CIS OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Austin ISD AmeriCorps Outcomes Evaluation

Communities In Schools
Central Texas

AGILE ANALYTICS
INNOVATE. IMPROVE.
EMPOWER.
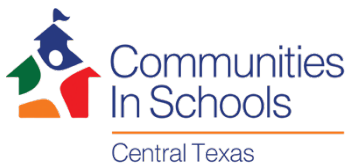
October 2020

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Communities In Schools (CIS) is a national organization serving students with a diverse range of needs across the country.

Broadly, CIS Central Texas is focused on dropout prevention, but it is so much more than that. CIS Central Texas serves the most vulnerable students and their families in the region to ensure they have the resources needed to overcome any barriers that may keep students from remaining in school.

An integral component of their work is to establish relationships with individual students to support them when an obstacle is encountered in an effort to keep them in school and succeed in life. These supports may include counseling, life skill development, academic tutoring, and other enrichment opportunities. Common to these supports is providing students with ample opportunities to relate with each other, build connections with mentors, and engage in activities that will set them up for future success in life and in school.

In the Austin Independent School District (AISD), CIS staff work directly with students at 24 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 7 high schools, and one alternative school to help students and their families identify, gain access to, and navigate existing resources in the community and services most needed to help students succeed.

![Communities In Schools Central Texas logo]

The CIS Model

To help achieve these critical goals, CIS staff use a specific model (see figure below) wherein program managers, trained in social services, work with students' and their respective schools to support students' needs.

As a first step in this process, students are referred to CIS program managers by teachers or administrators at their respective school. After students are referred, CIS Program Managers receive parental consent, assess their students' individual needs (academic or non-academic needs), and collaboratively develop a service plan to help them succeed.

Figure 1. The CIS program model is centered on building relationships.

Source. Communities in Schools Central Texas

Program managers either directly provide their assigned students with services (such as counseling) or connect them with volunteers or external services through existing

partnerships such as support groups, tutoring, mentoring, or other enrichment opportunities.

Many students – and their families – receive wraparound services to help them succeed in school and life. Although the main goal of CIS is to prevent high risk students from dropping out of school, CIS staff also help students achieve other positive outcomes such as graduating, college and career attainment, increased attendance, and helping high risk students succeed.

Additionally, CIS Central Texas provides specific programming to help meet their students' needs such as AmeriCorps, ASPIRE Family Literacy (literacy services for the family), Care Coordination (wraparound family services), Pebble Project (child abuse prevention/education), SmartKids (afterschool programming public housing), and the XY zone (leadership program for high school males).

Through these partnerships and programs, CIS staff effectively build relationships not only with students and families but also with the community including businesses, volunteers, and other partners. Doing so models relationship building from the top down ensuring all students' needs are met – no matter how big or how small. Indeed, the success of CIS hinges on the relationships developed between CIS program managers and students, as well as between program managers and the community (see Figure 1 above).

AmeriCorps Partnership

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs, comprised of three primary programs taking a different approach to improving people's lives and fostering civic engagement. Members commit their time to address critical community needs like increasing students' academic achievement, mentoring youth, fighting poverty, sustaining national parks, preparing for disasters, and more.

CIS of Central Texas is an AmeriCorps State and National grant recipient and has partnered with AmeriCorps for nearly 20 years. CIS of Central Texas recruits, trains, and supports nearly 80 full-time, half-time and Education Award Only quarter-time AmeriCorps members every year. Members provide both 1:1 and small group (3:1) support to over 1,000 economically disadvantaged students in public schools across central Texas.

AmeriCorps members' primary focus is providing mentorship and supportive guidance to students. In doing so, they become a trusted adult who students know they can share

successes and concerns with while at school. This relationship can then increase students' sense of belonging, self-confidence, and motivation to do well in school. Members also provide tutoring and academic support to students, enrichment activities, and college and career guidance, among other activities.

In this report, we examine how AmeriCorps members impact student academics, behaviors, and perceptions of school. The report compares students served by an AmeriCorps member in Grade 4 and 5 in 2017-2018 to students from a carefully matched control group that attended schools that were not served by CIS during this time period.

