additional 8,046 units of service.

- Total units of service for Nevada, 2007-2008 – 25,902
  - 16,003 units in Southern Nevada
  - 9,899 units in Northeastern Nevada
- Total dollar value of services coordinated, 2007-2008 - \$848,669
  - \$468,862 in Southern Nevada
  - \$379,807 in Northeastern Nevada
- Community Value of Services Provided and Donations Received, 2007-2008 - \$2,157,891
- Total Statewide Return on Investment, 2007-2008 – 609%
- 85% of all funding received is used for coordination and provision of services – only 15% of funding is used for management and additional fundraising

### Focus Groups and Administrator Interviews

Focus groups with CIS of Nevada partners and interviews with the regional and state directors indicated that partners see CIS of Nevada as an asset and find their services very useful for their students. Both partner schools and CIS of Nevada staff relayed multiple success stories, including those in which resources were available for students and their families where otherwise none would be. As a result of CIS of Nevada, students in these at-risk schools have the

opportunity to receive food, clothing and medical care at no cost to them or their families. In addition, these resources are coordinated by CIS of Nevada so school staff are not burdened with the day-to-day management of any of these programs.

CIS of Nevada state and regional executive directors shared some of the plans for the future of CIS of Nevada. This includes multiple expansions and improvements to existing initiatives within partner schools and maintaining the organization's commitment to data collection and tracking to continue to improve its ability to document the impact of activities on participating students.

### Summary and Conclusion

Communities in Schools of Nevada as an organization has been very successful, and as a result of working with existing services and building relationships the organization has been able to develop creative solutions to difficult problems. Their philosophy of creating sustainable programming ensures that the organization does not rely on additional funding each year from the schools themselves or the families they serve. CIS of Nevada has shown since its introduction into Nevada five years ago a commitment to the communities in which it operates to work within existing structures to address the needs of the students in these low-income schools. This coordination of efforts has started to show improvements in the schools qualitatively, through stories and experiences of school personnel and community partners. This in addition to the very positive results shown in preliminary evaluations tracking individual students receiving services that show improvements in attendance, behavior and achievement. As this organization continues to expand and collect individual-level data, evaluators will be able to use that longitudinal information to track changes in these populations and provide more specific results regarding the impact of the initiatives coordinated through CIS of Nevada.

## Introduction

### **Communities in Schools**

Communities in Schools (CIS) is a national organization with the goal of improving academic performance among students to reduce school dropout rates. CIS works in nearly 200 communities, located in 27 states and the District of Columbia, serving more than 1.2 million students in 3,200 schools. CIS provides services for students inside schools with resources that, most often, already exist within a community. A CIS site coordinator serves as the liaison between the school and CIS to link the services CIS brings to the school with the students that need them. “Communities in Schools was founded on the concept that students can and will achieve academically, when resources to address their academic and social service needs are tailored, coordinated and accessible. That premise has evolved into what we now call community based integrated student services, which are interventions that improve student achievement by connecting community resources with both student the academic and social service needs of students.” (www.cisnet.org, 2008)

In 2003, the national Communities in Schools organization established a local presence in Nevada. The new affiliate, Communities in Schools (CIS) of Southern Nevada, started work with one at-risk elementary school in Las Vegas, Reynaldo Martinez Elementary, at which 20% of the student population was homeless. Since that time, CIS of Southern Nevada has expanded to work with 14 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 combined schools (K-12), 1 high school, and one community-based site in Southern Nevada, and has itself become an affiliate of the statewide CIS of Nevada established in 2007, and a partner to the CIS of Northeastern Nevada affiliate established in 2007.

Programming for CIS is designed to improve academic achievement and prevent school dropout through meeting students’ basic needs. CIS of Nevada connects students with free social, emotional, health and enrichment initiatives and provides schools and service partners with strategic and tactical expertise in effective program coordination. CIS of Nevada collaborates with community agencies to bring food, medical/dental services, mental health services, clothing, mentoring programs, intensive supplementary instruction, interagency case management, parent/teacher education, birthday parties for children, and career exploration days to youth in partner schools.

CIS of Nevada works with its schools individually to determine which services are most required to meet student needs. For example, in one school, clothing may be the primary unmet need, while in another school backpacks filled with child-friendly food for the weekends may be most needed. At each school, CIS of Nevada staff develop a site plan with school staff to identify and meet these needs and coordinate and provide services to children and their families. Information on initiatives provided at each school is provided in the table on page 17 of this report.

### **Support for the Program within Existing Literature**

Communities in Schools uses a model of integrated student services to reduce grade-level retention and ultimately prevent students from dropping out of school. Researchers in this area have published a multitude of information exploring the risk factors and best practices to reduce

school drop-out rates. This is especially true when looking at those children that are economically disadvantaged. According to Rothstein (2004) disadvantaged children are more likely to progress poorly in school, with risks associated with low grades, retention, special education placement and school dropout. However Neuman (2007) notes that early interventions “can produce meaningful, sustainable gains in cognitive, social, and emotional development for high risk children” (Neuman, 2007). In her review of existing literature she found that coordinated services similar to those provided by CIS of Nevada have been shown to improve high school completion rates, decrease the rate of juvenile arrests, and provide high economic returns on investment. She also notes that successful programs also demand greater accountability. These programs monitor progress, provide careful oversight, create clear expectations, and evaluate results. Recent research has focused on the impact of effective interventions and has shown that programs, if done under certain circumstances, can be very effective in mitigating the effects of poverty on children. According to Neuman there are seven major research-based principals that characterize successful intervention policies and programs. The first is “targeting,” which simply indicates that those children that are most likely to benefit from the interventions are those at greatest risk. The second is “developmental timing,” which indicates the importance of the actual onset of the intervention. For many cases the earlier the better – it is easier to prevent problems than to try to mitigate them once they have already occurred (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). The third principal is “intensity.” This principal simply states that more intensive programs provide larger positive effects. This makes sense because those that participate fully in a program are more likely to get the benefits of that program. The fourth principal is “professional training,” which stresses the importance of highly trained staff delivering the services. Fifth is “coordinated services.” This principal operates under the understanding that most often the families and children in greatest need are those that struggle with persistent health problems, poor nutrition, and a high degree of stress in their lives. According to Neuman (2007), successful programs that really make a difference for these children recognize that “children learn best when they are healthy, safe, and in close and enduring relationships with family, caregivers, and teachers.” Finally the last two principals of successful intervention programs are “compensatory instruction” and “accountability.” Compensatory instruction recognizes that children in poverty may have substantial disparities in their knowledge and skills when compared to children not from poverty. Therefore successful interventions should provide opportunities for children to catch up quickly by providing higher-quality, faster-paced instruction to attempt to bridge those gaps in knowledge. The seventh principal of “accountability” states that successful intervention programs must carefully monitor progress, provide oversight and evaluate effects. This allows the programs to really see what is working and what needs to be changed to produce desired outcomes.

Communities in Schools of Nevada as an intervention organization takes into account many of the seven principals described in Neuman’s article. CIS of Nevada demonstrates its commitment to targeted and coordinated services in the following statement: “*Communities In Schools addresses the gap between student needs and a school’s ability to respond to these needs. We connect students with free social, emotional, health and enrichment programs and provide schools and service partners with strategic and tactical expertise in effective program coordination. We do our work inside the schools, with resources that often already exist in the community, but that are scattered and not accessible to those who need them most. Whether a child needs eyeglasses, help with homework, a nutritious meal, or just a safe place to be, we find*

*the resources and deliver them right inside the school building where s/he spends his days”*  
(Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada, [www.cisnevada.org](http://www.cisnevada.org))

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of this outside evaluation is to track and summarize the services provided to students and families in the schools involved with CIS of Nevada as well as to assess the effect that these services have had on selected outcome measures within participating schools.

Organization staff will use this evaluation to pinpoint areas for improvement or expansion as well as to note areas where the organization is most effective. Additionally this evaluation presents the information regarding the costs associated with these initiatives to illustrate the value of services being received by the schools and families through generous donations coordinated through CIS of Nevada.

The evaluators have used a multi-method approach to this evaluation utilizing various sources of data including focus groups with CIS of Nevada schools and partners, interviews with CIS of Nevada directors in Southern and Northeastern Nevada, Nevada state school accountability reports, as well as secondary analysis of data tracked by CIS of Nevada and their initiative partners including number of units of service and estimated value of services provided.

