



Communities  
In Schools®

Kalamazoo



CIS NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2024

## The Promise of a New Year

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The promise of a new year brings hope and excitement for many; some may consider it a fresh start, or a time to set new goals. Goal setting is in our DNA here at CIS of Kalamazoo.

As a part of our unique model, we set goals with students, work with different partners or services to support these goals, monitor (or adjust), and evaluate. Then, continue the process again. The difference between a New Year’s goal and goal setting through our model of support is that one tends to be individualized and without support. While, through our support, students are setting goals as part of a team. They have an additional caring adult in their life, guiding them, and supporting their goals.

“I want to turn in all my work and pass the 10th grade,” states Kiana Gill, a student at Loy Norrix High School, reflecting on her goal for the year. Kiana first got to know CIS in the CIS after-school program at Woodward School and Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts.

In high school, Kiana participates in a program called TRAILS, which stands for Transforming Research Into Action to Improve the Lives of Students, and is a group designed to work with students to help regulate anxiety by using mindfulness and relaxation techniques. CIS Site Coordinator Whitney Roden and KPS Guidance Counselor Melinda Long lead the program at Loy Norrix High School.

When Kiana’s grades started slipping, her mom, a strong advocate for her daughter, reached out to our team for additional support. That is when Kiana met with CIS Site Coordinator Whitney Roden to set personal academic goals for the year and continue to meet regularly to check her progress. To help support Kiana’s grades, she meets with a CIS math tutor every Monday after school. “Kiana is a bright young lady. She is committed to staying after school with Matt Cavalli each Monday.

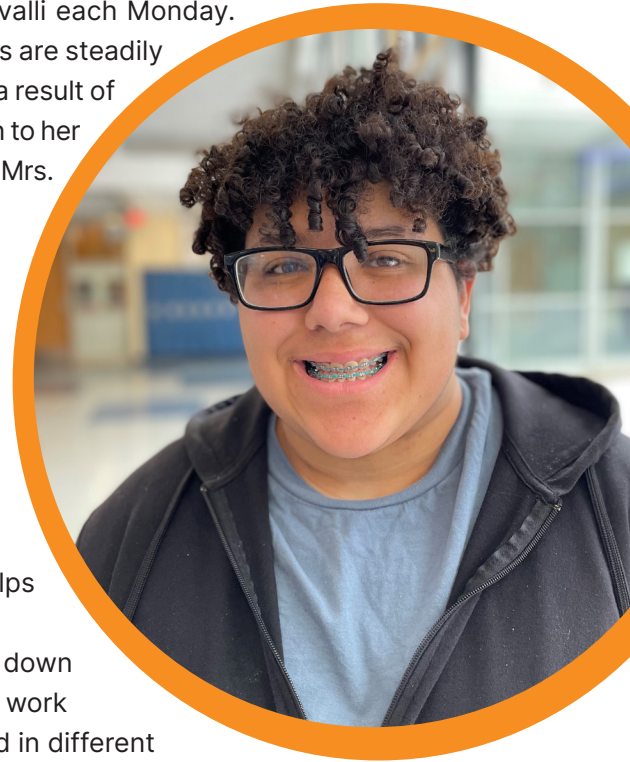
Kiana’s grades are steadily improving as a result of her dedication to her studies,” says Mrs. Roden.

After many coordinated tutor sessions, Kiana says, “Mr. Cavalli [CIS math tutor volunteer] helps by explaining and breaking down my geometry work into steps and in different

ways. It’s nice because he slows down the process a little bit to show how to get the answers. I understand it so much better with his help.”

Kiana’s teachers are also big supporters of her academic success. When asked if there are any other members on Kiana’s team, she quickly responded that Mrs. Bergh and Mr. Porco help inspire her to come to school every day. According to Kiana, Mr. Porco has a fun energy and great vibe that encourages her to come to class and Mrs. Bergh teaches one of Kiana’s favorite classes, choir.

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## CIS News and Updates

- The 2023 Ugly Sweater Party was a success! Thank you to those who supported by joining our party or making a financial donation! The fundraiser raised over \$16,000 to support our work.
- Save the date for the 17th Annual Champs Celebration: Thursday, April 25th at the Radisson Plaza Hotel. More information is forthcoming.
- Join us on Saturday, June 22nd at Arcadia Creek Festival Place for our 20th anniversary reunion picnic. All CIS of Kalamazoo friends and family are welcome!