Background Significance

In the 96 schools currently served by CIS of Central Texas (CISCT), over 46,000 students are at-risk for school dropout because they have repeated one or more grades; failed the state standardized test; have limited English proficiency; are homeless or in foster care; are pregnant or parenting; or have been set back academically by other challenges. More than 52,000 students at these schools are economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2017-18 Texas Academic Performance Reports). Students of color (particularly male), English Language Learners (ELL), and low-income students are overrepresented in dropout rates in Central Texas (E3 Alliance, 2020).

The individual and societal consequences of dropping out have been well-documented. Students who drop out before graduation are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, over three times more likely to be arrested, and eight times more likely to be incarcerated (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). While the graduation rates are improving nationally, in Central Texas disparities in graduation rates persist among students of color, low-income, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities (E3 Alliance, 2020).

CISCT provides year-round, dropout prevention services at 96 high-need schools in 7 Central Texas Independent School Districts (ISD)-Austin, Bastrop, Elgin, Lockhart, Manor, Hays Consolidated, and San Marcos. CISCT targets schools in underserved communities with large percentages of at-risk and economically disadvantaged students. In 2019-2020 86.4% of CISCT students received free and price lunch; 25% were ELL; 10.3% had an incarcerated parent; 13.4% were in special education; and .6% were pregnant or parenting.

The CISCT theory of change is centered on providing students with opportunities to develop a positive and safe relationships with a caring adult. We believe that relationships are crucial to our work and that every student needs and deserves a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult. The CISCT AmeriCorps program plays a critical role in this model by providing supportive mentoring relationships to at-risk, economically disadvantaged students attending a CISCT supported school.

Previous studies conducted by Agile Analytics examining the CIS 9th grade transition program have found that the more hours students spend in CIS-related activities, the better the outcomes (Hutson & Hawk, 2012). For example, CIS students who spent more time engaged in direct and indirect services had improved attendance (and fewer tardies), an increase likelihood of passing social studies, improved behavior, and increased promotion to the 10th grade.

Research Questions

The purpose of this report is to analyze the impact of working with AmeriCorps members on CIS students' academic outcomes.

Working with CIS Central Texas staff, we developed three broad research questions to document the impact of the AmeriCorps program in 2017-2018. To analyze these key questions, we compared outcomes for 171 Grade 4 and 5 students served by AmeriCorps members and a statistically similar group of 171 matched non-CIS students

For more information on the matching process and for other methodological details, see **Study Details: Methodology.**

The research questions are based on the program model. We had three primary research questions:

Questions

Question 1: Did CIS Grade 4 and 5 students have more **academic improvement** (grades and STAAR) in 2017-2018 compared to the matched control group?

Question 2: Did CIS Grade 4 and 5 students have **behavioral improvements** (attendance and discipline) in 2017-2018 compared to the matched control group?

Question 3: Were CIS students' **perceptions of school climate** better than those of their peers?
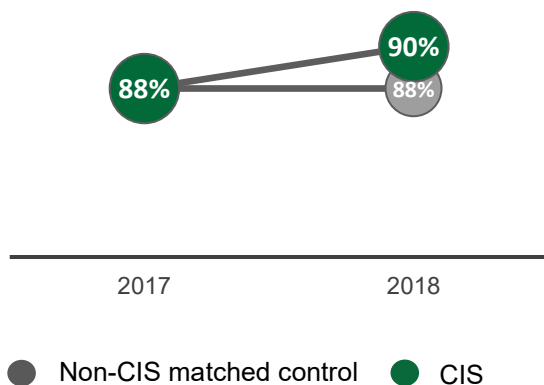
Key Findings

Question 1: Academics

The first question explored changes in academics. First, student grades for 2017-2018 in math, ELA, science, and social studies were compared between groups. Next, we compared students' 2018 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading and Math performance by group.

Social studies grades were similar for both CIS and their matched non-CIS peers in 2016-2017. However, the following year CIS students' social studies grades not only improved over time but were also significantly higher than that of their matched non-CIS peers (Figure 1; t (315) = -1.9, p = 0.056).

Question 1: Did CIS Grade 4 and 5 students have more academic improvement (grades and STAAR) in 2017-2018 compared to the matched control group?

