



From our Chief Executive Officer

Backward Design is a concept that promotes designing curriculum “with the end in mind.” In like manner, Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS) was designed with graduation as the end in mind. CIS-supported students have taken a variety of paths on their journeys, but they all had the same destination as their goal – graduating with the class of 2026.

Some chose the highway because they wanted to take the fastest route possible. CIS was there to help by connecting students to volunteer tutors and as a thought partner as they mapped out their college or career pathways.

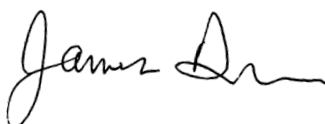
Others took the scenic route because they prioritized seeing and experiencing all of life’s possibilities on their journey. CIS was there to help those students by offering enrichment opportunities and supporting their participation in extracurricular activities.

Some students had a specific route in mind, but then encountered detours or obstacles along the way. Most detours were minor inconveniences like a single blocked lane. Yes, they slowed down, or stopped intermittently, but there was assurance that they would move forward.

CIS was there to help by providing essential needs (food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene items) or offering a word of encouragement to students needing a reset.

Other detours were catastrophic events like an impassable bridge or vehicle mechanical issues. CIS was there to help by providing individual therapy or connecting students to community resources to meet the depth and breadth of their physical or emotional needs.

Thank you to our many donors, volunteers, partners and staff for your contributions to making sure our students reached their goal of graduating this year—the ending we had in mind from the beginning.



James Devers
Chief Executive Officer



CIS News and Updates

WALKING WITH PURPOSE

Join us this October! Learn more about how to set up your own walking team.
<https://ciskalamazoo.org/events/walking-with-purpose/>

THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR STARTS!

August 31st is the beginning of the new school year! We are looking for volunteers to join us next school year.

UGLY SWEATER PARTY

December 10, 2026.
The date is set for this year’s ugly sweater party fundraiser.
Save the date today!

Sign up for our e-newsletter!



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Meet Our 2026 Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo Graduates

We're proud to celebrate each student who has reached the graduation finish line. Our role is to walk with students from elementary through middle and high school—providing consistent support so they can graduate and be ready for what's next. Below, you'll find a brief highlight from some of the CIS graduating students. They are sharing a little about themselves and what they're looking forward to after graduating.

Question 1: How would you describe yourself in one word?

Question 2: When you think of CIS, what comes to mind?

Question 3: What are your plans after graduation?



Ace, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Vivacious. **Q2:** I think of how much they have helped me through high school. **Q3:** I plan to go to KVCC and study to be a baking and pastry chef.

Alice, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Friendly. **Q2:** I think that they help students. **Q3:** I plan to go to KVCC.



Amari, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Determined. **Q2:** I think of a support team. **Q3:** I plan to work on getting an apartment.

Angel, Phoenix High School

Q1: Kind. **Q2:** I think of a group of people who are willing to help at anytime, who will listen, and who will understand. **Q3:** I plan go to KVCC for my associates degree.



Aracely, Loy Norrix High School

Q2: I think of the connections and help that they provide. **Q3:** I plan to attend KVCC for computer science.

Daijon, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Kind. **Q2:** I think they are very helpful and reliable. **Q3:** I plan to attend KVCC then transfer to a university.

Damari, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Tall. **Q2:** I think they are fun. **Q3:** I have basketball commitment plans.

David J., Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Genuine. **Q2:** I think of opportunities. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.

David W., Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Laid back. **Q2:** I think of a program that helps you become a difference maker. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.



Dequarius, Phoenix High School

Q1: Good vibes. **Q2:** I think about their help with my school work. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.

Eddie, Phoenix High School

Q1: Adventurous. **Q2:** I think they are great and helpful. **Q3:** I plan to find an apprenticeship.



Espoir, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Tenacious. **Q2:** I think it's a good thing that helped me with a lot of things. **Q3:** I plan to attend college and work.

Izabella, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Kind. **Q2:** I think of all the opportunities that I was able to experience. **Q3:** I plan to attend Ferris State University.

Ja'Vaeh, Phoenix High School

Q1: Resilient. **Q2:** I think of how a doctor helps with sickness, that CIS helps with tutoring and all the other things. **Q3:** I plan to attend a two-year college then transfer to a university.

Jacob, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Clutch. **Q2:** I think of support. **Q3:** I plan to play college basketball.

Joana, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Magnificent. **Q2:** I think of a place where you go when you feel lost and in need of someone to listen to you. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.

Judas, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Unique. **Q2:** I think of all the good times and places that we went. **Q3:** I plan to get a job.

Ka'Niya, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Versatile. **Q2:** I think of adults who help children who are in need. **Q3:** I plan to first work on getting a car, attend Wayne State University for nursing and minor in dance. I want to be able to find myself more and do things that make me happy. I would also start back doing hair to make some money on the side.

Kenya, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Fantastic. **Q2:** I think that it's a comfortable club that helps me relax from school every so often. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.