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# The Promise of a New Year (continued)

"I am getting better grades!" Kiana states, "Seeing my higher GPA was one of those moments that showed me that I can do it!" Kiana believes that receiving support from a tutor has been incredibly helpful in raising her grades. However, she knows that it isn't the only reason. "I stay after school to give me time to focus on my homework and studying. I go to sleep early. I work on staying healthy and not missing school."

Setting academic goals and establishing plans are two of the many ways CIS coordinators are supporting students. But it is up to the student, like Kiana, to take that first step. In Dr. King's quote, he advised us to start the journey toward our goal even if we cannot see the complete path.



CIS Site Coordinator Whitni Roden and Kiana in the CIS Loy Norrix High School office.

Kiana took the first step in her academic goal by building her team that will empower her through the many future steps up the staircase.

## CIS National Leadership Welcomed to Kalamazoo

This fall, we were thrilled to welcome guests from our Communities In Schools national office, Rey Saldaña, the President and CEO, and Charles Thompson, III the Chief External Engagement Officer.

CIS of Kalamazoo is one of over 114 affiliates across the nation that share the common goal of surrounding students with a community of support. Communities In Schools, Inc. is the nation's largest and most effective organization in addressing the student dropout crisis.

During their visit, we met with the Kalamazoo Public Schools principals and CIS of Kalamazoo team members at Lincoln International Studies School, Hillside Middle School, and Loy Norrix High School. It was a great opportunity to share with national leadership the impact our team is making in Kalamazoo schools. These schools were selected because they demonstrate the diversity of supports that CIS provides with respect to grade levels, programs, and student demographics.

Thank you, CIS Site Coordinator Joseph Burrell, CIS After-School Coordinator Keneisha Darden, Principal Dionna

Roberts, CIS Site Coordinator Jody Sikkema, CIS Site Coordinator Jalen Mitchell, CIS After-School Coordinator Morgan Mallard, Principal Atiba McKissack, CIS Site Coordinator Whitney Roden, CIS Success Coach Nazlhy Heredia-Waltemyer, and Principal Christopher Aguinaga, for opening your doors and welcoming our guests.



# Keeping Kids

## Warm

Michigan winters can be extremely brutal, with high winds, dropping temperatures, and sloppy sidewalks. That is why a warm coat and winter boots are essential items for children in Kalamazoo. For 37 years, the Warm Kids Project has been supporting many Kalamazoo County schools, preschools, and agencies by providing winter clothing for thousands of children that need them.

The Warm Kids Project has been an instrumental partner to our CIS Kids' Closet to distribute new winter coats and boots directly to kids in Kalamazoo Public Schools buildings. In its current framework, our site teams identify students who will receive clothing, measure the kids, contact the parents, process the order forms, and distribute the clothing.

We are excited to announce that we have been selected to assume operations of the project and our staff will maintain the legacy of the Warm Kids Project. This past January, we hosted leaders from the Warm Kids Project for a transition celebration.

CIS Executive Director James Devers stated, "CIS is committed to honoring the legacy of the Warm Kids Project's founders and supporters by continuing to serve the other currently supported schools and organizations in our community." In addition to the school buildings with CIS site coordinator presence, the additional 8 school districts, KRESA, and County Agencies already supported by the program will continue to be served through CIS of Kalamazoo.

"CIS is honored to continue the nearly 40-year tradition established by the Warm Kids Project, says CIS Basic Needs Coordinator Sara Ware, "I'm excited to expand our reach of meeting students' needs county-wide. I'm grateful to Leslie Lami-Reed and the Warm Kids board for their dedication to our area's schoolchildren. Now, more than ever, local families need these resources."



Leslie Lami-Reed and James Devers



Artrella Cohn, Kim Nemire, Linnaea Thomas, Cathy Finger, Leslie Lami-Reed, Bill Reed, Sara Ware, James Devers, and Dr. Candy McCorkle.



Leslie Lami-Reed, Bill Reed, and James Devers

## Planning for a Bright Future:

Plan now and leave a lasting legacy that will impact future generations of students.

Amid the celebrations of and reflections on our first twenty years in Kalamazoo, we must also look forward. Our vision for the future is an engaged community where every child fulfills their promise. If you share this vision, please consider CIS in **your** plans.

A meaningful way to impact the future is to plan now for support when you are gone. You can leave a lasting legacy and make a difference for future generations by including Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo in your will or trust. By doing so, you will make a positive difference for kids in Kalamazoo well beyond your lifetime.

These first twenty years were made possible by our community of support, and likewise our community will propel us into the future.

Be a part of a bright future for students by including CIS in your will or trust. Many future generations of students will be empowered to stay in school and achieve in life thanks to your generosity. Thank you!

Do you already have CIS included in your will or trust? Please let us know!