## **Methodology**

In the summer of 2007, Communities in Schools of Nevada contracted with the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP) to complete an evaluation of their initiatives over the 2007-2008 school year. CIS of Nevada agreed to collect all data throughout the school year and work with their contact at the school district to gain access to school-related outcome data. This information was then presented to researchers at the NICRP to conduct their own secondary data analysis and interpretation of the results. All data were gathered by CIS of Nevada staff and partners with the exception of CIS of Nevada partners’ focus groups and interviews with state and regional directors. Specific methodology for each section evaluated is presented in that section.

This evaluation is designed to review the initiative components and provide feedback from schools, community partners and CIS of Nevada staff themselves to understand how the process is working and identify any areas that are in need of improvement. In addition, the evaluation will review school performance on several indicator variables from school accountability reports and provide an analysis of some individual student-level data. The evaluation is designed to assess the included schools based on indicators of retention rates, drop-out rates, school violence, attendance and academic achievement. This report will then also provide recommendations for initiative improvement and continued success and will describe some of the changes in the initiatives that have been planned for the next school year and how to improve the evaluation of this organization.

## Results

The following section contains information from each aspect of this evaluation. The first section contains a description and findings from a survey administered at the conclusion of the 2007-2008 school year to the Southern Nevada school partners to gauge their satisfaction with the organization and how it has helped them to achieve their improvement goals as a school. The second section provides information regarding a focus group held with community partners to gain their perspective and reflections on the past school year. The third section compares each of the participating schools and their performance on selected outcome measures.

### 1. School Satisfaction Survey

#### Methods

Following the 2007-2008 school year, participating schools were asked to complete a short on-line survey. This survey was created by a school district representative and the executive director of Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada. The survey was modeled after the school site plans and was designed to elicit input as to how the sites perceived services that were included by CIS of Southern Nevada in the service plans. School principals and site coordinators were sent the link with instructions on June 3, 2008, to complete the survey by June 13. One reminder email was sent on June 16, 2008. At the conclusion of the collection period, 13 people from 11 different schools completed the survey, resulting in a 43.3% response rate.

Information from the survey was downloaded into an excel spreadsheet and sent over to NICRP for use in the evaluation. NICRP staff then transferred the information into SPSS for analysis. There were some limitations within this survey that should be noted. First, two people at each school were asked to complete the survey, but the respondent's position within the school was not recorded so no conclusions can be drawn based on the respondent's level of involvement with CIS of Southern Nevada services. The second limitation was in the response categories provided to the respondents. Many questions on the survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction on a scale. However, that scale ranged from "somewhat satisfied" to "very satisfied" or not applicable, not giving the respondent the opportunity to indicate that they were unsatisfied. The way that this scale was presented to respondents may skew results of this small survey.

#### Findings

The online survey collected minimal demographic information about the respondents; however that information is presented in Figure 1.1 below.

**Figure 1.1**

School Name	Count	%	School Name	Count	%
Bailey ES	2	15.4%	Robert Taylor ES	1	7.7%
Bridger MS	1	7.7%	Tom Williams ES	1	7.7%
Cunningham ES	1	7.7%	Whitney ES	1	7.7%
Harmon ES	2	15.4%	West Prep	1	7.7%
Hinman ES	1	7.7%	Canyon Springs High and the Leadership and Law Prep	1	7.7%
Martinez ES	1	7.7%			

Respondents were asked to report which CIS of Southern Nevada services were requested and which were received by the school. Figure 1.2 illustrates these counts and percentages. For 43% of services, schools that requested the service received it in the 2007-2008 school year. In some cases services were requested more often than they were received. For example 46.2% of respondents requested mental health services, but only 23.1% received them. Overall 77.14% of services that were requested by schools were received by schools.

**Figure 1.2**

Services	Requested		Received	
	Count	%	Count	%
Care at Martinez or Cunningham Medical Clinic	10	76.9%	9	69.2%
Care on the Miles for Smiles Dental Bus	8	61.5%	6	46.2%
Vision Services	3	23.1%	3	23.1%
Mental Health Services	6	46.2%	3	23.1%
Weekend Food Bags	10	76.9%	10	76.9%
Other Food (For Families)	3	23.1%	4	30.8%
Clothing for Students (Uniforms or Other)	10	76.9%	8	61.5%
Career Club Events	3	23.1%	1	7.7%
Life Experience/Field Trip Events	1	7.7%	1	7.7%
Adult Mentors/Tutors	2	15.4%	1	7.7%
Positive Role Models in the Classroom	1	7.7%	1	7.7%
Fellows Academy	2	15.4%	2	15.4%
Peer Mentoring/Tutoring	1	7.7%	1	7.7%
Birthday Parties	2	15.4%	1	7.7%
Grooming/Hygiene	3	23.1%	0	0.0%
Student Volunteer Opportunities	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Parenting Classes	3	23.1%	1	7.7%
Adult Ed/ELL for Parents	1	7.7%	1	7.7%
Neighborhood Safety Initiatives	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Gang Education	1	7.7%	1	7.7%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the various initiatives. All respondents reported that they were satisfied with the services provided through CIS of Southern Nevada. Respondents were also asked how CIS of Southern Nevada has helped the school to achieve its school improvement plan goals this year. All thirteen respondents provided an answer to this question. All but one respondent stated that the organization had helped them reach their goals. Most stated that CIS of Southern Nevada helps students get their basic needs met so that they can focus on school. One respondent wrote, *“CIS is a wonderful resource for families and school staff alike. We are grateful for the help we receive from CIS.”* Another respondent stated, *“We appreciate knowing that the CIS services are available for our students. Basic health and survival needs must be met before children can learn.”* The only respondent that did not feel CIS of Southern Nevada had helped the school achieve its goals noted that the organization had not been able to provide the extent of services that they need at that school. Overall 61.5% of all respondents reported that they were “very satisfied” with the support that CIS had provided in the 2007-2008 school year. However, some respondents did report some difficulty in accessing services and getting parents to take advantage of services. One respondent noted that “birthday parties and parent education were never started” and another wrote that although “the services provided through CIS were satisfactory, it has been difficult to get our population to take advantage of the other services provided, so our participation has been limited.”

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Overall, participants in this survey had a very positive view of CIS of Southern Nevada and how the organization has helped their schools. There were some methodological limitations that will be addressed when this survey is administered again at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school years. These changes will include addressing the balance of the response categories in the satisfaction questions, as well as directing certain individuals from each school to complete the survey to create a more balanced perspective from all participating schools.

## **2. Program Implementation and Growth Strategy**

CIS of Nevada utilizes multiple initiative services to meet the needs of the students in the schools it serves. Their growth strategy describes the services they provide to the schools as well as their anticipated expansion in terms of staff and service provision. The following section describes the services provided by CIS of Nevada as well as reviews their anticipated and actual growth in the 2007-2008 school year.

### **Methods**

Communities in Schools of Nevada offers coordination of services in five primary areas: Health and Wellness; Basic Welfare; Skills for the Future; Self Esteem and Joy; and Family/Community Strengthening. The regional executive directors meet with school administration each year to determine services that are needed to support children and their families at each particular school. Communities in Schools of Nevada provided a description of the services that are currently offered or have initiated development during the past project year which are listed below. Each school’s site plan was reviewed for implementation and impact.

## **Initiative Summaries**

These summaries were provided to NICRP by CIS of Nevada for inclusion in this report to demonstrate the necessity for these services and the impact a lack of such services can have on a youth's life and chance for success in school. These services are 100% leveraged through community partnerships and donations, and all services are available to children and their families at no cost.

### *Service Segment #1 - Health & Wellness*

**Medical:** Nevada remains above the national average in uninsured persons, and both national research and Nevada state studies show that uninsured children do not get the health care they need. Ample evidence demonstrates that uninsured children have fewer physician visits per year, are less likely to receive adequate preventive services and immunizations, and are less likely to be seen by a physician when they are ill. Given our target population and the demographics of our neighborhoods, this crisis is an everyday reality for our students.

**Dental:** According to a joint United Way of Southern Nevada and Nevada Community Foundation study, access to dental health services is gravely limited in Las Vegas. Nevada ranks first in surveyed states for the prevalence of tooth decay (67.1%) and untreated decay (38.9%) among third graders; nearly 42% of third graders have not visited a dentist in the past year while 11.2 % have never seen a dentist; and Nevada ranks 49<sup>th</sup> for annual dental visits. Yet, when children are suffering from toothaches and other dental problems, they are unable to concentrate on their schoolwork, their grades go down, and discipline problems increase.

