



Communities  
In Schools

Kalamazoo

# Connections

## Why Boys?

*“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”*

–Frederick Douglass

These days, the road to becoming a man is fraught with peril. Throughout our nation:

- Boys are suspended at roughly twice the rate of girls.
- Two-thirds of the D’s and F’s given out in school go to boys.
- Boys are one-third more likely to drop out before finishing high school.
- African-American males are particularly vulnerable; one in five receives out-of-school suspension compared with one in ten white males.

These are just a handful of the somber statistics when it comes to boys and education. So, why a newsletter devoted to boys? It’s a good reminder to keep our eyes and hearts open to boys so that we can close the achievement gaps that exist. At CIS, we believe that when we take time to reflect on boys we all benefit.

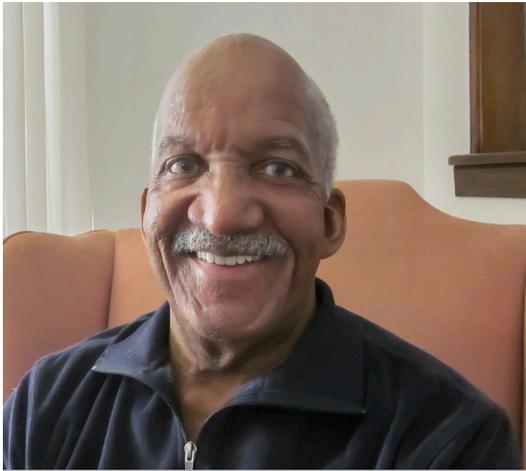
For example, when reviewing the CIS After School Program data from 2012-13 and 2013-14, we noticed a trend that female participants outnumbered their male counterparts. To meet the needs of boys, we must connect with them. By setting goals of enrolling more boys to reflect the overall population of the school and offering services directed at their interests, we have made significant progress in engaging young male students. In the 2014-15 school year, a majority of the CIS After School Programs have met their goals in increasing male students. There is still more work to be done, but CIS will continue to look at ways to make a difference for boys including engaging our community to join with us.

Thank you for showing you care for all kids by supporting CIS with your time, talent, and resources.



*“A chance to give back to peers and community” is one of Communities In Schools’ Five Basics. That is what these young men from Loy Norrix High School did. Together, they helped to distribute over 300 Thanksgiving meals to community family members as part of the Community Feast at Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School. This event is held in partnership with New World Flood. Pictured from left to right: CIS Success Coach O’Neal Ollie, Loy Norrix students: DeAndre Buchanan, Xavier Gillon and Quay Evans & CIS Site Coordinator Montrell Baker.*

# Conversation with CIS



Moses Walker, CIS Board Member and retired employee of Borgess Health.

**C**ommunities In Schools Board Member Moses Walker is a truth-teller, justice seeker, and numbers guy. As a boy, he walked everywhere. As a man, he has touched the lives of practically everyone who walks anywhere in Kalamazoo, whether they know it or not. Born in Kalamazoo, the community that raised him, Moses Walker has, in turn, helped to raise this community. Here, he shares some of his thoughts on boys, education, community, and much more.

**Do you think boys today face different pressures than what their fathers faced?**

That's a difficult question for me to answer. We have three grandchildren—my son's three daughters—so they are the children of today. That's two generations removed from me! But, from a societal standpoint, I can tell you: things change all

the time. My generation was raised in a different way. We came from large families. I was born in 1940 and one of nine; that was not uncommon. We were close to each other—literally. We lived close to our friends. We could walk to each other's houses. We had a different sense of community and sense of neighborhood. Everyone was your parent. Everyone had the right to correct you. That doesn't exist today.

Even transportation is different. We walked everywhere. We didn't own cars and many of our parents didn't either. That sense of neighborhood when I was growing up doesn't exist today. Many children have lost that sense of belonging, a sense of a greater bond. You know the saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child?' Well, that was truer in my day. We were a village. Children today are not growing up in the same village. People are less connected and as a result, peer pressures have greater influence on children and how they react to them.

