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Communities in Schools Receives PA Commission on Crime & Delinquency Grant to Expand Alternative Learning Support for Allentown School District

Allentown, PA, January 3, 2002—Communities In Schools will use a \$200,000 PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) grant to help Allentown School District (ASD) expand the Alternative Learning Center concept into all four district middle schools. State Senator Charles Dent and State Representatives Pat Browne and Jennifer Mann were instrumental in accessing the CIS funding for district use. State Representative Jennifer Mann, who sits on the Commission, presented a check to Communities In Schools Executive Director William Leh and Allentown Superintendent Dr. Diane Scott.

"We are grateful for the commitment by our state representatives who continue to press forward and help the teachers and staff at Allentown School District tackle the education reforms needed to renew the district's long-standing commitment to educational excellence," says ASD Superintendent Dr. Diane Scott. "We know the CIS commitment, and Bill Leh's sincerity in seeing Allentown succeed, and we appreciate that as well."

"Alternative educational services for disruptive middle school students" is part of the ASD Improvement Plan, under Mandate 10, Goal 3.

“The grant from PCCD will allow CIS to coordinate an array of community resources for Allentown's at-risk students and their families," says William Leh, CIS LV Executive Director. " These services would not otherwise be there, and we've seen the difference they make. I am especially delighted that the program has been recognized as innovative and effective, not only locally but statewide.”

Two years ago, Communities In Schools, in partnership with Harrison Morton Middle School teachers and administration, designed and piloted an Alternative Learning Center (ALC) to work with disruptive, low-performing students. Based on the success of this prototype, Allentown School District included replication of the ALC at all four middle schools as part of its Empowerment Team Improvement Plan. The Raub school program recently opened. ALC's will be created at South Mountain and Trexler schools in Fall of 2002.

It is a timely intervention: During the past three school years, there has been a 220% increase in arrests of Allentown middle school students, according to the Allentown Police Youth Division report. At an ALC, disruptive students, most of whom struggle with a number of unresolved family or social issues, benefit from intensive case management, individual and family counseling, and a behavior modification learning program.

PCCD funding will support one Communities In Schools Site Coordinator for each new ALC as well as one Attendance / Family Outreach Specialist to work with all four ALCs. Communities In Schools staff will coordinate community services on behalf of students, monitor attendance, and improve communication between families, teachers, school district, and the juvenile justice system. By streamlining services, Communities In Schools keeps all parties informed and students receive unified expectations from all fronts.

Communities In Schools is the region's leading organization helping kids succeed in school and prepare for life. It is affiliated with the CIS National Network, which serves more than 1.4 million students in 2300 schools. The investment magazine *Worth* in its December 2001 issue has named Communities In Schools as one of the nation's 100 best charities. More information on Communities In Schools is available on the Internet at www.cisl.org and www.cisnet.org.

Serving more than 16,700 students in 23 elementary, middle and high schools located throughout the City of Allentown, PA, Allentown School District is the third largest school district out of 501 Commonwealth districts. About 60 percent of the students are members of minority groups and seventy percent qualify for free or reduced lunch, more than twice the state average. More than eighty percent of the City's residents do not have children attending school. In 2000, ASD was one of 12 school districts in the state cited as distressed and placed

on the state's Empowerment list. After submitting its Empowerment plan, the district was approved for over \$4.5 million in funds to implement the plan over three years. The Allentown School Board in June 2001 approved the first school tax increase in over seven years to add much needed resources to foster increased student achievement and more focused programs in its schools. For more information, please contact the superintendent's office, Allentown School District, 31 South Penn Street, Allentown, PA 18105, 484-765-4235,

www.allentownsd.org.

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