**Mental Health:** Research demonstrates that behavioral and mental health-based interventions are essential for at-risk youth, and that failure to support their mental health can have serious negative consequences including increased risk for school failure; drug and alcohol abuse; suicide; incarceration; unemployment; and poor physical health. Because students are more likely to keep appointments that occur in a familiar setting, are already required to be at school, and teachers who work with students on a regular basis can be trained to recognize warning signs, experts including the U.S. Surgeon General recommend that schools be a primary setting for the recognition and treatment of mental health and behavioral issues in youth and adolescents. The provision of such services has a proven, positive impact on school performance. Unfortunately, schools are chronically short-staffed with mental health professionals and this shortage compromises their ability to provide broad-based mental health and behavioral services.

### *Service Segment #2 - Basic Welfare*

**Emergent Food:** Many CIS of Nevada families live well below the poverty line and thousands are homeless; for the children of these families, hunger is a constant companion. This is significant because the impact of hunger on children is considerable. Research demonstrates that hungry children suffer up to four times as many health problems as non-hungry children; are more likely to be absent from school; and are far more likely to suffer from iron-deficiency anemia, which can cause developmental and behavioral problems that affect children's ability to learn. Because basic nutrition is essential for every child to be healthy and to be successful in school, we established the WeekEND Hunger Initiative. Every Friday, packs filled with 'child-friendly food' (food that requires no preparation or adult assistance to eat) are sent home with

children who have been identified by their schools as “food fragile.” In many cases this is the only food these children will eat all weekend.

**Clothing Closet:** In order for children to succeed, all of their basic needs must be met, including the need for appropriate clothing. Many of the CIS of Nevada families cannot afford to maintain clean clothing for their children, let alone to purchase the uniforms required at many of the elementary schools. The CIS Clothing Closet supplies students in need not only with school uniforms, but also basic clothing items such as coats, shoes, belts and underwear as needed.

#### *Service Segment #3 - Skills for the Future*

**Career Club:** Through a partnership with the Latin Chamber of Commerce, the Career Club brings leading community businesses into our schools to emphasize the value of staying in school and to help children struggling to survive day-to-day learn how to dream about their futures. Several times each year, a different career concept is brought to the children in a fun and experiential way. To date, Career Club events have included Teddy Bear Clinics, Fairy-Tale Trials, Mock Hazardous Material Testing, and encounters with the Garbage Gremlin. Prior to these experiences, many of these children did not even know they were supposed to have career goals when they grew up. Following these experiences, however, the youth typically tell staff that they want to be a scientist, a judge, or a nurse. Career Clubs provide context for children’s education and consequently help improve their performance on a day-to-day basis in school.

**Fellows Academy:** In Nevada, over 100 students drop out of school each day. Tackling this trend will take a common understanding that our most at-risk students are not simply struggling with academic rigor, but have a diversity of needs: academic skill development, understanding of and following appropriate social mores, complying with standards of behavior, and meeting their individual needs for shelter, food, clothing, and consistent parent/guardian support. In response to this epidemic, CIS of Southern Nevada has partnered with Nevada Partners, the Clark County School District, and multiple other agencies to establish the Fellows Academy. This community-based dropout prevention program utilizes youth-centric inter-agency case management teams, in conjunction with intensive supplementary instruction, career exploration, life skills training and support services to assist youth at successfully matriculating into and/or completing high school. To date, CIS of Southern Nevada results indicate that Fellows have better attendance rates, higher achievement scores, less behavioral issues in school, and promote to high school at a rate 3.9 times greater than control groups.

**Adult Mentoring/Role Models in the Classroom:** Adult Mentors/Role Models not only help young people improve their school skills, but also provide the meaningful relationship with a caring adult that so many of these children are lacking. The CIS of Nevada mentor volunteers are trained and provided with teaching tools and support throughout their mentoring experience.

#### *Service Segment #4 - Self Esteem & Joy*

**Birthday Parties:** Birthdays are no different than any other day for many children in Las Vegas: no one sends them a card or wishes them a special day, there are no parties to plan, no presents to request. Many children do not even know their birth dates. In response, CIS of Southern Nevada partnered with the Junior League of Las Vegas to develop the Birthday Closet Program. The program ensures that all children at Martinez Elementary School receive a birthday party, a

present, and a chance to connect with a caring adult in their birth month. The children are treated to cake, punch, games, crafts and a visit to the present area where they have a huge selection of toys to choose from. For a moment, these kids can just be kids and forget about the problems that they face at home.

**Service Learning, Peer Mentoring & Tutoring:** Children who succeed are those we allow to feel part of and give back to their community. By connecting students with others who are in need, the CIS Service Learning, Peer Mentoring and Tutoring Initiatives create an environment in which students' gifts are nurtured and service to others is expected and rewarded.

#### *Service Segment #5 - Family/Community Strengthening*

**Child Care Cooperative:** A lack of quality childcare is pervasive throughout the Las Vegas Valley. This deficiency is exacerbated in the CIS of Nevada neighborhoods by the low socioeconomic status of our families. The few affordable childcare options are typically overflowing and any additional opportunities are beyond financial reach or are too far for families limited to public transportation and walking. For this reason, CIS of Nevada is looking at seeding a collaborative initiative to help build the capacity of the community and of appropriate agencies to fulfill this currently unmet need.

**Parent/Parenting Education:** Many of our students' home environments would be significantly improved if their parents had the opportunity to do some learning of their own. Lack of English language proficiency and low educational achievement are a barrier for many parents to getting adequately paying employment. Also, a lack of parent engagement and parenting skills can have a serious effect on the behavior and achievement of their children. That is why CIS of Southern Nevada partnered with CCSD's Adult Education and Wrap Around Services (Social Work) Departments to develop and provide ongoing parent education opportunities at our school-sites.

**Gang Education:** Gang presence is a fact of life for many of the children living in many neighborhoods. Empowering our kids to resist gangs from the time they are young is our number one priority, but we also recognize that many of our students are already involved in gangs and that this affiliation may seem to them to be a necessary part of surviving life in their neighborhoods.

**CIS of Northeastern Nevada's Evening Reporting Program:** The overall goal of this program is to identify juveniles who repeatedly break the law and are placed in a secure detention facility as a form of an immediate sanction and provide them with skills to break the cycle of their delinquent behavior. By introducing them to these new thinking concepts, they will see the need to discontinue their self-destructive behaviors and break free from a life of crime. These new thinking concepts include developing team-building strategies, improving self-esteem, and enhancing decision-making habits. Instruction will also include working on peer relations, conflict management, goal setting, and community leadership. A business component is also being used.

Through the partnership with the Elko County Juvenile Probation Office, this program uses an entrepreneurial platform to introduce leadership and life skills while teaching the nuts and bolts

of starting and operating a small business. Case studies allow students to learn from other successful entrepreneurs, including hundreds of youth who are operating their own businesses now. Guest speakers, mentors and community participants help them discover local opportunities while exposing them to positive role models. They learn critical thinking skills and teamwork tactics as they develop an actual business plan. Further, the entrepreneurial curriculum ties academics and sound choices to outcomes such as independence, respect, financial security and prosperity. Finally, it motivates them to give back to the community by helping others make the same journey through peer mentoring. Another essential component of this program is assisting participants to develop work force skills and career applications through “Project Greenhouse” which allows participants to actively work in a greenhouse setting growing a variety of plants and vegetables.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

All of these programs have been created to help students succeed and eventually graduate from high school. These programs are used to varying degrees within the schools based on that school’s site plan. The overall success of each of these programs using identified outcome measures of academic achievement, attendance and discipline cannot be used at this point. For the 2007-2008 school year, CIS of Nevada collected statistics on the number of services provided and the schools in which these services were provided, but not necessarily the home school of each child provided services. In addition, CIS decided not to collect individual student-level data for all initiatives in 2007-2008 and therefore this information cannot be used to evaluate the success of these initiatives in improving academic achievement, increasing attendance or decreasing the number of disciplinary actions taken. However, Figure 2.1 illustrates which services were provided in each school as well as which services were in the planning phase for the 2007-2008 school year.