**According to Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, psychologists and the authors of *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, too many of our young men “remain emotionally illiterate in pursuit of a caricature of strong, silent masculinity.” Do you agree?**

Probably. Too many of our young men today are raised in single parent, female households. We don't see black males today involved in children's lives as they once were. There is a major gap. In fact, over 70 % of our young boys are born into homes without men around. In the barbershop, we talk about how women can do the best they can, but that absence of a male figure—a positive male role model—makes a big difference. The absence of this, especially during a boy's developmental years is a contributing factor to this problem.

**What do we need to do better as a community to equip our boys to become successful and fulfilled young men?**

That's a difficult question. First of all, to become successful and fulfilled, you've got to be educated. Boys, particularly black males right now, are not doing well when it comes to graduating on time or not graduating at

## Board Member: Moses Walker

all. White females are at the top, with 88% graduating on time, second is black females, followed by white males and then we see a major decline, with only 61% of black males are graduating on time. That's a big warning sign.

We don't want our boys heading to Jackson State University on 6000 Cooper Street [Jackson State Prison]. That's the wrong university! But it's hard. When children lack hope, are in an environment where education is not stressed, not passed on, it's hard. But we have to stop making excuses. There are no easy ways but education is key. In my parents' time, you just needed a pick and a shovel. These days, it's tough succeeding without the necessary technical and academic training that today's world demands. We need to engage, engage, engage, and keep our boys—and girls—in school.

### **If you could give only two pieces of wisdom to parents on raising sons, what would they be?**

Value education. You must value it yourself in order to pass this along. Number two: make sure your child is putting forth the effort. Regardless of a child's ethnicity, they are not going anywhere if they aren't prepared technology-wise or academically, so make sure they're working hard. It starts with you. There's no easy road. Hard work. It really comes down to recognizing the importance of education and sitting on your butt and doing the work. The Kalamazoo Promise guarantees opportunity. But the Promise doesn't guarantee success or results.

### **There are many great organizations within our community. What is it about CIS that attracts you to give of your time and talent to this particular board?**

I believe in what CIS stands for and the population we serve. CIS is reaching out to some of our most vulnerable children and supporting them in a multitude of ways so they can be successful. That's really what it's all about. Also, my relationship with [CIS Executive Director] Pam Kingery goes back a long ways. At the end of the day, though, the CIS mission—surrounding students with a community of support so they can stay in school and succeed in life—is compelling. Some of our kids need additional supports and CIS is helping them academically, socially, and beyond.

### **Thank you, Moses Walker!**

*To learn more about Moses, the kind of boy he once was, and the people and experiences that shaped him into the man he is today, read the CIS blog, Ask Me About My 12,000 Kids. You can find it on our new website, [www.ciskalamazoo.org](http://www.ciskalamazoo.org).*



*A blast from the past: Moses Walker (right) with long-time friend, Dr. Charles Warfield, current President of the Kalamazoo Metro NAACP.*

# A Young Man Moving Forward



Dareon Martin, CIS Alumni and  
2015 Loy Norrix High School graduate.

Dareon Martin, in his quiet voice says, “Everybody has their own story. I went through stuff when I was younger. I needed somebody. I was fortunate to have some people in my life that cared and now I want to be one of those people for someone else.”

Without a doubt, Dareon is one of those caring people. A 2015 graduate of Loy Norrix High School, he is a young man who is giving back. Hired upon graduation by the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, Dareon is supporting young people by helping them with homework, reading with them, engaging in activities, and more.

“Being a Literacy Buddy\* while I was at Loy Norrix helped me get this job,” he says. “I gained the skills I needed to help me work with kids.” Literacy Buddies pairs high school students with elementary students to serve as positive role

models and offer one-on-one support to motivate success.

Dareon plans to soon tap into The Kalamazoo Promise and attend Kalamazoo Valley Community College. He wants to explore a wide variety of his interests, ranging from culinary arts, to dance, music, and the criminal justice system.