Quick answer: Yes – in one area. Students served by AmeriCorps members had **better grades in social studies**.

There were no significant differences between CIS students and their matched non-CIS peers in ELA, Math, or Science, or on the STAAR Reading and Math examinations.

Figure 1. CIS Students served by AmeriCorps members had higher social studies grades than did their **matched non-CIS peers.**

Students who were served by an AmeriCorps member in 2017-2018 had higher social studies grades than students in the matched control sample.

Source. 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 AISD Grades
Note. 2018 difference is significant, p = 0.056; difference was stronger (*p* < .01) when prior grades and other factors were controlled in a linear model.

When prior year social studies grade, prior STAAR score, and other demographic variables were controlled, students served by AmeriCorps members continued to have higher grades than their peers, (B = 1.91, p <.01).

There were no differences for other subjects, or when we examined 2018 STAAR performance. Detailed results are explored in **Study Details: Results.**

Question 2: Behaviors

Next, we examined students' attendance and disciplinary infractions to determine if service from AmeriCorps members predicted improvements in these areas.

We did not find any differences between groups.

- Overall attendance rates over time were consistent over time and between groups.
- The number of disciplinary incidents was small and decreased for each group over time to near 0 for 2017-2018.
- For more information, see **Study Details: Results.**

*Question 2: Did CIS Grade 4 and 5 students have **behavioral improvements** (attendance and discipline) in 2017-2018 compared to the matched control group?*

Quick answer: No. We found no significant differences between CIS students and their matched non-CIS peers.

*Question 3: Were CIS students' perceptions of **school climate** better than those of their peers?*

Quick answer: No. There were no differences between groups.

Question 3: Climate

Finally, we theorized that students' perceptions of school climate in 2017-2018 might differ based on CIS participation. The Austin ISD climate survey was broken into three scales for our analyses:

- Perceptions of self
- Perceptions of other students
- Perceptions of teachers and staff

We found no differences in the climate data between students for any of the three categories. There was not 2016-17 climate data available to compare, so it is not possible to know if there were positive changes over time in these areas. For more details, see **Study Details: Results**.

Conclusions & Recommendations

CIS Central Texas focuses on providing direct and indirect services to the region's most in-need students. The results from this outcomes evaluation showed a **small improvement in social studies grades** for the students served by AmeriCorps members, but no other differences emerged in terms of remaining subject grades, STAAR performance, behaviors, or perceptions of school climate.

AmeriCorps members spend only a small amount of time in academic support services.

As part of our analysis, we collected the number of service hours provided to each student and the categories in which that student was served. Students received services (both direct and indirect) in seven documented areas:

- Academic Enhancement & Support
- Case Management
- College & Career Readiness
- Enrichment Activities
- Health & Human Services
- Parental & Family Engagement
- Supportive Guidance

On average, each student was served by an AmeriCorps member for 31.2 hours. The majority of time spent (18.9 hours or 61%) was in supportive guidance. A very small amount of time, 2.4 hours or about 8% of the total participation time, was in receiving academic support and tutoring from members (see Figure 2, next page).

Figure 2. Students received most support from CIS staff in programming related to supportive guidance.

Service data suggest that AmeriCorps members spend the majority of the ~31 hours with students giving supportive guidance.