**Figure 2.1**

**School/Partner Service Implementation**

School	Health and Wellness			Basic Welfare		Skills for the Future				Self Esteem and Joy		Family and Community Strengthening	
	Medical Care	Dental Care	Mental Health Services	WeekEnd Hunger	Clothing	Career Club	Role Models	Field Trips	Fellows Academy	Birthday Parties	Peer Mentoring	Evening Reporting	Parent Education
<b>Clark County</b>													
Agassi		x		x	x								
Bailey	x	x	P	x		P							
Bridger	x	x	P	x	x	P	x		x		x		
Canyon Springs	x	x	P		x								
Cunningham	x	x	x	x	x					P			P
Harmon	x	x		x	x								P
Hinman	x	x	P			P	P						P
Martinez	x	x		x	x	x				x			
McCall	x	x		x	x	P	P			P			P
Nevada Partners			x						x		x		
JD Smith	x	x		x	x				x		x		
Squires		x		x	x								P
Taylor	x	x	P		x								P
Williams	x	x		x	x		x	x					
West Prep	x	x		x	x		P	x	x		x		
Whitney	x	x		x*	x								
Wynn				x									
Bennett				x	x								
Bullhead City (2 schools total)				x	x								
<b>Elko County</b>													
Wells ES				x									
Northside ES	x			x									x
Elko Co. JPO												x	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Received canned good to distribute to children. Different from WeekEnd Hunger Program.

\*\* "P" indicates that the school was in the planning phases for this initiative, while an "X" indicates that the school had the initiative for this year

**Programs in Planning Phase in 2007-2008 School Year**

Program	Schools Planning
Medicaid Eligibility	JD Smith
Self Image	Bridger and West Prep
Gang Education	Agassi, Harmon, McCall, JD Smith, West Prep
School and Neighborhood Safety	Bailey
Vision Services	Bailey, Harmon, Hinman, Squires, Taylor, Williams

## Growth Strategy

CIS of Southern Nevada completed a growth strategy prior to the 2007-2008 School Year. This growth strategy was based on planned dollars received from the Nevada State Legislature. CIS of Southern Nevada requested funding for implementation in Southern Nevada, Northeastern Nevada, Northwestern Nevada, and overall support for statewide infrastructure. The funding awarded only included dollars to serve Clark County (i.e. Southern Nevada). Additionally, the legislature funded Clark County at only 86% of the requested amount.

Over the past project year, despite funding limitations, activities were conducted in both Southern Nevada and Northeastern Nevada. NICRP reviewed the projected growth plan based on initial requested funds as well as the actual counts after the conclusion of this school year for both Southern and Northeastern Nevada. The comparisons between projected and actual numbers for the 2007-2008 school year are illustrated below.

### Southern Nevada

<b>Staffing</b>	
<b>Projected 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual 2007-2008</b>
Two Full-Time Employees	Two Full-Time Employees – One Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant
1.5 staff from Clark County School District	One Full-Time staff member repositioned by the Clark County School District; one Part-Time staff member shared with CCSD

<b>School Participation</b>	
<b>Projected 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual 2007-2008</b>
19 Schools	19 schools participated, plus one community-based site
20,000 units of service facilitated	16,003 units of service facilitated

### Northeastern Nevada

<b>Staffing</b>	
<b>Projected 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual 2007-2008</b>
1 Full Time, 2 Part-Time employees	1 Full-Time and 1 Part-Time employee

<b>School Participation</b>	
<b>Projected 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual 2007-2008</b>
2 sites – Elko County and White Pine County	3 sites in Elko County only – 2 schools and one juvenile detention center
1,853 units of service facilitated	9,899 units of service facilitated

NICRP also calculated return on investment for the Nevada State Legislature's contribution to the overall budget of Communities in Schools of Nevada. This was calculated using the actual funding received from the state and the community value for the services provided during the 2007-2008 school year. Community value for each of the services was determined by a Certified Professional Accountant (CPA) employed by CIS of Nevada and included both donations received and services provided. The value of services provided was calculated at the lowest paying rate for that service and when available, national rates of service were utilized. For a detailed explanation of unit of service value, please refer to Appendix A: CIS of Nevada Community Value Summary, on page 26 of this report.

The total units of service coordinated for the entire state in the 2007-2008 academic year was 25,902 (Southern Nevada=16,003; Northeastern Nevada=9,899). The dollar value of the services coordinated throughout the year total \$848,669 (Southern Nevada= \$468,862; Northeastern = \$379,807). In Southern Nevada, almost all projected goals were met. The goals that were not met included expansion to an additional school as well as total units of service. CIS of Nevada was just shy of meeting the projected units of service by 3,997 units. However, these projections were based on a budget that was double the amount of funding received. Given that information, CIS of Nevada should have only been able to accomplish about half of the projected goals. With that in consideration, CIS of Nevada actually surpassed all projected goals. For Northeastern Nevada, no funding was allocated by the State Legislature, but CIS of Nevada was able to surpass the projected goals for the 2007-2008 school year as well by coordinating service for one additional site and coordinating an additional 8,000 units of service.

The final amount that was allocated by the Nevada State Legislature was \$709,000 for two years. This amount was divided evenly between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. These funds were awarded to CIS of Nevada to work to reduce dropout rates and improve academic performance through coordination of services to meet the basic needs of children and families. The return on investment was calculated by dividing the total community value of the services by the amount of actual funding provided. The funds allocated (\$354,500) and community value to Clark County (\$1,635,646) yielded a 461% return on investment in Clark County. The anticipated return on investment based on a fully funded program (\$412,500) was 412%. Despite the reduced funding, CIS of Nevada was able to exceed the projected return on investment in Clark County by 12%. In addition, CIS of Nevada expanded statewide and provided over two million dollars (\$2,157,891) in community value for Southern Nevada and Northeastern Nevada which yielded a 609% return on the initial legislative investment for the entire state. From a financial standpoint, CIS of Nevada has proven to provide a substantial return on investment.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Communities in Schools of Nevada was able to meet and exceed all of the stated goals even though the project was not funded at the anticipated amount. CIS of Nevada reported that all funding received from outside funding agencies was used as contracted. CIS of Nevada State Director Louise Helton stated that the Nevada State Legislature's financial commitment has enabled the organization to meet a national CIS requirement for each state to develop an office with a statewide focus and state funding. The function of this state office is to support and coordinate the efforts of the regional affiliates to maximize resources, and to concentrate on strategically developing resources and partnerships in underserved areas of the state. The

Nevada Legislature's support also provided the opportunity for the organization to expand outside of just Southern Nevada this past project year and into Northeastern Nevada. Therefore, with the assistance of the legislature, the funding actually yielded a statewide return on investment of 609%. It is also important to note that 85% of the funding received was used directly for the coordination and provision of services in the community. The other 15% was utilized for program management and additional fundraising. With the funding received over the past project year, from the State Legislature and other granting sources, Communities in Schools of Nevada was able to coordinate a myriad of services, continue to establish a strong reputation, and increase local support for the organization. In the 2007-2008 school year Communities in Schools of Nevada demonstrated a strong return on investment and great financial value to the communities that they served. With continued support, CIS will be able to demonstrate a measurable impact in the State of Nevada regarding dropout rates, academic performance and overall child well being.

### **3. Outcome Indicators**

Communities in Schools of Nevada was active in two school districts in the state of Nevada: Clark County School District and Elko County School District. In Clark County, CIS of Southern Nevada was active in 14 elementary schools, 2 combined schools (K-12), 2 middle schools and 1 high school, plus one community partner site. In Elko County, CIS of Northeastern Nevada was active in two elementary schools plus one community partner site.

Initiative implementation will vary by school depending on the needs of each school. Therefore each school will be looked at for individual improvement and success measure by improvement from previous years.

#### **Methods**

##### *School-Wide Data*

For each school several factors were examined across a four-year period (2004/2005 to 2007/2008) to determine initiative impact. The first year is a baseline period during which Communities in Schools of Nevada was not active. CIS of Nevada activity varies per school; therefore, some schools will have multiple-year baseline comparisons. The primary variables that will be examined for change include retention and dropout rates. Other contributing factors that will be examined include school transience, average daily attendance, habitual truancy, and standard testing pass rates. Data were retrieved from the annual school accountability report which is a joint effort among the Nevada Department of Education, Otis Educational Systems and Nevada school districts. This report is a public document and can be accessed on the Nevada Annual Reports of Accountability website at [www.nevadareportcard.com](http://www.nevadareportcard.com).