Contact Kim Nemire at [knemire@cislalamazoo.org](mailto:knemire@cislalamazoo.org).

# Student Spotlight



**Mariska**, 5th grader at Washington Writers' Academy

**What is your favorite part of school?** Math, because some of the questions are easy but some are hard.

**How has CIS helped you?** Practice reading, and class work. Plus, I like the snacks and playing games with her.

**How would you describe your site coordinator in one word?** Kind.



**Elija**, 8th grader at Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math, Science, and Technology

**What is your favorite part of school?** Art, because I am creative.

**How has CIS helped you?** They have helped me with my homework. I also meet more students at our school during the after-school program.

**How would you describe your after-school site coordinator in one word?** Funny.

## Thank you to the KPS Math Teachers for Embracing the High School Algebra I Push In Tutor Program!

Success in algebra has been identified as a critical component for students seeking careers in STEM fields. The CIS Push-In-Tutor Program is an effort to increase academic supports in this subject. This program places paid tutors into the 9th grade Algebra I classrooms to aid students during instructional time. These tutors work with students in small groups or through individualized support. Eight Kalamazoo Public Schools classroom teachers from Kalamazoo Central High School and Loy Norrix High School welcome and partner with our KPS trained tutors to ensure they understand the classroom daily lesson plan and help identify students who need additional math support.

With the school year halfway over, we reached out to the math teachers involved to gauge their opinion of the program with a brief survey. Here are some of the results:

**50%**

of the teachers responded to the survey.

**100%**

responded "yes" when asked if the additional support was useful as a teacher.

**100%**

responded "yes" when asked if the teachers noticed an improvement in student performance since the tutoring support began.

We are thrilled to receive the positive reception and look forward to continuing the program. Thank you to the amazing partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools, and the wonderful math teachers for supporting the Push-In Tutor Program.

# Mid-Year Impact Statement

## (2023-2024 School Year, thru December 2023)

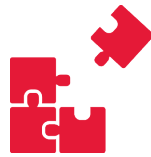
CIS works to improve outcomes for students who have challenges with academics, attendance, behavior, and/or SEL (social emotional learning) so that they can succeed in school, graduate, and be prepared for life.

### Case Managed Support (daytime)



**21,762** hours supporting students by CIS site coordinators, volunteers, and partners

15,840 CIS site coordinators  
4,994 Volunteers  
928 Partners



**923** case-managed students  
505 Elementary (15 buildings)  
418 Secondary (7 buildings)



**356** students receive sustained academic and social and emotional learning support in our after-school program.

**91%**

of caseload students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

We connect students to caring adults and community resources that help them overcome the barriers that stand between them and a bright future. By embedding site coordinators in 22 Kalamazoo school buildings, we establish a multi-tier model of support to help empower students to stay in school and achieve in life.

**326** CIS volunteers supported students, providing over 4,994 hours of support.

**15** students received vision support from the CIS Vision Fund in the form of a visit to the eye doctor, and/or glasses purchased.

**1,531** mental health sessions were received by students.

**4,227** food packs have been distributed to elementary students.

**11,039** items from CIS Kids' Closet were distributed to students.

**8,712** visits made to 11 food pantries supported students and their families.

- CIS AFFILIATES
- SITE COORDINATORS
- COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS



## Our Unique Model

- INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS**
- Academic Assistance
  - Basic Needs
  - Behavioral Intervention
  - College and Career Prep
  - Community and Service Learning
  - Enrichment
  - Family Engagement
  - Life Skills
  - Mental Health
  - Physical Health





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**VOLUNTEER:** Change a child's life, and yours as well!



**DONATE:** Invest in the future of our community. \$1,500 supports a student for a year.

## From our executive director

New beginnings are often associated with a new calendar year. But the beautiful thing about new beginnings is that we are not limited to one. Each month, week, day, minute, and second also provide the opportunity for new beginnings. Although these don't usually come with the same fanfare, they are all quite significant.

That significance has deep meaning at Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS). When students enter our site coordinators' offices—no matter what needs or circumstances may have brought them there—CIS is there to help support and pave the way for new beginnings. It could look like a fresh start for the day when greeted by the familiar face of a site coordinator. It could be a quiet space during lunch to calm the anxiety of the morning, while creating new optimism for the afternoon. It could look like connecting with a math tutor to make sure this trimester is the first step toward newfound academic success.

Thank you for helping CIS cultivate the conditions for new beginnings for our students as we work to support and empower them to stay in school and achieve in life. Many of you have been here for us since our beginning and we appreciate all that you do to keep our work moving forward.

James Devers, Executive Director

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.