



Communities
In Schools

Kalamazoo

Connections

The Double Issue



For the past 13 years, CIS of Kalamazoo has helped students succeed in school through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and currently serves 750 students in 15 after school sites—11 elementary and 4 middle school sites. CIS After School is available thanks to the support of federal dollars awarded through the Michigan Department of Education, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The federal budget for 2017-18 (which begins October 1, 2017) proposed by the President completely eliminates funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

This would eliminate critical academic and social supports for our kids, families and community. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers are a key part of helping students graduate from high school ready for college or a career and able to utilize the gift of The Kalamazoo Promise. Over the past 11 years, the graduation rate for KPS students has increased, in part because of the added learning readiness and learning support services afforded by the 21st Century CLC programs provided by CIS and its community partners.

Over the years, thousands of Kalamazoo Public School students have told this community how important it is to extend their learning day. Our children have written letters to public officials and stakeholders, visited City Hall and shared with their

Mayor and City Commissioners the importance of extending the learning day through after school programming. They've made artwork, read essays, and held neighborhood marches to raise grown-ups' awareness about the need for after school and summer opportunities.

The CIS board has heard our children and is taking every action possible to advocate for continued funding of regular after school and summer programs through 21st Century Community Learning Centers. If you share this concern, you can speak up on behalf of the 100's of students who benefit from approximately 440 extra hours of learning support per year thanks to the funding provided by 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Our public officials (listed below) have an important job to consider these needs and the opinions of individuals who live in their communities. Help them understand what you think should happen.

Public Official Contact Information

Senator Gary Peters

www.peters.senate.gov

Senator Debbie Stabenow

(202) 224-4822 or www.stabenow.senate.gov

Congressman Fred Upton

(269) 385-0039 or www.upton.house.gov

Duo Helps Students Succeed Every Day



Tamiko Garrett, CIS Site Coordinator at Linden Grove Middle School

What happens when you bring a Knight and Giant together? You get the powerhouse team of CIS Site Coordinator Tamiko Garrett and CIS After School Coordinator Jenee McDaniel. These two graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools sat down with us to reflect on the work they do at Linden Grove Middle School to help students stay in school and achieve in life.

How do you two work together to provide cohesive, seamless support from daytime through after school to help students get and stay on track to graduation?

Tamiko: Jenee and I have open communication with each other. When we enroll students in CIS, we keep in mind whether the student would be best served with daytime or after school. It's always about what is the best fit for the student and their family.

Jenee: We're in constant communication, whether it's on the phone, touching base in the morning, during the day, after school. We often re-evaluate situations and are always open to making adjustments to services or resources we have in place. To do this work well, you have to think out of the box. We do that. If we need to meet on a Sunday night to make something happen, so be it.

What qualities do you admire in each other that help you work so well together?

Tamiko: Jenee and I are opposite in so many ways and that makes us a good team. We play to each other's strengths. Jenee is so genuine and I also admire her outspokenness. I observe, then choose my words.

What's the easiest part about working together?

Jenee: We both have a good understanding of what needs to be done. There's no competition between us. We can count on each other. I know that Tamiko's not just checking off the boxes to get something done. She really cares and is knowledgeable about her job. I respect that.

What's the most challenging aspect when it comes to collaborating?

Jenee: We're here to do what we're here to do. It helps that we collaborate on everything, from how we communicate, to our schedules, to how we're going to best serve these students. We have a process that works well in this school.

Tamiko: So when we get our enrollment list—kids strategic in attendance, behavior, or academics who could possibly benefit from CIS support to become proficient in one or more of these areas—we sit down with our Principal, Craig McCain and Ms. Mahannah of the Student Services team. They know these kids and their input is invaluable. After we've worked out a game plan, Jenee and I lead mini lunch & learns with the students. We explain CIS, the various resources,

and how that support looks in the day and after school. It's not just an adult- or parent- driven process: "you're going to do this!" but kids are involved from the beginning. Because they feel a sense of ownership from the start, they're more invested and stick with the program. Linden Grove Middle School makes it easy to collaborate, from Principal McCain, to the teachers and staff, to the school secretaries, Heather Morrison and Linda Farrell, and the custodian, Michael Watson.