##### *Individual Data*

###### Cunningham Elementary School

Additionally, a small subset of data were collected on 13 students at one elementary school served by CIS of Southern Nevada. This population was selected and tracked to begin to evaluate the impact of CIS on individual students. These students were tracked in terms of which services they received as well as their behavior change (judged by teachers and/or counselors), attendance, discipline, and achievement in reading writing and math. Achievement was measured by collecting students' grades in reading, writing and math and assigning each letter grade a numerical value. Better grades were assigned higher numbers, for example, a letter grade of an 'A' was assigned a 3, B =2, C=1, D and F were both assigned a zero. These numbers were then added together to get the school's total achievement score in each subject area.

###### Fellows Academy

Individual-level data were also collected regarding those students enrolled in the Fellows Academy. Initiative staff collected demographic information including race/ethnicity, age, student ID number, school attended and Fellows cohort . In addition, data were collected regarding their attendance, promotion from middle to high school, suspensions, expulsions, and the number of credits attempted compared to the number of credits attempted. This information was also collected on a "control group" of demographically similar students that were not participating in the Fellows Academy. This information was used by CIS of Southern Nevada

and its partner, Nevada Partners, to conduct a small evaluation on this individual program that was presented in May of 2008.

## Findings

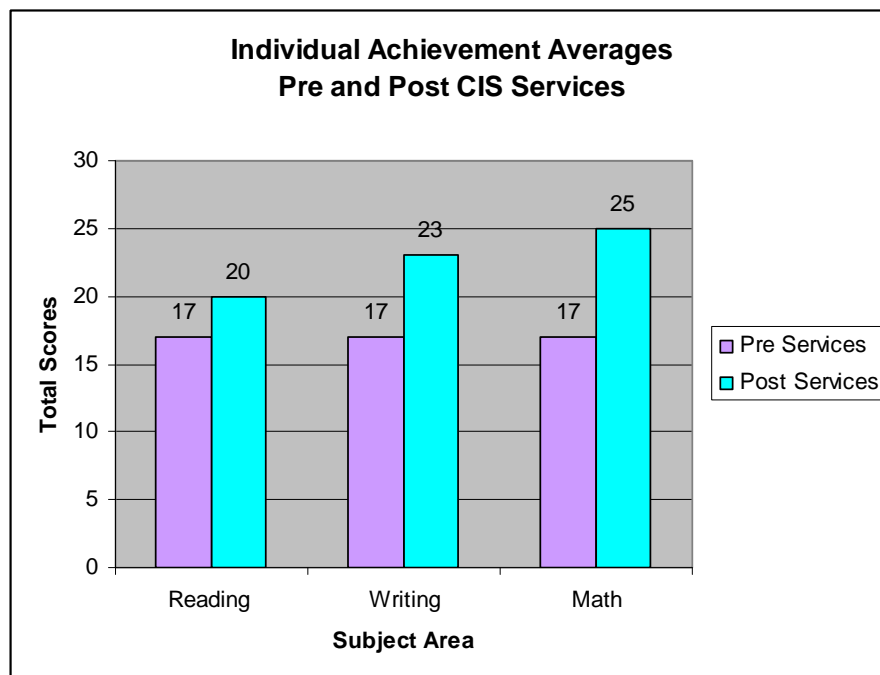
### School-Wide Data

All data used in these comparisons are school wide. CIS of Nevada programming seeks to coordinate the implementation of various services on an individual basis, which is to provide the specific services that each individual child needs. For this reason using school-wide data to identify improvements in the various standard indicators of school success is difficult. There may be naturally occurring fluctuations in these outcome measures that cannot be attributed to the programs provided by CIS of Nevada. Therefore more data regarding the performance of individual children will be collected in the subsequent years to track individual performance and use that as an indicator of initiative success. At this time, there are too many fluctuations in the data to be able to make a statement on the effectiveness of CIS of Nevada on these outcome measures. Data is only available from the 2003-2004 school year, which does not provide a large enough baseline to determine tendencies of data prior to CIS of Nevada involvement. School-wide data will continue to be tracked and monitored to assess the school as a whole over time to watch for trends in terms of the school-wide performance indicators.

### Cunningham Elementary

However in July of 2008 a small subset of data was collected for 13 children in one elementary school that receives CIS of Nevada services. This information revealed an increase in achievement in reading, writing, and math. This information is presented in figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1**



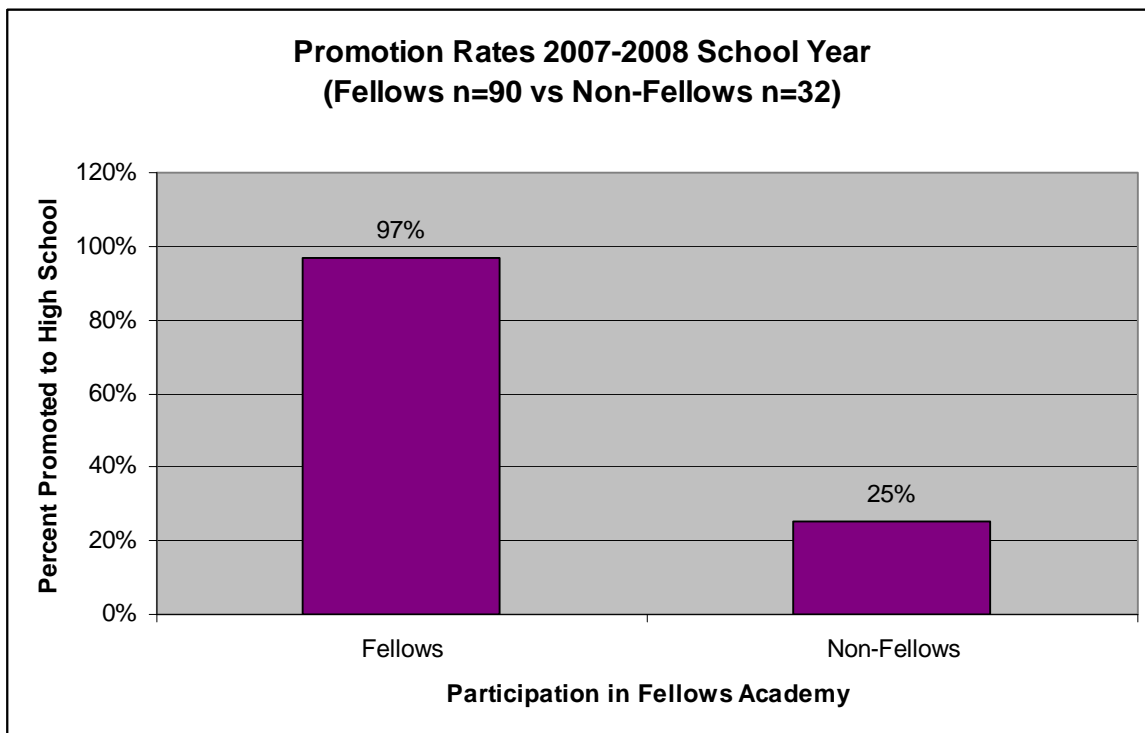
\* Total scores are calculated by assigning numerical values to letter grades, where a higher number indicates a better grade.

The table above indicates an increase in total scores for all students in each subject area, demonstrating an average increase of 15% in reading, 26% in writing and 32% in math. Students who participated in the WeekEND Hunger program also had a higher attendance rate at 99.9% attendance compared to the school rate of 94.5%.

### Fellows Academy

The Fellows Academy is a community-based dropout prevention initiative that utilizes youth-centric inter-agency case management teams in conjunction with intensive supplementary instruction, career exploration, life skills training and support services to assist youth at successfully matriculating into and/or completing high school. At the end of the 2007-2008 school year this program had introduced five cohorts of students into the program. Preliminary results indicate that this program has shown success with its participants. According to the internal evaluation data, students participating in the Fellows Academy had a higher promotion rate: 97% of Fellows promoted, compared to only 25% of the comparison group as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below. Additionally, students enrolled in this program had slightly fewer absences, with an average of 13.38 absences for fellows students (range of 0 to 81) compared to 18.97 absences for non-fellows students (range of 0 to 70).

