

## A site coordinator is...

A site coordinator is, in the words of one CIS board member, the “secret sauce” in what we do. Warriors for change, site coordinators see the challenges our kids face and offer up new possibilities.

### Site coordinators are...

Bridge builders ... connecting children to the right resources and caring adults, to assure students are on the right road to succeed in school and life.



Communities  
In Schools

Kalamazoo

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER



Excavators ... moving mountains by working alongside other CIS staff, volunteers, school and community partners to remove barriers—one at a time—that stand in the way of building the most important foundation for a healthy community...our children.

Enfolders ... helping us lovingly wrap our collective arms around our children.

Influencers ... inviting caring adults to inspire kids to become the people they are meant to be.

Navigators ... mapping courses to success, these route-seekers and direction-finders guide the community's work within the schools, clearing a path for kids to reach their promise.

Site coordinators embody the spirit of collaboration, showing us what we can accomplish when we work together.

(Continue inside to see how our site coordinators are collaborating during these unprecedented times.)



## News and CIS of Kalamazoo Updates

- Teacher Appreciation Week is the first week of May. We are so grateful for all the teachers we work with at Kalamazoo Public Schools.
- 2021 Annual Champs Celebration - May 12th at 5PM. Visit: [www.ciskalamazoo.org/champs](http://www.ciskalamazoo.org/champs) to RSVP today!
- Thank you to Maestro who is designing and building out our new website! Be sure to check it out this June.

*Looking forward, our next issue will feature graduation season and celebrating the class of 2021.*

# Student spotlights



## Alonzo Jones

2nd grader – Parkwood Upjohn Elementary School

What is your favorite part of school?

Math, picture day, lunch, and recess.

How has CIS helped you?

I get help with my homework every week. I also go to Panther Prime Time with other CIS students on Monday mornings to get ready for my school week. [Panther Prime Time is a virtual small group gathering coordinated by CIS site coordinator, Angel Van Heest.]

Describe your site coordinator in one word.

Happy!



## Candis Lopez

5th grader – El Sol Elementary School

What is your favorite part of school?

I look forward to going to small group, it makes me happy to see my friends and teacher.

Because of CIS, I am ... and why?

I am growing! I am learning new things about myself and my interests.

Describe your site coordinator, Ms. Perla M. Medina Cano, in one word.

Kind, and she helps us a lot with school supplies.

## Your generosity empowers students to succeed

CIS site coordinators are the bridge between your generosity and student success. Site coordinators work with students to help them see, confront, and overcome the barriers that stand between them and a brighter future.

## Did you know?

Gifts to CIS for student supports are automatically doubled? Each school in which we work not only has voluntarily invited CIS to be there, they also match 50 percent of the cost.

## Support CIS site coordinators – and student success

Your gift to CIS will support the work of site coordinators in 20 Kalamazoo schools, connecting with nearly 12,000 students each year. A gift of \$600 will cover a week of support for students at one school. A gift of \$125 will cover a full day. Give today to support site coordinators' work – and help students see their potential in school and beyond.



# A message from our executive director

"A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult" is one of the Five Basics of Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS). At CIS, site coordinators are the caring adults at the forefront of our work who understand that real relationships with students are built on trust.

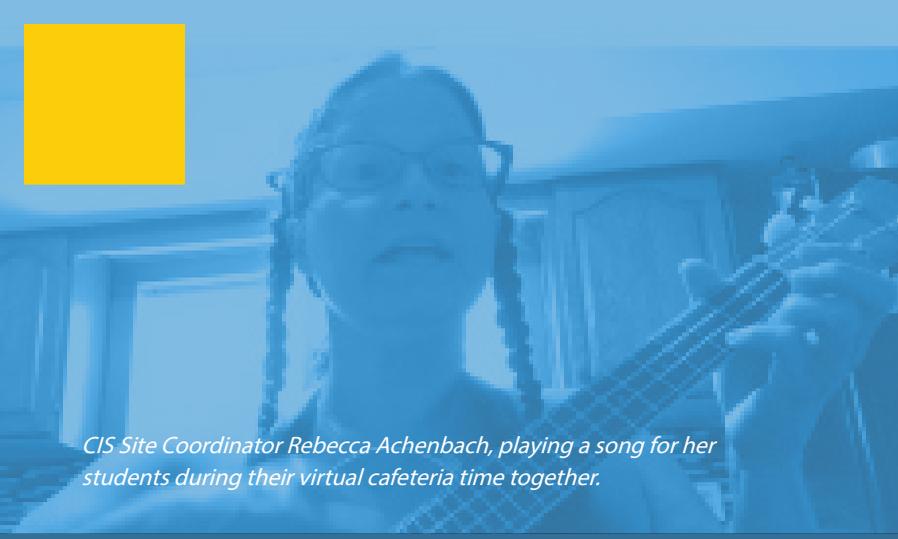
CIS site coordinators don't simply ask to be trusted, they strive to be trustworthy. Site coordinators demonstrate their trustworthiness to students by showing up every day, creating safe spaces, aligning impactful services to expressed needs, displaying understanding and grace, listening to their students dreams and concerns, and advocating for and supporting their academic, physical, mental, social and emotional well-being.