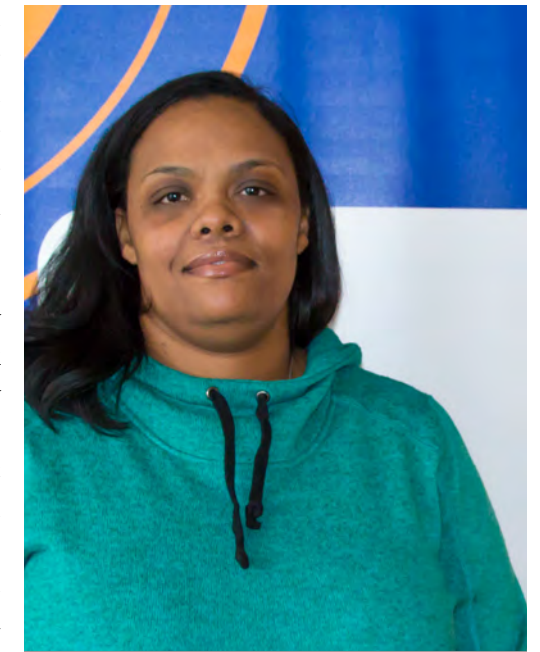
Jenee: The school has made us feel like we're a part of their team, so it's easy for us to be a team with each other and do our jobs. We both regularly check and monitor students' progress and grades. Students do better when they know someone is going to supply their needs and hold them accountable. For students to graduate, a lot of pieces must come together. First off, basic needs must be met. It's that whole Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Tamiko, in her role as Site Coordinator, provides a lot of that, tapping CIS Kids' Closet. It's the simplest things that can be a deal breaker and keep a student from graduating. It's cold out and they don't have a coat. They need a snack, a shirt, a feminine hygiene product. The students know they can come to CIS to get those things. They know that the community is providing this support, that somebody has their back and cares. They aren't a number because they know 'somebody is thinking about me.'

What has CIS at Linden Grove been doing to impact social emotional learning (SEL), one of six CIS program goals for the year?

Tamiko: Right now, we have Hospice doing an eight week grief and loss group. Hospice is an awesome partner. Usually, when you think of Hospice you think of someone dying, but there are many types of losses and Hospice helps our kids deal with them—separation of parents, divorce, witnessing the death of a loved one, or whatever form loss takes, period. Sometime, all our kids can think about is their loss. Cate, the therapist is helping them gain coping skills so they can focus on their academics.

Jenee: After school, we have a girls' group, "I Am Beautiful" as well as "Young Men Overcoming Barriers." We come up with a game plan, activities, and question starters for each of the groups. Say the activity is doing facials, then questions asked might be, What do people see in you? What do you see in yourself? Soon enough, someone asks if the group can talk about being two-faced and so friendships and other real issues like that get explored.

We help the kids do this in a safe forum. We've used movies and tv clips as well as correlating music with feelings. What's your family's song? If you had to write the soundtrack of your life, what would it be? What music makes you feel cute? The students connect with these approaches so it allows for conversations and reflections around a whole range of topics: non-traditional family situations, dating situations, who is your safe person to talk to, race, and cultural acceptance. Each day, we have a plan and an idea of what we want to accomplish and the kids roll it in a new direction and take it elsewhere. It's real cool and that's how it should be.



Jenee McDaniel, CIS After School Coordinator at Linden Grove Middle School.

TWO Shining Stars: Diamond and Dominique Mahone

CIS is a wonderful program. My kids have been with it for years and they just love the one-on-one interaction that they receive. As a full-time working mother, CIS has been a godsend and had such tremendous impact on my kids. They have been taught major leadership skills, learned how to communicate with adults, and built relationships—all skills that they can take with them and help them thrive when they become young adults. Along with what they are being taught at home, I believe CIS keeps them grounded and on the right track—not leaving any room for an idle mind, which can lead to trouble. I just love this program. Go CIS!

—Andrea Mahone, mother of Diamond and Dominique



Dominique (left) and Diamond (right) are fifth graders at King-Westwood Elementary School.

Earlier in the year, we had a chance to sit down with Diamond and Dominique Mahone, fifth graders at King-Westwood Elementary School. These twins, once struggling with attendance, have overcome barriers and transformed into the shining stars they are meant to be. Their grades have soared thanks to their own hard work and the combined efforts of great teachers, CIS and the array of coordinated supports they receive through the community, and their loving family.

“The Mahones really value their time together as a family,” says the twins’ CIS Site Coordinator Laura Keiser. “It takes parents working with us to help kids get the most out of opportunities we offer. Their mom does whatever it takes...whether it’s filling out the necessary paperwork or taking the whole family to enjoy time together at a K-Wings game [thanks to anonymous donors for providing tickets to CIS students and families].

She embraces all we offer because she knows these resources and experiences will help her children be successful in school.” As a result, the twins “attendance is awesome this year, their behavior is focused and they are learning like never before.”

The twins each find that different aspects of CIS have helped improve their academics, behavior, and attendance. For Diamond, it’s “school supplies and clothes and my tutor, Ms. Rosalie. I’ve been working with her since third grade. She helps me with my math and she motivates me to come to school.” Diamond is also looking forward to being matched with an in-school mentor as part of the Bigs in School program of Big Brothers Big Sisters, A Community of Caring. [At the time of this interview, she had just been matched with Cassandra and was looking forward to their time together.]