**Figure 3.2**



The executive director for CIS of Southern Nevada was very excited about the success of the Fellows Academy as well as what these results could mean for the organization's impact on the entire school. She stated: "The Fellows Academy is for individual students what Communities in Schools is designed to be for the entire school. The success of this program as it provides for the needs of the individual participants could be indicative of what CIS will do for the whole school as it provides for the needs of those students." Further evaluation would be necessary to

see these changes on a school-wide level. In addition evaluators would need to be able to control for potential intervening variables. As CIS of Nevada grows, the individual initiatives will continue to be tracked and their impact evaluated as further indication of the success of CIS of Nevada as a whole program, while at the same time school wide-data will continue to be monitored for trends to see if the organization is having an impact on the school as a whole.

## **4. Focus Groups**

### **Method**

In December 2008, following the 2007-2008 school year, community partners and CIS of Nevada schools were asked to participate in a brief interview to determine specific successes and challenges over the past project period. The interview questions were created by an evaluation team at the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy. Two sets of questions were designed, one set specifically for schools and one set for community partners. The questions were designed to elicit input as to how the school sites perceived service availability and delivery, how community partners perceived service access and delivery, and the effectiveness of Community in Schools of Nevada partnership meetings. For CIS of Southern Nevada, evaluators held a focus group during the two monthly partnership meetings in December. For CIS of Northeastern Nevada, school affiliates and community partners were each called to do a phone interview and had an option to respond to the questions via email.

There were some limitations within this survey that should be noted. For CIS of Southern Nevada, only individuals who attended the December meeting had the opportunity to participate in the focus groups. Also it should be noted that the State Director was present for both focus groups. While her participation could have positively skewed the results of these focus groups, due to information provided by schools in the individual satisfaction surveys it is not likely that her presence had much of an effect on responses provided during the focus groups. For CIS of Northeastern Nevada, interviews were conducted either over the phone or through email and did not take place in a group setting, which may have limited the information shared.

### **Findings**

#### *Southern Nevada*

#### **School Sites**

Representatives from schools indicated that the appropriate services were selected and received by working with Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada. Schools did indicate that new services that are needed include an increased food supply, vision services, transportation to medical clinics, mental health services for youth and families, and increased access to dental services. The school liaisons reported that the needs of the students and the overall school are constantly reviewed and new services are requested throughout the year. Many of the needs mentioned above are currently in planning phases; additionally, many of the services listed above are provided at a small number of schools, but not yet at all schools. The school liaisons shared comments stating that Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada provides networking opportunities and community connections that school personnel may not have the ability or time to access. Many school personnel are able to make one phone call to CIS of Southern Nevada and access a variety of services, usually within a short time period, that are crucial for the students and their families. Even though immediate needs are important, more significantly,

these community connections should provide for long-term relationships between the providers and the school liaisons.

School liaisons also shared individual stories demonstrating how the connections provided by Communities in Schools touched the lives of the students. Stories included the availability of same-day clothing and food resources for families who suffered a hardship such as a house burning; counseling and other services provided for a student with severe problems that helped the student to graduate from middle school and into an appropriate high school; and a student who had been out of school for over two years and classified as a runaway who was accepted into the Fellows Academy and is now at home with family and on track to graduate high school in the adult education program. Services offered to the students help the students' ability to separate gang life and school life, there is a reduction in violence on school campuses, and school is viewed as a safe place where students feel they can participate in school activities. These are just a few examples of what the liaisons are viewing at their school sites.

### **Community Partners**

The community partners all agreed that the partnership with Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada is extremely beneficial and rewarding. One big difference is the full-time staff member that is repositioned by the Clark County School District. This allows for programming and services to be offered to the students at a more efficient rate. The school liaison also provides a connection to all schools in the district, even those that are not actual CIS sites, because of that person's knowledge of the organization and the community resources that are available. The partners feel that their contribution is valuable as it allows CIS of Southern Nevada to remain a community builder and not a direct service provider. Even though there are times when CIS of Nevada will strategically initiate a program to meet a need that cannot be immediately addressed by another community agency, often times a community provider will take over the programming once it has been established and help the program expand. One example of this is the WeekEnd Hunger program, which was recently adopted by a larger entity that is new to the area, and has the capacity to take over the existing program and to expand the number of students and schools served. Community partners also commented that CIS of Southern Nevada is assisting in acting as a central data source which community agencies can use to provide data and statistics to increase funding for services and provide education to the community. Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada has a great ability to determine the strengths in community partners and support those strengths to enhance child well being and the community at large. What is needed now are more resources, more funding and more community agencies working together to provide services to the students and their families.

### **Effectiveness of Monthly Meetings**

It was unanimous that the monthly meetings were highly informative and effective. Even though individuals may not have the ability to be present every month, these meetings provide a consistent point of contact with Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada and keep the schools and partners informed of school needs and service activity. It was reported several times that a school liaison would attend a meeting and mention a specific challenge with a student and that the liaison would walk away from the meeting with a contact or resource that could be utilized immediately. The monthly meetings give school liaisons and community partners a chance to meet face to face and for each person to learn more about the needs in the community.

Schools are also able to share success stories and providers are getting immediate feedback on the impact their involvement has. This immediate positive feedback translates into more motivation and services offered to the community.

### **Other Testimony**

CIS of Southern Nevada has helped families who have been locked out of their weekly rental to retrieve their belongings. They have resources about what schools the kids go to at the budget suites, and the managers of many of these properties actually care and want to help now that they know how. The suites also communicate with each other and this information spreads.

### ***Northeastern Nevada***

CIS of Northeastern Nevada holds partnership meetings on a quarterly basis. Since individuals were not available as a group, members were contacted on an individual basis for feedback. A list of CIS of Northeastern partners, community and school, was provided to the evaluation team in late December. A total of eight individuals were included on the list and each one was contacted by phone to administer the focus group questionnaire orally and by email with the option to complete the questionnaire in electronic format. Five individuals responded to the survey, three by phone and two in electronic format. Two individuals were school representatives and three individuals represented community partners. On average, the participants had been involved in the organization for approximately one and a half years. There is a small difference in the quality of the information received electronically as it was less specific. However, with the quality of the information received, it is believed by the evaluation team that the results from this survey are reliable.

### **School**

The schools' representatives expressed that the services received were appropriate for the specific needs of the school. Program implementation was not scheduled to begin until January of 2007, however, there was an extreme demand for school vaccinations, so Communities in Schools of Northeastern Nevada began providing immunization services ahead of schedule to ensure that children would be able to attend school. Immunization clinics were offered to other schools in the district as well to meet community needs. There was also great success with the two food programs implemented, the breakfast program and backpack program, and the schools assisted with a fundraiser for additional funds to expand the food program. The schools feel that CIS of Northeastern Nevada is doing a wonderful job with the resources that are currently available. For a program that is new, remarkable progress has been made and residents and the community at large are starting to realize the long-term potential.

Schools recognize that funding is a problem for program sustainability and expansion and are hoping to play a role in assisting with those needs. It was a challenge to begin the program in the schools and Great Basin College was a key partner in service implementation, more so than the school district. It would be extremely helpful to have a representative of the school district on staff similar to the structure of CIS of Southern Nevada. This could assist the rate of initiative implementation. Some of the services that are needed include increased medical care for underserved children and continued expansion of the food program.

### **Community Partners**

Community partners that responded indicated that the mental health project, immunizations and the food program went very well and felt that implementation was successful. Great Basin College has been a great partner and was able to provide volunteers to assist with immunization implementation and other programs. The college also provides office space for staff.

Community partners had a few suggestions for future improvement which include increasing funding; perhaps one strategy would be collecting money from families who can pay for services but perhaps cannot access services through other sources at all or in a timely manner. This would provide a slight flow of income. Community partners also requested initiative summaries to better understand implementation strategies so that they can assist with initiative expansion.

### **Partners Meeting**

Currently CIS of Northeastern Nevada partners' meetings are held on a quarterly basis.

Respondents indicated that these meetings are effective, well organized and the content is specific and relevant. Meetings offer an opportunity to disseminate information, network, and receive project updates. If individuals miss meetings there have been some feelings of disconnect so there might be a way to connect with those individuals in a different way to keep people active and informed. Meeting minutes are distributed to all partners regardless of their ability to participate in the meetings. For the future, partners should be assessed on a continued basis to determine if more meetings will be needed as the organization grows.