A very small amount of time (less than 3 hours per student, on average) is spent in direct academic support
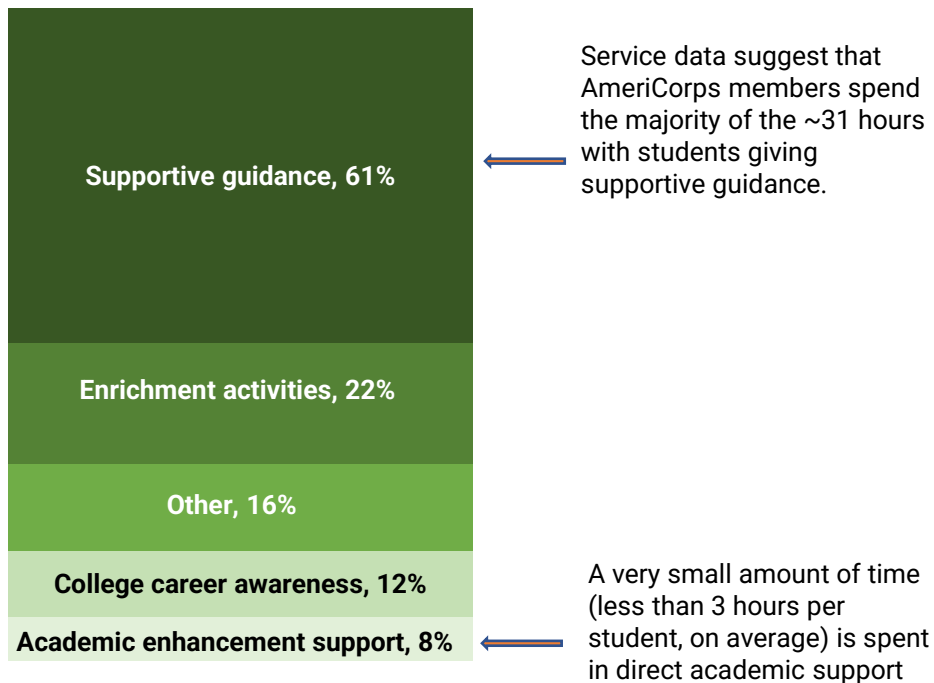
Note. The "other" category includes case management activities, health and human services, and parental/family engagement services.
Source. 2017-2018 CIS internal service data

It is likely that supportive guidance and enrichment activities relate to academic achievement, but we suspect that this relationship is indirect. That is, students receiving supportive guidance will form a trusting and supportive relationship with an adult, gain confidence, and eventually improve their academic performance. However – we imagine that the academic improvement caused by this indirect relationship may take one or more years to manifest. Our first recommendation is to **examine more years of academic and behavioral data** in the next outcomes study.

Additionally, a brief analysis of internal data revealed that students who were referred to CIS because they did not meet assessment standards were not more likely to receive academic enhancement and support services than those who were referred for other reasons. Therefore, our second recommendation is to **provide more intense academic support services** for students who are referred for academic reasons.

To enhance the tutoring services members can provide, CIS staff may want to pick a specific problem area (e.g., Grade 4 math) and provide intensive training to members on how to best help in that area. They should then monitor the service logs to ensure that students are receiving the additional academic support that they need. Then CIS

staff can measure progress using their own BOY and EOY data to determine if the approach was successful.

The data available from Austin ISD were unlikely to show large differences between groups.

Given that the majority of hours spent working with AmeriCorps members is in supportive guidance, improvements in PEIMS[1]-level academic and behavioral variables within one year is unlikely. A third recommendation is to **identify outcomes more directly linked to supportive guidance and enrichment activities** provided by AmeriCorps members. Refocusing outcomes and research questions to focus on the specific activities CIS staff engage in most frequently with their students will more clearly delineate how these services relate to outcomes of interest.

To address this issue, we recommend the following ideas:
- Within Austin ISD, linked student climate survey data are available for the 2017-2018 school year and beyond, so future studies could include both pre- and post-test climate data to assess changes over time.
- In years where an impact/outcomes evaluation is not required, a closer look at subjective student experience using targeted focus group and internal survey questions would be helpful.
- Align research aims and objectives with the CIS logic model and/or program model. Focus particularly on short term outcomes

The two groups of students, those served by CIS and their matched non-CIS peers, may have been different from outset.

Although great care was made to ensure that both student groups – CIS and their matched control non-CIS served peers – were statistically similar prior to analyses, it is quite possible that these two groups of students were quite different from each other. Conversations with CIS program staff corroborated this assertion stating that many students selected to participate in CIS services were referred to CIS based on needs that are not measured in PEIMS data (e.g., homelessness, disengagement with school, low self-esteem, extreme behavioral problems, family conflict/abuse, etc.). Many of these characteristics are not measurable and are likely influence the outcomes examined in this study including attendance, academic achievement, and perceptions of school climate.

