

# **Communities In Schools of Georgia**

## **End of the Year Summative Report**

### **on Race to the Top**

### **Performance Learning Centers**

**FY2014**

### **Executive Summary**



**Communities In Schools of Georgia**

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# End of the Year Summative Report on Race to the Top Performance Learning Centers FY2014

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary provides information on three Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) developed by Communities In Schools of Georgia as part of the Georgia Department of Education's Race to the Top grant. The three Race to the Top PLCs are located within the Richmond County, Floyd County and Carrollton City school districts.

This report provides information on the support and services CIS of Georgia has provided to these three communities in developing their Performance Learning Centers, detail on their progress in implementing the model during the 2013-14 year and student results during the 2013-14 school year.

### Performance Learning Center Development

Developed in 2002 by CIS of Georgia, Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) have been validated by independent research to be effective in helping school districts to improve their graduation rates and reduce their dropout rates. PLCs are nontraditional learning environments for high school students who are not succeeding in traditional schools. Students work at their own pace, completing coursework online with the support of learning facilitators (LFs) provided by the district. PLCs employ the Communities In Schools model with each PLC having with a CIS site coordinator (SC) provided by the local CIS affiliate who provides students with the additional supports they need to be successful. Academic coordinators (ACs) lead the Performance Learning Centers.

Communities In Schools of Georgia provided support to the PLCs in implementation of the PLC model. This includes development and implementation of all PLC components including: Project-Based Learning, Academic Service Learning, Senior Projects, Individual Development Plans, Career Discovery, Dual enrollment/Post-secondary options, Morning Motivation, Tutorials, Charting for Success Advisory Lessons, Incentives, College Preparation, Mentors and Parent/Guardian Involvement.

Throughout the course of the grant, CIS of Georgia provided formal training opportunities and ongoing technical support for PLC development through the field support and evaluation departments. Formal training included PLC staff orientations, summer training institutes, PLC roundtable meetings and a PLC "roll call" webinar series. Each training was designed to assist PLC staff in implementation of the model.

**Progress in Program Implementation.** The RT3 PLC were assessed throughout the course of the grant for their progress in implementing each component of the PLC model according to a developmental rubric. Below are the highlights and challenge areas of development for each of the RT3 PLCs:

- **Carrollton City Performance Learning Center**
  - Carrollton City Performance Learning Center opened in August of 2012 and maintained the same staff throughout their 2 years of grant participation. The PLC is the first in the state to also serve middle school students.
  - **Areas of Strength** – Areas of strength for Carrollton City PLC are creative scheduling, student attendance, documentation, incentive program mentoring, incentive program, academic service learning, project-based learning and parent engagement.
    - **Program Highlights.** Carrollton City PLC utilized laptops to expand enrollment up to an additional 15 students. Their CIS site coordinator developed a relationship with a group called "College Girls Rock" from the University of West Georgia to mentor young women and encourage them toward post-secondary education. Carrollton City PLC has consistently had the strongest data collection and documentation of the 3 RT3 PLCs. The PLC was ahead of schedule in development of service learning projects and project-based learning was in place ahead of schedule.