## **5. Interviews with Administration**

### **Methods**

Interviews were conducted with each of the regional CIS directors, as well as the state director for CIS of Nevada. The state director for CIS of Nevada and the executive director for CIS of Southern Nevada were interviewed together and the executive director from CIS of Northeastern Nevada was interviewed separately. After the initial draft of the evaluation report the Grant and Data Management Contractor for CIS of Southern Nevada also provided feedback that was incorporated into the report. All participants were asked only three questions. The first asked about particular successes of the 2007-2008 school year, the next about specific challenges faces and the final question asked them to describe any changes or improvements planned for the next school year. All three participants were happy to provide their feedback on the organization and were excited to discuss the changes that had already been made for the 2008-2009 school year.

### **Findings**

#### **Successes in 2007-2008**

Both the executive directors of CIS of Southern Nevada and of CIS of Northeastern Nevada had exciting successes to discuss. For CIS of Southern Nevada, one of the first successes discussed was the improvement made to the medical care that they provide. The executive director reported that pediatricians are now seeing children in their neighborhoods at no cost to the families. In this year they also started partnering with the medical schools to create opportunities for their residents to treat kids, as well as bringing nurses into the program. They have also been able to leverage additional community resources and bring in a separate mental health program to help serve the needs of the children and families in their schools. They are hoping to continue

to develop this segment and see it expand in the coming years. In terms of 2007-2008 the school-based mental health component was implemented with one intern and four practicum students as well as several undergraduate students and a licensed social worker who over saw the program and provided direct services himself. This program provided services at one elementary school and at Nevada Partners, one of CIS of Southern Nevada's community partners. From July 2007 to April 2008 this program was able to serve 118 students. In conjunction with this program, CIS of Southern Nevada was able to offer "Red Flag" training once to teachers and staff at two elementary schools, once for the staff at partner agency Nevada Partners, and twice for staff at Boys and Girls Clubs. This training is designed to help staff recognize signs of mental health distress to be able to provide those early referrals for students to get mental health treatment. An additional training was provided for staff at one partner elementary school regarding best practices in working with homeless children in an educational setting. Another success from the previous school year was the Fellows Academy initiative. Both the CIS of Nevada state director and the executive director for CIS of Southern Nevada reported this program as a big success, since they were able to really move into individual student services and see a change in terms of promotion rates, attendance and disciplinary actions.

These staff also reported that their work with the Fellows Academy was touted by the National Dropout Prevention Center as one of the best examples of operationalizing the research done by their center. The Fellows Academy has been a great example of understanding the research and recommendations and creating a program that is working. They plan to work with The National Dropout Prevention Center to publish some of these experiences and the results they have seen so far in a book.

Additionally, the organization's ability to develop another agency's capacity to serve the community to expand and eventually become self sustaining has been remarkable. Their work with the WeekEnd Hunger initiative, which started in one school, has now expanded with a grant to fund a director working with a new community partner, and the initiative now serves the entire Clark County School District. Another success has been the Clothing Closet, which began as a pilot project but now has expanded into an agreement with Goodwill that allows CIS to trade used clothing donations for vouchers from Goodwill that they can provide to needy families.

2007-08 was the first year of operations for CIS of Northeastern Nevada. The executive director reported that they were able to partner with the school district and several service providers and were able to provide more services than they thought was possible. She even noted that in their first year they were able to serve over 6,300 breakfasts to hungry children. She also mentioned that last year was their first of what they hope to have as an annual event, the Scarecrow Festival. They were able to organize and use this event as a fundraiser for CIS of Northeastern Nevada as well as a way to promote the organization and gain additional support through community partners. She said that this event did so well that all of their partners viewed it as a great success.

### **Challenges in 2007-2008**

The executive director of CIS of Southern Nevada reported that most of their challenges last year were internal, noting that there were some changes with national standards and the measures that their board had put in place to measure success. Consequently, just keeping up with the changes and growth last year was a challenge. The state director discussed how last year, CIS of Nevada

organized as a state entity and opened their CIS of Northeastern Nevada affiliate in Elko. She also mentioned that another challenge was moving physical offices in Southern Nevada last year. However, they both also noted that they were able to make the adjustments and meet their standards for quality. The executive director for CIS of Southern Nevada stated that last year they did not face any financial challenges and were able to start their initiatives in a sustainable way. Their initiatives are low cost and low maintenance because they expand using existing resources. They also are able to keep costs low by using volunteers to run many of their initiatives. They noted that in Southern Nevada they were able to grow and serve more students without incurring additional costs. They were so cost efficient last year that they reported that their board actually voted to put some private funds toward a public awareness campaign.

In Northeastern Nevada, the executive director reported that some of her biggest challenges came from it being their first year; in so small part, initially she was the only staff member of CIS of Northeastern Nevada. She said that only having one person to get everything done was a challenge. She also noted funding as a challenge because they didn't have an established stream of funding, and additionally that one of the major hurdles she had to overcome in that first year was simply educating the community about the problems its children and families were facing. Many were unaware of the low immunization rates, barriers to accessing health care and the number of hungry children in their own community. She said that many people see this as an issue in other countries and other larger communities, but not in their own.

### **Changes for 2008-2009**

CIS of Southern Nevada has already made several changes in the 2008-2009 school year. They are planning the expansion of their medical program to include a mobile clinic which will have drivers trained as eligibility workers, so that in addition to making the medical services available, the driver can also help families navigate all the paperwork necessary for obtaining medical coverage. The medical services will also include a vision component to help children be seen and get glasses when necessary. In terms of improving medical care, CIS of Southern Nevada is working to put together a "think tank" of physicians and leaders in the medical schools and health district to work on ways to screen and provide services to indigent populations. CIS of Southern Nevada is also working to coordinate a full-service medical program including psychological services, and family practice physicians to develop healthy children that can be successful in school. CIS of Southern Nevada is working with the UNLV School of Counseling to develop and maintain internships within the CIS of Southern Nevada schools to provide services to the schools at no cost, while providing valuable experience to the UNLV students. Other expansions include the inclusion of three new schools in the Fellows Academy. There are also plans for getting a childcare cooperative on-line to improve childcare for their families. CIS of Southern Nevada is planning to have a childcare campus onsite at Nevada Partners to provide no-cost childcare. In addition, there are already plans to put in a playground at Nevada Partners to help support the cooperative.

CIS of Northeastern Nevada reported an expansion in staff in the 2008-2009 school year. The executive director stated that she now has two VISTA members. She also stated that the program has already expanded to three schools from the initial two schools. In addition they have added a mentoring program with one class offered in April of 2008 that helped to keep eight youth out of juvenile detention. They have also expanded to include some mental health

services through the use of telemedicine; they have arranged to have a counselor from UNLV provide services with the help of a facilitator out of Great Basin College locally. Services have also expanded from just Elko to Wendover, a nearby town with similar needs. In addition, CIS of Northeastern Nevada is planning several additional initiatives including an early childhood education piece and mentoring with Hispanic women, and they are planning to bring on 2 more schools that have been on their waiting list. The final expansion for 2008-2009 is their work to get a board together to address the new barriers to obtaining subsidized immunizations for children. She noted that changes in state laws have made this more difficult for their county and they want to address this issue in their community.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Overall this first year's evaluation results appear positive. These results indicate that CIS of Nevada has been able to deliver many necessary services to children in the community directly where they are located – in school. In looking at the number of units of service alone, CIS of Nevada was able to exceed their projected goals statewide, providing 4,049 additional units of services from what was projected in the growth strategy. In the 2007-2008 school year CIS of Nevada provided 25,902 units of service at a value of \$2,157,891, resulting in an estimated 609% return on investment statewide.

Surveys, focus groups and interviews with participating schools and community partners as well as CIS of Nevada staff indicate that CIS as an organization is positively received in the communities in which they work. School staff that work with CIS of Nevada overwhelmingly felt that the programs and resources that CIS of Nevada has been able to bring to their schools have been invaluable. Most of the CIS of Nevada partners and schools shared anecdotes about how a CIS initiative has improved the lives of their students in terms of academic achievement, health, and self esteem.