CIS site coordinators' trustworthiness is evidenced by their creativity and tenacity to focus on what they can do, instead of what they cannot do. They say ... "If you can't stop by my office to pick up school supplies or food packs, I'll drop them off on your porch." "If your volunteer tutor can't come to your classroom, then I'll arrange for them to join your remote learning session." "If your counselor's office is closed, then I'll arrange teletherapy sessions for you."

Our students are overcoming barriers this year because our site coordinators overcame barriers to make sure they could be there for students. Trustworthiness shown in times like these yields trust that is genuine, lasting, and impactful. As Bill Milliken said, "Programs don't change people, relationships do."

James Devers, Executive Director





*CIS Site Coordinator Rebecca Achenbach, playing a song for her students during their virtual cafeteria time together.*



*CIS Site Coordinator Cameron Massimino delivering basic essentials to students.*



*CIS Site Coordinator Samantha Darby reading to students during KPS literacy night.*



# Working Together for Kids

We are all in this together, site coordinators will tell you. This pandemic has reminded us how connecting means just as much for children and their families as it does for all of us.

Here, two of them share their thoughts: CIS Site Coordinator for Linden Grove, Rebecca Hayward-Achenbach and CIS Site Coordinator for Woodward School for Technology & Research, Jen DeWaele.

How, during this pandemic, are you working with other site coordinators to provide student support?

Rebecca: Communication has been key. In the past we only had the opportunity to work with the students in our building, but now I feel that we work with the child as a family unit.

It has also been important to connect as we support other needs for the family like food, chromebooks, hot spots, clothing, winter gear, etc ... This way it eliminates numerous contacts. It has been wonderful to coordinate so that only one coordinator can take what is needed to the family. Another key component is that working with the other site coordinators in other schools allows children and families to see that there are

several positive adults looking out for their best interests, and this gives students a sense that there are several caring adults involved in their life.

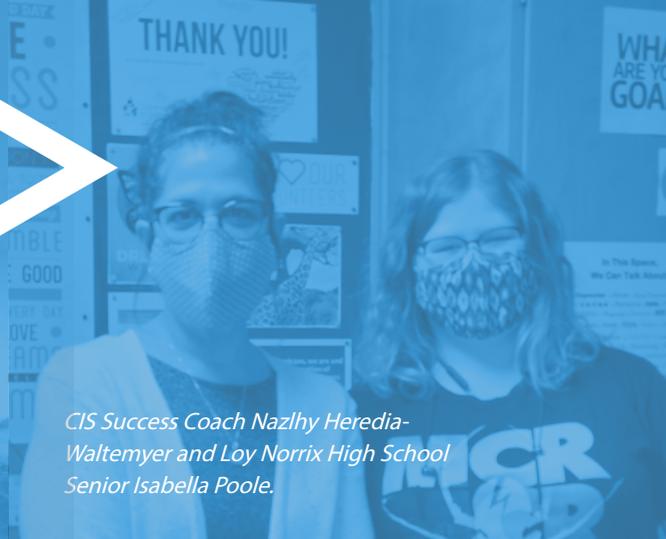
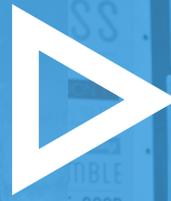
Jen: Site coordinators have worked together in depth to make sure that each coordinator knew of other siblings to their caseload students in other schools to strengthen the CIS relationship between elementary, middle, and high school. Many times this year, CIS site coordinators were the bridge for families who had not attended the school before the pandemic, and were now having to navigate new waters without any familiar faces. I worked to support new sixth graders from Woodward so that they could connect with their middle school CIS worker, and we could continue to surround the family with support.

What is one quality you admire in others that helps you work well together?

Rebecca: I love the empathy and compassion of my co-workers. This way of being allows us to do our best work for the children and families in our community.



*CIS Site Coordinator Jen DeWaele.*



*CIS Success Coach Nazlhy Heredia-Waltemyer and Loy Norrix High School Senior Isabella Poole.*



*CIS Site Coordinator Frederick Daniel supporting a food distribution site.*

Jen: Oh my goodness—communication and follow-up! When site coordinators are able to go the extra mile and make personal deliveries, bring a smile, and consistently do it every week, that puts the family and the student so much at ease, and goes a long way to supporting their academics. This has been a scary time for all of us. We are all in need of that consistent support from each other!

What's the most surprising aspects you've discovered when it comes to collaborating during these challenging times?