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[1] PEIMS is the Public Information Management System of Texas. All data that are submitted to the state are collected in a standardized format and are what are usually available for evaluation and research studies.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study helped shed light on students served by AmeriCorps members within CIS Central Texas, there were some limitation of this study. For example, **we were unable to link students served by AmeriCorps back to their direct mentoring data** to determine which specific mentoring services were most beneficial to students. Gaining access to this more granular level of data will help identify these best practices and also remove students who only received a few mentoring services. This refined sample might speak more directly to the true experiences of students served by CIS Central Texas.

Relatedly, a factor we were unable to include in our analyses was examining AmeriCorps member type (e.g., full or half-time) to determine if there is a **difference in student outcomes based on the amount of time members work with students**. For example, we might see more increases in student outcomes for those students paired with a full-time mentor since full time mentors more immersed in the school, more able to build connections and relationships with students, and engage with the community.

Finally, **expanding the number of years examined in the study will allow for more time to see the full effects of AmeriCorps members' mentoring**. Many effective dropout intervention programs work with students from middle school through high school (Wang & Fredricks, 2014; Hutson & Lamb, 2020); therefore, following students for a longer period of time will more likely show improvements in their experiences in school. For example, a recent evaluation of a similar program in Central Texas gathered data from participating students for a 7-year time period (middle school through graduation), and as a result found positive results (Hutson & Lamb, 2020). Using a similar type of methodology will likely benefit the overall evaluation of CIS.

In the next section, we provide details on the methodology of the evaluation and the outcomes that were not significant.

Study Details

Methodology

In this section of the report, we describe in more detail the analyses and results conducted for this evaluation. First, we will explain in more detail our methods for creating our sample. Ultimately, we conducted a quasi-experimental design with propensity score matching (see sidebar).

The sample. As described earlier in the report, in order to examine the impact of AmeriCorps members on academic and behavioral outcomes for CIS participants within AISD, we collected student-level data from the 2016-2017 school year for students enrolled in grades 3 through 5. We used this data to create a group of CIS students and a group of similar matched students who were not enrolled in CIS.

Propensity Score Matching (PSM)

Propensity Score Matching (PSM) is used when a true treatment and control group are difficult or impossible to obtain in a study. PSM uses existing data to create a one-to-one match to create treatment and control groups that are similar.

Step 1: The match. CIS students were matched to non-CIS students on gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, and 2016-2017 STAAR math/reading scores.

Step 2: Baseline equivalency. Initially, there were differences in groups. After reexamining the data, we removed students who attended a CIS school in 2017-2018 but did not in 2016-2017. After rebalancing the data, we confirmed that there were no differences between the CIS students and the matched control students on any demographic or prior achievement variables.

Step 3: Analyze groups for post-intervention differences. We assessed differences between the groups in 2017-2018 data including grades, discipline, attendance, STAAR performance, using linear models that included demographic variables and prior achievement.

The data

The following de-identified student-level data elements were obtained from AISD's Department of Research and Evaluation (DREA unique study ID was assigned to each student to ink disparate data sources.

Demographics: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 de-identified student-level gender, ethnicity, free and reduced-price lunch status, at risk status (a composite indicator computed by the Texas Education Agency), special education status, and limited English proficiency status.

Behavior: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 de-identified student-level attendance and discipline data.

Grades: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 de-identified student-level grades in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

STAAR: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 de-identified student-level STAAR performance data for English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Student climate: 2017-2018 student-;level responses to AISD's Student Climate Survey (conducted by AISD's DRE). More information is on page25.

We selected a quasi-experimental research design utilizing propensity score matching for several reasons because they generally considered to be among the most robust available aside from Randomized Control Trial studies (which were not able to be conducted in this case for ethical and practical reasons). In a PSM study, pre-test variables are carefully matched, and data are checked to ensure that groups are statistically similar at baseline. Differences at post-test can thus be inferred as changes caused by program participation. Further, in our design, we created linear models that controlled for pre-test scores and certain demographic / prior year data. These steps ensured that our findings were as reliable as possible.