Things haven’t come easily for Dareon. He could have easily given up and become a negative statistic, but he didn’t. Dareon’s personal mantra is: keep moving on...no matter what.

“I wouldn’t have graduated high school on time if it wasn’t for Communities In Schools, that’s for sure,” says Dareon. “I probably would have ended up on the streets doing something I shouldn’t have been doing.” Reflecting further, he says, “I just didn’t care about school. It wasn’t until about the end of my freshman year of high school that it all hit. Everybody else around me was caring about me and how I was doing. It hit me that I needed to start caring about myself.”

And just who were those people who paved the way for Dareon? Dareon points to a host of people, like his sixth grade teacher at Edison Environmental Science Academy. “Ms. [Erika] Adams, she helped me through a lot of stuff.” [Ms. Adams now goes by Mrs. Zavasky and is still teaching at Edison.] And in 2008, Dareon was matched

*It wasn’t until the end of my freshman year that it all hit. I needed to start caring about myself.”*

## Forward, No Matter What

with Dan Hinkle, a mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters, A Community of Caring. “Dan Hinkle, he’s a great man. He’s always been there for me. He still is.”

“I was an immature kid,” Dareon says matter-of-factly. “And when I got to high school, I was fighting and getting into trouble. I didn’t care about school. It was just bad.” Meeting the polite, well-mannered man that Dareon is today, it’s hard to imagine him otherwise. What changed and helped get him on track to graduate from high school?

“I’d say the people in CIS helped focus me. I visited the CIS office every day. They also gave me somewhere to go after school where I could get my homework done. Ms. Jenee [McDaniel], Mr. Charles [McCall Lipsey], Ms. Rola [Emmanuel], Mr. Ja’male [Jordan], Ms. Shayla [Jones], and Ms. Elnora [Talbert]....they all helped me a lot. Coach too.”



*Dareon with Calvin, one of his two Literacy Buddies.*

*end of my freshman  
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aring about myself.*

The coach Dareon is referring to is CIS Success Coach O’Neal Ollie. “Dareon is a natural leader,” says Ollie. “And despite the obstacles, he doesn’t give up.” Together, they mapped out a plan tailored for Dareon’s success. “It’s really more of a game plan or road map,” says Ollie. “It helps make the impossible seem possible.”

Kalamazoo Public Schools recognized the gains Dareon made and in his senior year, Dareon was selected by Principal Prewitt to represent Loy Norrix at the NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet.

It’s Dareon’s positive attitude, grit and perseverance that fuels him forward. Were it not for all the caring adults in Dareon’s life, he says his story would have turned out differently. “I probably wouldn’t be here talking to you today, that’s for sure. And CIS, you guys saved my future.”

*All of the great work you’ve been reading about is made possible by people like you who volunteer with or donate to CIS. Please invest in local kids and be a part of more success stories like Dareon’s.*

*Make a gift to CIS today.*

# 1 Excellent Math Club!

Say you want to travel from Kalamazoo to Florida. Is it cheaper to go by a car and stay in hotels or to rent a motor home and stay in that? Or maybe you want to build a shed. How should it be designed? What type of materials should you use and how much will you need? These are the types of real life situations Howard Tejchma, a CIS volunteer, poses to the fifth grade boys who are part of his math club at Arcadia Elementary School.

Howard, who has a degree in physics from Kalamazoo College, has been imparting his love for math for the past six years by posing problems and getting boys to have a conversation about how to solve them.

“I really enjoy building an understanding of how math relates to life,” Howard says. “When I saw one of my students riding a bike to school, I got an idea,” he says.

“We talked about bicycles and gears and ratios the next week. Boys need to know why do I need to learn this? Why does it matter to me? Working with boys can get a little chaotic with the physical activity. However, this is not necessarily to be avoided. Boys benefit from opportunities to physically relate to the information. With the changing work environment—to one that is more desk-based, office-based—I think boys are being left behind. So I make sure math club is an active and safe learning environment.”