Rebecca: It allows us to see into students' lives in a very deep way. I can truly see that the students who had barriers before the pandemic are affected the most, and the role that school played in their lives is more important than I could have imagined.

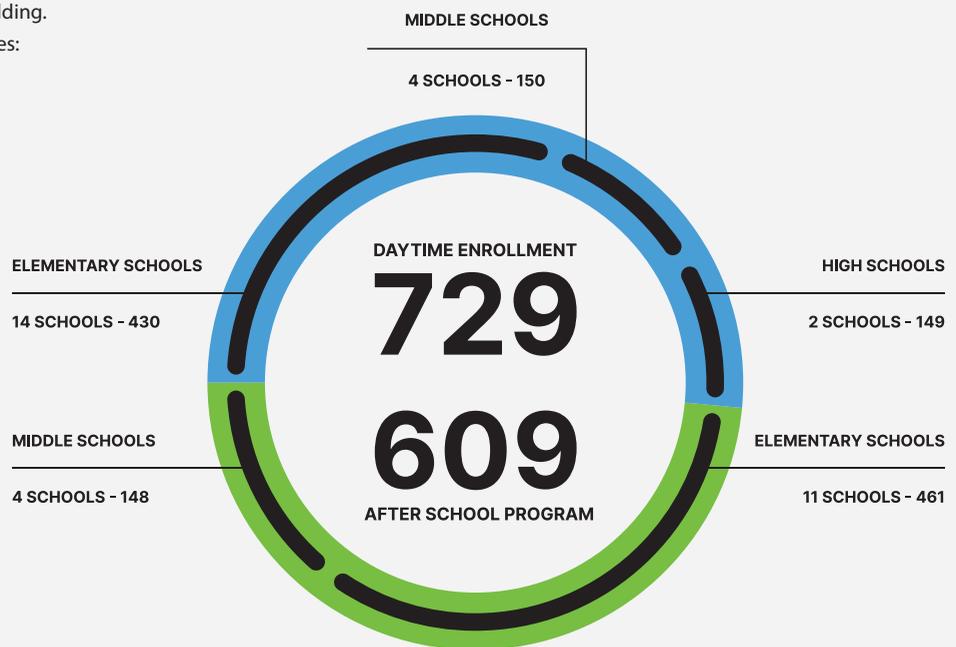
Jen: Right away when we started delivering food pantry items to families, I saw that having the food was helpful, but immediately saw in parents and children—and in myself—that having the day-to-day connection with each other that we had in school was the most important. As the world was falling apart around us by the hour, and things were changing all the time, to have that regular, weekly connection, where we could check in with each other, and remind ourselves of our connections to each other, to renew our community with each other, was the most important.



# CIS has connected over **1,300 KPS students** to sustained supports and services.

During virtual programming, CIS continued to offer supports and services beyond the school building. The supports and services cover ten categories:

- academic assistance
- basic (essential) needs
- behavioral interventions/modifications
- base management
- college and career preparation
- enrichment and motivation
- family engagement
- physical health
- professional mental health



## Primary categories of supports offered are

Academic Assistance

1,650

Hours

Kids' Closet

1,821

Items

Food Distribution

325

Occurrences\*

Case Management

1,300

Students

Social Support

611

Occurrences

Source: Data compiled from September 2020 – January 2021

\*Occurrences represents delivery of a food pack. The food pack could consist of food for multiple days and/or multiple families.



# Partner spotlight

First Day Shoe Fund

First Day Shoe Fund believes that all children should start school on equal footing. CIS is proud to have partnered with FDSF since its beginnings to help identify children in need of shoes and to create the infrastructure needed to get the shoes onto little feet.

“First Day Shoe Fund always works closely with CIS to make sure every student who needs shoes can get a pair, no matter the hurdles,” says CIS Partner Services Coordinator John Brandon. “That was no different this year, with FDSF pulling out all the stops to connect with students, in spite of the distribution challenges we faced due to students not physically being present in school, by adding many avenues and opportunities for distribution of shoes and collaborating with our staff to expand the window of time in which families could request them.”

The nonprofit’s Executive Director Andrea Macklin who has been at the helm of FDSF since February 2019 says, “There were a lot of unknowns heading into our 2020 season, especially with students in virtual learning. Our normal model is based on in-school distribution, so we knew it would be a struggle to reach the hundreds of KPS students we plan to serve each year. CIS coordinators at each site were indispensable. They tracked down families and students to inform them of our community-wide distribution in September, volunteered during the weekend event, and even followed up with special orders for students who couldn’t attend in person. Our entire community stepped up to help kids in 2020, but CIS staff went above and beyond to ensure their students had shoes that fit.”

Photos were provided by FDSF and taken during their drive-through event this year.



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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.

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 donors like you.

Photos in this newsletter were taken by contributing CIS staff, unless otherwise noted.