Specifically, we matched students in grades 3 through 5 based on their 2016-2017 demographic information (e.g., Hispanic/non-Hispanic, free/reduced price lunch status, STAAR reading and math, attendance, and disciplinary referrals; see sidebar on previous page). Notably, students in the comparison group could not have attended a CIS school. In this way we could determine the overall effects of CIS on students' experiences in school among students with similar backgrounds. After we received the data from AISD, we computed Propensity Score Matching (PSM) using the Nearest Neighbor matching procedure (Rassen, Shelat, Myers, Glynn, Rothman, & Schneeweiss, 2012).

Balancing. Once our sample was created, we computed statistical checks to ensure both groups were balanced, or equivalent to each other in terms of background characteristics such as race, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, and 2016-17 grades, STAAR performance, and behaviors, prior to conducting analyses using the 2017-2018 data[2] (all difference effect sizes <.25, with the majority < .05). Doing so would allow us to have more confidence in stating that any differences between the groups in 2017-2018 was because of engaging with CIS, rather than due to chance alone.

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[2] Baseline equivalency is defined by the What Works Clearinghouse guidelines as a very small difference between groups, with the difference effect size being 0.05 or less. Slightly larger differences of 0.06 to 0.25 are acceptable as long as the variables with these differences are included in all models. Groups that have differences with effect sizes >0.25 are not considered equivalent.

Rebalancing. After balancing the data, we ran descriptive statistics to determine that our samples were similar. Next, we joined this data set back to students' remaining data requested from AISD, including additional 2016-2017 demographic information including gender, at risk status, SPED stats, LEP status, gifted and talented participation, and grades (reading, math, science, and social studies). Additionally, we received AISD data from 2017-2018 including grades, STAAR reading and math, attendance, disciplinary infractions, and students' ratings of school climate.

We again ran analyses to ensure our groups (e.g., CIS and non-CIS students) were statistically similar. Unfortunately, we found that many non-CIS students enrolled in 5th grade in 2016-2017 went on to attend a middle school offering CIS services in 2017-2018. As a result, these students had to be removed from our sample to ensure that we were matching CIS to students who were never served by CIS. Doing so is critical because we know that many CIS students are identified because they are experiencing specific needs including family conflict, homelessness, and academic issues that many students do not experience. This means that CIS students – even if they are attending the same school as non-CIS students – are likely quite different than their non-CIS peers. It should also be noted that CIS of Central Texas focus their services on the lowest performing schools, also limiting the sample. For these reasons, we decided to exclude students enrolled in 6th grade in 2017-2018 from our final sample.

After the balancing and rebalancing, our final sample included 171 CIS students in 4th and 5th grades who were expertly matched to 171 similar peers who were not served by CIS, making a total of 342 students in the sample. Importantly, after rebalancing the data, we found that – after including additional students from which to draw a sample from – the final sample was well balanced in terms of grades and all other variables of interest (effect sizes < .025; Table 1).

Table 1. After re-balancing and removing 6th grade students from the sample, **CIS** and matched **non-CIS** students were demographically similar.

	Free-reduced price lunch	% Hispanic	% LEP	% SPED status	% At risk
CIS (*n* = 171)	96%	78%	47%	16%	68%
Non-CIS (*n* = 171)	96%	78%	50%	20%	68%

Source. 2016-2017 AISD demographic data

![Communities In Schools Central Texas logo]

Results

This section outlines in more detail results from our analyses. To analyze the effects of AmeriCorps members on CIS students' experiences in school in the 2017-2018 school year, we created linear models to explore the potential relationship between CIS participation and students' academic achievement, behaviors, and attitudes/perceptions about school. Specifically, our linear models included the following 2016-2017 variables (all effect sizes >.05):

- math, reading and science grades in 2016-*17*,
- special education status,
- number of disciplinary infractions in 2016-17, and
- LEP status.

Additionally, we included variables in our models if they were significantly related to the outcome of interest (e.g., social studies grades in 2016-2017 were included in the model predicting 2017-2018 social studies grades). We computed 11 individual regression models examining student outcomes. We first describe analyses relating to subject-level grades and STAAR performance at the elementary school level.