- **Challenge Areas** – Challenge areas for Carrollton City PLC include curriculum, project-based learning forms, morning motivation, and student advisory.
  - **Areas in Need of Development.** Carrollton City PLC was slow in developing syllabuses that incorporate pacing guides, and project-based learning was not documented in the recommended forms. Carrollton City PLC lacks common space needed for large groups, which hampered conducting morning motivation. Advisory did take place, but the PLC lacked full student notebooks and individual development plans.
- **Floyd County Performance Learning Center**
  - Floyd County PLC opened in August of 2011 at the Floyd County Education Center.
  - The PLC relocated to the Floyd County College and Career Academy in August of 2013 (year 3 of the grant) with completely new staff.
  - **Areas of Strength** – Areas of strength for Floyd County PLC are the enrollment and recruitment process, differentiated instruction and small group instruction, senior projects, student advisory, capstone/job shadowing, incentive program, and mentoring.
    - **Program Highlights.** Floyd County PLC fully developed a student recruitment plan and interview process at the new location with a waiting list of students. The PLC operated with two highly qualified teachers using differentiated learning and small group instruction was implemented ahead of schedule. The PLC was ahead of schedule on senior projects, with all graduating seniors participating. The PLC developed relationships with technical colleges that provided student advisory supports and capstone experiences for PLC students. The technical college is across the street and students could take part in dual enrollment. Floyd County PLC developed a strong incentive program to encourage students. The move to their new location resulted in increased mentoring as the PLC is better located for volunteer access.
  - **Challenge Areas** – Challenge areas for Floyd County PLC include curriculum forms, morning motivation, and parent engagement.
    - **Areas in Need of Development.** As a new PLC site with new staff, course syllabuses with pacing guides were not fully developed. Floyd County PLC lacks common space needed for large groups, which hampered conducting morning motivation. Parent involvement activities were in the emerging stage.
- **Richmond County Performance Learning Center**
  - Richmond County PLC opened in August of 2011, but was without an academic coordinator most of the first year due to illness. A new academic coordinator was hired at the start of their second year and staffing remained stable through end of the grant.
  - **Areas of Strength** – Areas of strength for Richmond County PLC are the enrollment and recruitment process, documentation, curriculum, academic service learning, morning motivation, student advisory, incentive program, and parent engagement.
    - **Program Highlights.** Richmond County PLC fully implemented the interview process for students. They developed a division of labor for data collection and checking of data entry resulting in improved data quality. The PLC aligned curriculum with the Common Core Standards and further refined these standards for PLC. Richmond County PLC provided multiple service learning options for students. The PLC was innovative in implementation of morning motivation and developed homeroom “tribes” that worked together on projects. Richmond County implemented a strong advisory program with homeroom teachers taking the lead, an admissions advisory and development of graduation forms that students used to keep track of their progress.
  - **Challenge Areas** – Challenge areas for Richmond County PLC include senior projects, college tours, career pathways, and mentoring.
    - **Areas in Need of Development.** Richmond County PLC was slow in fully implementing senior projects as credit is not offered and students are resistant to participate. The CIS site coordinator failed to develop the partnerships necessary for internships and mentoring, with transportation being a contributing factor.

## **Student Outcomes 2014**

PLC Staff collected student progress data at each of the RT3 PLCs. Below are overviews of the academic outcomes for Performance Learning Center students.

- **Carrollton City Performance Learning Center**
  - **Students Enrolled 2014:** 80 students – 74 high school and 6 middle school students
  - **Number of Graduates Since Start:** 28 total - 23 in 2014 and 5 in 2013
  - **Middle School Promotion:** All middle school PLC students were promoted to the next grade
  - **Academic Performance 2014**
    - Average of 7.21 credits earned per student during the year
    - 71.6% of students showing academic improvement overall
    - Statistically significant improvement in overall average, language arts, math, social studies and science
- **Floyd County Performance Learning Center**
  - **Students Enrolled 2014:** 81 students
  - **Number of Graduates Since Start:** 96 total - 45 in 2014, 30 in 2013 and 21 in 2012
  - **Academic Performance 2014**
    - Average of 4.4 credits earned per student during the year
    - 54.7% of students showing academic improvement overall
    - Statistically significant improvement in overall average, and social studies
- **Richmond County Performance Learning Center**
  - **Students Enrolled 2014:** 114 students
  - **Number of Graduates Since Start:** 79 total - 31 in 2014, 29 in 2013 and 19 in 2012
    - Average of 5.66 credits earned per student during the year
    - 88.3% of students showing academic improvement overall
    - Statistically significant improvement in overall average, language arts, math, social studies and science

## **Lessons Learned**

One of the lesson learned with the RT3 PLCs was the importance of staffing, particularly in the position of the PLC academic coordinator (AC). The Richmond PLC lost its AC in the first months of operations due to illness and a new AC was not placed until Year 2. Absence in this key leadership role did hamper progress during the first year, but much progress was made once a new AC was hired.

Where a PLC is located can impact the implementation of some program components. Carrollton City and Floyd County at its new location had much greater access to college and career resources and volunteers such as mentors with their proximity to universities and technical colleges. Transportation challenges in Richmond County and at the first location of the Floyd County PLC limited volunteer involvement and access to certain resources at these sites.

## **Sustainability**

Performance Learning Centers generally operate with small staff, including the academic coordinator, 2 to 5 learning facilitators, an administrative assistant and a Communities In Schools site coordinator. Some PLC sites may have a counselor, but that is not common. When CIS of Georgia first started PLCs, the majority were started as small stand alone schools which was more costly. Each of the Race to the Top PLCs are located on campuses with other programs, which we hope will help with efficiency and keep the cost of sustaining the programs lower.

All of the Race to the Top Performance Learning Centers are still in operation for the 2014-15 school year. At the start of the new school year, Carrollton City PLC had enrollment of 67 students, Floyd County 50 students and Richmond County 105 students.