



**Highlights from the
Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts
Performance Audit Division: Communities in Schools of Georgia**

Background on the Audit: The special examination of Communities In Schools was conducted at the request of the House Appropriations Committee of the Georgia General Assembly. The audit was completed in December 2015.

Audit Findings:

- CIS is implemented in one-fifth of the state's school systems (41 of 201) to improve academic and non-academic outcomes of students deemed to be at-risk of dropping out of school in 2015.
- Approximately 120,000 students, or about 10 percent of the state's student population (including 10,580 identified as at-risk) were served by CIS in FY 2015.
- More than 53 percent of students receiving sustained services from CIS were high school students, 22 percent were in middle school, and another 22 percent were elementary school students.
- Based on current funding levels and the number of at-risk students served by CIS, the state's return on investment is estimated to be \$18 to \$1 for a high school student over his or her lifetime.
- For the State of Georgia to break even on its investment each year, only a relatively small number of CIS students need to graduate. CIS exceeded this expectation in FY 2015. The audit found that 125 CIS graduates were needed to break even on the state's investment. In reality, approximately 7,600 CIS served students graduated.
- CIS average graduation rates were higher than the statewide rates and average graduation rates for non-CIS schools.
- The average graduation rates in CIS schools improved one and two years after CIS' implementation.
- Citing third party research studies (Child Trends) in CIS, audit findings stated that CIS programs have a positive effect on academic outcomes such as student progress (dropout rate and credit completion), school attendance and math achievement.

- CIS survey of principals found CIS to have a positive influence on improving outcomes; crediting CIS with helping to improve attendance, student discipline, academic performance and progress toward graduation.
- Auditors stated a need for more individual student level data. Auditors pointed out that should the General Assembly be interested in future evaluations, the Georgia Department of Education should consider adding student participation in CIS as an identifier in its annual data collection process.
- This identifier would enable GaDOE and state auditors to link CIS programs and services to individual student level outcomes.