Elementary School Grades

Math. In 2016-2017, non-CIS students' grades were slightly (but not statistically significantly) higher than their CIS peers, and although both groups improved, non-CIS students' grades continued to be slightly higher than that of their CIS peers (Figure 3; $t(314) = 1.99$, $p < .05$). However, when a regression model was created that controlled for demographic variables and prior math achievement (prior math grade, prior STAAR performance), there was no longer a significant difference between CIS and non-CIS students.

Figure 3. At both time points, math grades for **CIS students** were lower than that of their matched **non-CIS peers**. Change over time was similar for both groups.

77%
75%
82%
79%

2017	2018
● Non-CIS matched control	● CIS

Source. 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 AISD math grade data
Note. * *p*<.05; differences are significant across group, within year

English Language Arts (ELA). Similar to math, elementary school students participating in CIS had lower ELA grades in 2016-2017, and although they experienced a slight increase in grades, matched non-CIS students also experienced an increase in ELA grades in 2017-2018 (Figure 4). These differences, however, were not statistically significant. Additionally, there were no significant differences in the regression models created.

Figure 4. Students participating in **CIS** and their matched **non-CIS peers** had similar ELA grades in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

80%
79%
82%
81%

2017	2018
● Non-CIS matched control	● CIS

Source. 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 AISD ELA grade data

Science. Finally, students' science grades were similar for both CIS students and their matched non-CIS peers (Figure 5).

Figure 5. In both 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, participating **CIS** students and their matched **non-CIS peers** had similar science grades in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

87%

85%

86%

85%

2017

2018

Non-CIS matched control   CIS

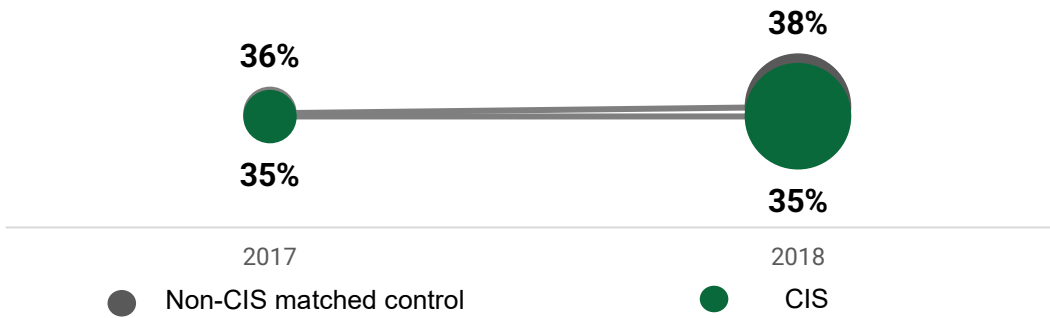*Source.* 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 AISD science grade data

STAAR

Next, we conducted a similar set of analyses to determine the effects of AmeriCorps members influence on CIS on students' STAAR reading and math performance in 2017-2018. To do so, we created and analyzed linear models that included the following 2016-2017 variables (all effect sizes >.05): STAAR math and reading, special education status, number of disciplinary infractions, and LEP status on STAAR Percentile.

STAAR Percentile was calculated using frequency distribution data from the Texas Education Agency.[3] Frequency distributions were computed using a formula available

Our results found no differences between groups, either in the t-test models or in the linear models (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. While not significant, participating **CIS** students had lower STAAR math scores at both time periods than did their matched **non-CIS peers**.

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[3] https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/staar/staar-frequency-distributions

36%

35%

38%

35%

2017   2018

● Non-CIS matched control   ● CIS

Source. 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 STAAR math percentiles

Figure 7. Although not significant, participating **CIS** students experienced an increase in STAAR reading performance in 2017-2018 compared with their matched **non-CIS peers**.