“At CIS, we’re the tools,” explains Laura. “Diamond is the handy person who uses the tools. Last year she came to me

and said, ‘I need to work with Ms. Rosalie again.’ She knew what tool she needed. She took the necessary paperwork and returned it the next day, signed. Diamond gives up her lunch and recess two days a week to work on academics with her tutor. This kid is going places. She’s quiet but determined.”

Dominique is going places too, just in a more boisterous manner. “He’s quite gregarious,” says Laura. “He’s very social and outgoing. What I really appreciate about him is that, like his sister, he perseveres and goes after what he wants. I don’t want to say he nags me but he’s good at reminding. Just today he wanted to know about his Bigs in School mentor, ‘Is everything set up with my Big Sister Jasmine?’ he asked.

Of the tools that help Dominique, CIS Volunteer Mr. Early tops his list. “He helps me in lots of math stuff. He’s really helped me with angles. And point symmetry. That’s when you just turn a shape upside down and it looks the same. I learned that with Mr. Early.” Other resources he appreciates and says have helped him be “the smart and funny kid I am today” include shoes [in partnership with First Day Shoe Fund], Friday Food packs [in partnership with Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes], Literacy Buddies [in partnership with State Farm], and CIS Think Summer.

When it comes to improving attendance, the twins agree: the attendance club has helped. Dominique explains. “You get a folder and you color in days that you’re in school and you can get prizes from the CIS office. Ms. Emily [WMU School of Social Work intern] helps us stay on track. She helps me and other students with our attendance and always asks if we need anything.”

The twins also agree that King Westwood Elementary School is a great place to learn and grow. Because of the support they receive, Diamond and Dominique are empowered to be their true, shining selves.

Want to know who some of their dedicated teachers are or what colleges the twins plan to attend? Their favorite school subjects? To learn more, hop over to the CIS blog, Ask Me About My 12,000 Kids, and check out their answers to the pop quiz we gave them.

All of the great work you’ve been reading about is made possible by people like you who volunteer with or donate to CIS.

Make a gift to CIS today.

Doubling Down to Make a Difference

Congratulations to CIS volunteer Mary Aldrich who, along with her husband, Scott, has recently been awarded the prestigious Andrus Award for Community Service. Given annually, this award is named for AARP founder Ethel Percy Andrus. Mary has volunteered with CIS for the past four years as a Senior Services RSVP member. In addition to her fine volunteer work at Spring Valley Center for Exploration, she and her husband are involved in many other volunteer efforts throughout the community. They've clearly doubled up to extend their reach and make a difference in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and elsewhere.

"Mary has become a part of the Spring Valley family," notes Spring Valley's CIS Site Coordinator Martha Serio. "She not only tutors our students, but she is there for them when they need a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear."

KPS Teacher Jaimie Hall says that "Ms. Mary has not only improved students' confidence in themselves, but in their learning as well. She has worked with students in both math and reading. Many students have shown an improvement in their reading and math abilities after receiving one-on-one time with her. Ms. Mary is very thorough; she does her "homework" and comes in each week with new ideas and tools to help kids learn to the best of their ability...Ms. Mary is amazing. I am grateful for her each and every day, and I know that my students are as well."

You can change the life of a young person by volunteering. To find out more, go to our website, www.ciskalamazoo.org.



Mary Aldrich with students from Spring Valley Center for Exploration.

Photo by Kathleen Kelleher of Senior Services of Kalamazoo

David Hamilton: Doing Double Duty

David Hamilton is studying health administration at Western Michigan University and, along with his twin brother, Daniel, will graduate this Spring. As an AmeriCorps VISTA member with Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo at Kalamazoo Central High School and Washington Writers Academy, David is focused on promoting a college-going culture.

At Kalamazoo Central, David has also been working on improving attendance among ninth graders who are chronically absent. He says, "The school and CIS work together to remove barriers to attendance. We've named the program 'All Giants Present.'" David has been researching what works and says that "while there may be many root issues, it comes down to accountability and community support."

One of the strategies he's implementing is incentive cards. "They are more like 'we miss you' cards and they are signed by other students. Geared towards accountability, these cards let the absent student know their absence is noticed and that they are missed."



David Hamilton (right) with his twin brother, Daniel, as children. Now as an adult, David is an AmeriCorps VISTA member with CIS.

If you believe in our efforts to ensure that ALL kids stay in school and achieve in life, please visit 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.

The work of Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo is supported by the Kalamazoo Public Schools, the City of Kalamazoo, the Michigan Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers), local foundations, and individual donors like you.

Photos in this newsletter were taken by 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 Wilson (CIS Marketing & Community Engagement Manager) at jwilson@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.



Double Issue

“The CIS After School Program helps us stay away from drugs and off the streets. The staff help us with our homework and any issues we struggle with. The staff will do anything to make sure we are respectful, responsible, and safe so we can grow up to be anything we want to be and treated equally. This helps us so we can do the same for others who need help and think they can’t find it.”

—Kalamazoo Public School student participant in CIS After School Program