While the counts in the number of units of service that are provided and positive feedback from partners is exciting, the direct impact of CIS of Nevada initiatives on students could be better illustrated through analysis of more student-level data. This would allow researchers and evaluators the ability to make statements about direct impact of programs on students as opposed to discussing only school-wide data which may not show a clear indication of CIS of Nevada initiative impact, as there could be many other intervening variables that could impact the school wide data. CIS of Nevada should focus its attention on gathering more student-level data and this could include tracking all youth that participate in each program and linking that data with data from the schools regarding students' academic performance, attendance, and behavior. This would allow initiative staff, partners, evaluators and funding agencies to study the direct impact that these initiatives can have on school performance. Additionally, this information could be supplemented by qualitative data in the form of interviews with parents. Upon reviewing the draft of this evaluation report CIS of Southern Nevada reported to NICRP that they have hired staff to help facilitate the collection of individual level data for the 2008-2009 school year and this is something that CIS of Southern Nevada will continue to do as it grows.

Communities in Schools of Nevada as an organization has been very successful, and as a result of working with existing services and building relationships the organization has been able to develop creative solutions to difficult problems. Their philosophy of creating sustainable programming ensures that the organization does not rely on additional funding each year from the schools themselves or the families they serve. CIS of Nevada has shown since its introduction into Nevada five years ago a commitment to the communities in which it operates to work within existing structures to address the needs of the students in these low-income schools. This coordination of efforts has started to show improvements in the schools qualitatively through stories and experiences of school personnel and community partners. This in addition to the very positive results shown in preliminary evaluations tracking individual students receiving services that show improvements in attendance, behavior and achievement. As this organization

continues to expand and collect individual-level data, evaluators will be able to use that longitudinal information to track changes in these populations and provide more specific results regarding the impact of the programs coordinated through CIS of Nevada.

## References

Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada Website. <http://www.cisnevada.org>

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## Appendix A: CIS Community Value Summary



### Total Community Value Provided July 2007 to June 2008

#### DONATIONS RECEIVED:

Program	Donation Description	Explanation of Donation Unit Measurement	Value per Unit of Service	Number of Units Received	In-Kind	Cash	Total Value
Clothing Closet	Volunteers	Vol. Hrs.-Ind. Sector Value, FMV of Cloth	\$18.77 and Varies	Varies	\$10,136	\$0	\$10,136
Dental	Volunteers, Dental Bus	Prof. Vol. Hrs, Value of Bus	\$35 and \$2250/day	Varies	\$51,040	\$0	\$51,040
Fellows Academy	Cash, Volunteers	Cash Value, Vo. Hours-Ind. Sector Val.	\$18.77	480	\$9,010	\$5,000	\$14,010
Medical	Volunteers, Furniture, Cash, Svc C	Prof Rate, FMV, Cash Value, FMV of Main	Varies	39	\$9,323	\$6,500	\$15,823
			\$2,040 for each bldg per month	12 mos	\$48,960	\$0	\$48,960
Medical	Medical Buildings at 2 schools	FMV of Lease in comparable areas					
Mental Health	Volunteers, Svc Centers, Furniture	Prof. Vol. Hrs, FMV of Svc. Ctr Maint, and F	Varies	633	\$42,106	\$0	\$42,106
Peer Mentoring	Volunteers	Vol. Hours - Ind. Sector Valuation	\$18.77	634	\$11,895	\$0	\$11,895
WeekEND Hunger	Volunteers, Food, Warehouse, Cash	Vol. Hrs-Ind. Sector Val, All Others-FMV	Varies	1,314	\$93,387	\$36,713	\$130,100
S Miscellaneous	Cash, Volunteers, Supplies	Cash Value, Ind. Sector Valuation, FMV	\$18.77	1,518	\$40,378	\$35,031	\$75,409
NE Healthcare	Volunteers, Cash, Clinic Space	Vol-Prof. Rate, Cash Value, FMV	\$18.77 and \$60.00	360	\$17,843	\$987	\$18,830
NE Hunger Prevention	Volunteers, Warehouse Space	Vol. Hours - Ind. Sector Valuation, FMV	\$18.77 and \$840 per month	182	\$12,656	\$0	\$12,656
NE Mentoring	Volunteers, Evening Reporting Cen	Vol. Hours - Ind. Sector Valuation, FMV	\$18.77	174	\$7,423	\$0	\$7,423
NE Miscellaneous	Volunteers and Cash	Vol. Hours and Cash Value	\$18.77	487	\$9,141	\$20,571	\$29,712
Unrestricted	Cash, Stock, Volunteers	Cash Value, Stock Value, Vol Value	\$18.77	729	\$13,683	\$58,766	\$72,449
All CCSD Programs	Network Coordinator	Salary (paid by CCSD)	n/a	n/a	\$84,999	\$0	\$84,999
All CCSD Programs	Student Success Advocate	Salary (part paid by CIS, part by CCSD)	n/a	n/a	\$11,459	\$0	\$11,459
All CCSD Programs	Program Site Coordinators	Time spent for coord. X avg. salary	n/a	n/a	\$12,600	\$0	\$12,600
Various	VISTA Volunteers	Based on stipend paid	n/a	n/a	\$31,387	\$0	\$31,387
Various	Grant Funding	Cash Value	n/a	n/a	\$0	\$628,227	\$628,227
<b>Total Donations</b>				<b>6,549</b>	<b>\$517,427</b>	<b>\$791,795</b>	<b>\$1,309,221</b>

#### SERVICES PROVIDED:

Program	Target Population	Service Provider/Partner	Unit of Service	Value per Unit of Service	Explanation of Unit of Service Value	Number of Units of Service Provided	Total Value of Service Provided
Adult Mentoring	Middle school students	Latin Chamber of Commerce	Mentoring Hr per student	\$10.00	Hourly rate for Mentor	8.0	\$80
Birthday Closet	Martinez Elementary school childre	Junior League of Las Vegas	Party for one child	\$16.99	Value of Party	636.0	\$10,806
Career Club	Martinez Elementary school childre	UMC, EPA during FY08	Mentoring Hr per student	\$10.00	Hourly rate for career advice	895.5	\$8,955
Clothing Closet	All CIS youth	CIS	Item of Clothing	Varies	Fair Market Value of Clothing	1,812.0	\$7,813
Dental	All CIS youth	NHC, Miles for Smiles, SNHD	Dental Procedure	Varies	Medical Rates	1,465.0	\$43,124
Fellows Academy	CIS youth	Nevada Partners	Fellows Academy Student	\$3,560.62	Cost per Student per NV Ptrs	27.0	\$96,137
Medical	All youth	Community Outreach Medical Center	Medical Service	Varies	Medical Rates	2,067.0	\$104,259
Mental Health	Cunningham, Fellows	NV Ptrs, UNLV	Counseling Session	\$65.00	Rate for counseling	156.3	\$10,160
Mental Health	Cunningham, Fellows	NV Ptrs, UNLV	Workshop/Training	\$25.00	Professional Rate	215.5	\$5,388
Mental Health	Cunningham, Fellows	NV Ptrs, UNLV	Supervision	\$100.00	Professional Rate	133.0	\$13,300
Mental Health	Cunningham, Fellows	NV Ptrs, UNLV	Presentations	\$25.00	Professional Rate	82.0	\$2,050
Peer Mentoring	All CIS youth	CIS Youth	Mentoring Hour	\$5.00	tutoring	633.8	\$3,169
Special Initiatives	All CIS youth	CIS	Bicycle, School Supplies	Varies	FMV of Bikes and supplies	85.0	\$9,379
WeekEND Hunger	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Reg. weekend backpack	\$7.74	Actual cost of food in backpk	5,970.0	\$46,208
WeekEND Hunger	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Long weekend backpack	\$11.23	Actual cost of food in backpk	1,374.0	\$15,430
WeekEND Hunger	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Week-long backpack	\$16.97	Actual cost of food in backpk	443.0	\$7,518
NE Healthcare	Elko	Elko School Dist, NHC, Imm Coalition	Immunization	\$95.00	From NV Health Centers	2,998.0	\$284,810
NE Hunger Prevention	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Reg. weekend backpack	\$7.74	Actual cost of food in backpk	477.0	\$3,692
NE Hunger Prevention	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Breakfast Snack	\$0.88	Actual cost of food in backpk	6,389.0	\$5,622
NE Hunger Prevention	Highly food-fragile CIS youth	CIS	Week-long backpack	\$16.97	Actual cost of food in backpk	35.0	\$594
All Programs	All CIS youth and CIS communities	CIS	Program Coordination	Varies	State Dir. & Exec. Directors	Varies	\$170,178
<b>Total Services Provided</b>						<b>25,902</b>	<b>\$848,669</b>

#### TOTAL COMMUNITY VALUE

**\$2,157,891**