Khamyra, Phoenix High School

Q1: Outstanding. **Q2:** I think that they are helpful. **Q3:** I plan to go to college.

Krysty'Anna, Phoenix High School

Q1: Shy. **Q2:** I think that they are helpful. **Q3:** I plan to go to KVCC to become a medical assistant.

Nour, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Kind. **Q2:** I think of Ms. Naz and how she has helped me get through the year, making meetings, and reaching out to talk to me and help me out. **Q3:** I plan to attend a community college and get a job.

Nolvia, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Intelligent. **Q2:** I think of communication and support. **Q3:** I plan to work on pursuing my dreams.

Ramiah, Phoenix High School

Q1: Perfect. **Q2:** I think of help. **Q3:** I plan to go to KVCC or get a job.

Rose, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Smart. **Q2:** I think of them helping me improve in my academics and making more friends. **Q3:** I plan to go to college, military national guard, and keep my hair business running.

Samuela, Kalamazoo Central High School

Q1: Ambitious. **Q2:** I think of the support system that helped me stay on track and gave me opportunities. **Q3:** I plan to attend Western Michigan University and study accounting.

Selecia, Phoenix High School

Q1: Bright. **Q2:** I think that it is an understanding program. **Q3:** I plan to go to cosmetology school and become a nail technician.

Se'Maj, Phoenix High School

Q1: Cool. **Q2:** I think of it as a work place. **Q3:** I plan to earn money and leave Kalamazoo.

Ulises, Phoenix High School

Q1: Sleep. **Q2:** I think of helping. **Q3:** I plan to earn money.

Uriel, Loy Norrix High School

Q1: Bilingual. **Q2:** I think of opportunity, support, and people who truly care about students' success. **Q3:** I plan to attend KVCC for two years and then transfer to Western Michigan University to pursue a career in Civil Engineering.

Celebrations Surround the CIS Team

As we celebrate graduation season, we are proud to shine a light not only on the students we serve, but also on our own team members who have reached important educational milestones this spring. Across our organization, colleagues have demonstrated incredible dedication and perseverance by completing degrees and credentials ranging from GEDs and associate degrees to bachelor's and master's programs. These achievements reflect countless hours of hard work, determination, and a shared commitment to personal and professional growth.



Morgan Jones



Laurin Mathis

Please join us in congratulating our staff members who crossed the graduation stage this spring:

Kennedy Arseneau, earned a master's degree from Western Michigan University

Angel Forestieri, earned a bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University

Morgan Jones, earned a master's degree from Western Michigan University

Laurin Mathis, earned an associate's degree from Kalamazoo Valley Community College

Josh Smith, earned an associate's degree from Kalamazoo Valley Community College

A Future Built on Support: River's Story

Phoenix High School senior River Ford is stepping into her next chapter prepared, hopeful, and full of possibility. At this year's Champs Celebration, River took center stage to share what it has meant to have Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo in her corner—and to recognize the people who showed up for her consistently, including Ms. Tinsaye, Ms. Naz, and Ms. Best, who are past and present CIS coordinators who supported her from middle school through high school.

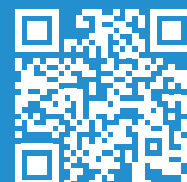
Before the celebration, River also guided us through a video site visit of Phoenix High School—offering a glimpse into the place where she grew, persevered, and kept moving forward. River is now looking ahead to attending Kalamazoo Valley Community College to explore furthering her education in the field of child support so she can give back in the same kinds of ways she has been supported.



River at the 2026 Champs Celebration

River shared, “Ms. Tinsaye has always been there to keep me mentally and physically safe, encouraged me to push forward, and told me to try when the mental or physical trip was scary. The moment I've stepped into this school, I've always known that I've had someone there for me.”

Check out River's video here.



BEING PRESENT MATTERS



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



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

Thinking About Summer!

We're excited to launch another great CIS Think Summer program for Kalamazoo Public Schools elementary students, designed to reduce summer learning loss and increase academic and enrichment opportunities.

This summer's program will have a strong focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) learning. Students will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on, enriching activities while also working on grade-level Math and ELA content to help them meet important academic benchmarks. By blending creativity with core academics, the program is designed to keep students engaged, curious, and growing throughout the summer.

We anticipate serving more than 100 elementary students, providing a supportive and dynamic environment that encourages both learning and connection.

Be sure to follow us on our Facebook page to see photos throughout the summer!

“We're excited to spark curiosity through STEAM and give students meaningful opportunities to build both their skills and confidence.”

AMANDA SWAGER, CIS PROGRAM ASSISTANT

Always in for Kids

STUDENT SUCCESS LASTS A LIFETIME

Join our recurring giving program and know your support will always be there for kids in Kalamazoo.



Audrey, Always in for Kids student ambassador

Scan to learn more today!



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.

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), Paramount Charter Academy, local foundations, and donors like you.