Each session begins with members reflecting on their week, sharing something interesting or exciting that has been going on. Howard soon has the boys moving around and will, if the weather is nice, often take the club outside. “I don’t give answers. I get them to think by asking questions like: What do you need to know to solve this problem? What information do you gather and how do you organize it to make sense of it?” The session usually concludes with a game of cards where “it’s a chance to talk about strategy and rules.”

Howard, who is also a Provider Onboarding Specialist with Bronson Healthcare, uses Math Club as an opportunity to talk about careers and answer any questions the boys may have. Math Club is about awakening curiosity, encouraging discovery, and most of all, never giving up. “I let them know I flunked a math class in college,” Howard says. “Upon reflection, I realized I needed to study harder. So I studied, retook the class and got an A. It’s not going to be easy, I tell them. But don’t give up. Take time to reflect, go back and try again. People who have achieved the most have failed the most...Boys, I remind them, you are hard-wired to learn.”

*Time is ticking by. Our boys can’t wait. We need a few good men (actually a lot of good men) to step up and volunteer or join our youth development staff to support students in the Kalamazoo Public Schools. To learn more, go to the CIS website at: <http://ciskalamazoo.org>.*



*Howard Tejchma, CIS Volunteer, (left) and Gulnar Husain, CIS Site Coordinator at Arcadia Elementary (right).*

## Time Waits 4 No Man!

*Time waits 4 No Man!*

*My life is a waste of time*

*I do nothing but sit around and rhyme*

*Why is my life a waste of time?*

*Maybe it's not a waste of time*

*Maybe it's just a change of mind*

*My life is not a waste of time*

*My life jumps when I hear a song*

*Wow, hold on because I was wrong along*

*I am healthy and my heart is strong*

*So now I know my life is not up for pawn*



*Tristan Pierce, author of  
"Time Waits 4 No Man!"*

### **-Tristan Pierce, Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary Student**

Literacy Buddies\* pairs trained high school students with elementary students to improve their reading, writing, and vocabulary skills. CIS matched up students from Loy Norrix High School with students from Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary. That's where Tristan met Dareon, his high school "buddy" who is also featured in this newsletter. Thanks to Literacy Buddies, Tristan had a chance to flex his poetry muscles with help from Dareon.

*\* In 2014-15, Literacy Buddies was held in partnership with Read and Write Kalamazoo and was funded by State Farm, Old National Bank Foundation, and the Sally Appleyard Trust. This school year, Literacy Buddies is funded by State Farm and The Greg Jennings Foundation.*

If you believe in our efforts to ensure that ALL kids stay in school and achieve in life, please visit [www.ciskalamazoo.org](http://www.ciskalamazoo.org) or call 269.337.1601 for more details on getting involved with CIS. On our website you will find ways to support local youth through volunteer opportunities, ways to make a gift, event information, and our Kids' Closet Wish List.

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Photos in this newsletter were taken by Don Kingery (CIS Volunteer): Back Cover along with contributing CIS Staff.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this newsletter or would like to sign up for the e-newsletter, contact Jessy Oprea (CIS Fund Development and Marketing Coordinator) at [joprea@ciskalamazoo.org](mailto:joprea@ciskalamazoo.org) or call 269.337.1601 extension 217.



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*Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo overcomes the barriers that derail kids, giving them hope and the belief that they can succeed in school, graduate and be prepared for life.*



# From Boys to Men

Texas came to Kalamazoo! CIS staff who work in secondary schools were trained in the XY-Zone, a male involvement program which seeks to reduce drop-out rates by focusing on the needs of male students. Robert Bachicha (who developed the curriculum) and Albino Quinones (pictured on right with CIS After School Coordinator Hillside Middle School, Katherine Williamson), both of Communities In Schools of Central Texas, did the training. *We had a chance to interview them. Follow our blog, to learn more about the XY-Zone.*