32%

31%

34%

33%

2017   2018

● Non-CIS matched control   ● CIS
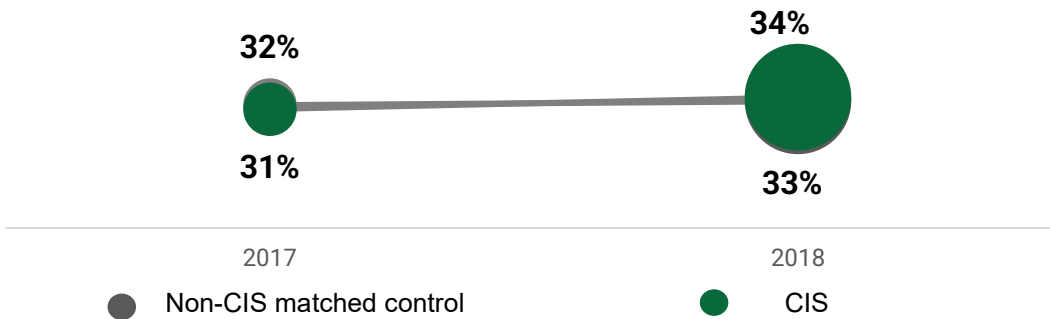
Source. 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 STAAR reading percentiles

Attendance & Discipline

Next, we examined students' attendance rates and disciplinary infractions over time based on group. As mentioned previously in the report, we found no significant differences based on CIS group. Attendance levels remained high for both groups (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Both **CIS** and matched **non-CIS** students had similar attendance rates in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

| 96% | ● ————————————— ● | 95% |

| 2017 | 2018 |

● Non-CIS matched control   ● CIS

Source. 2016-2017 to.2017-2018 AISD attendance rates

In addition, disciplinary infractions were few and as a result we were unable to analyze group differences over time.

Climate

Finally, we conducted analyses to determine the effects of AmeriCorps members influence on CIS on students' perceptions of school climate in 2017-2018 using the Austin Independent School District's (AISD) student climate survey. Each year, the AISD's Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) asks students in grades 3-11 to complete a survey that provides district staff and key stakeholders with feedback regarding their perceptions of and experiences with school climate. Beginning in 2017-2018, the survey was administered online and linked to students' individual records. As a result, Agile Analytics was able to obtain de-identified student-level data for those students in our sample. Students' responses on the survey ranged from 1-4 (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). For more information on AISD's student climate survey, please click here (after clicking, please select "interactive reports" and then "student climate survey").

Utilizing a factor analysis technique, items from the student climate survey were divided into three small scales:

- Perceptions of self
  - I use ways to calm myself down.
  - I don't give up even when I feel frustrated.

- o I can do even the hardest schoolwork if I try.
- o I enjoy doing my schoolwork.
- o During my school day, I am aware of when my feelings change.
- o I try hard to do my best work.
- o I feel successful in my schoolwork.
- o During my school day I am aware of when my thoughts change from positive to negative.
- o I can reach the goals I set for myself.
- o My homework helps me learn things I need to know.
- o During my school day, I am aware of how my body feels when my feelings change.
- o I receive recognition or praise for doing good work.
- o If I get angry with a classmate, we can talk about it and make it better.

- Perceptions of other students
  - o My classmates show respect to each other.
  - o My classmates show respect to other students who are different.
  - o I am happy with the way my classmates treat me.
  - o My classmates behave the way my teachers want them to.
  - o At my school, students take care of each other.

- Perceptions of teachers and staff
  - o Teachers at this school care about their students.
  - o Adults at this school listen to student ideas and opinions.
  - o Adults at this school treat all students fairly.
  - o The staff in the front office show respect to students.
  - o At my school, there is respect for different cultures.
  - o At my school, there is respect for students who speak languages other than English.
  - o My teachers are fair to everyone.
  - o My teachers expect me to think hard about the things we read.
  - o My teachers expect everybody to work hard.
  - o Teachers at this school know who I am.
  - o My teachers know what I am good at.

Results yielded no significant differences between groups. Data for 2016-17 were not available for comparison; in future years these data will be available and may make for interesting analyses.

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About the Evaluators

Agile Analytics is a woman-owned boutique research and evaluation firm. We work with a select group of non-profit organizations that improve people's lives through innovative programs.

We use advanced quantitative and qualitative techniques to measure the impact programs have on the people they serve, and to find areas of opportunity for growth.

Our goal is to empower organizations to use their data to improve their programs, and ultimately to change people's lives for the better.

Andrea Hutson, Ph.D. is the founder and President of Agile Analytics. She has a Doctorate in Developmental Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin, with minors in Statistics and Cognition. Andrea founded Agile Analytics with the focus on the improvement of education for students in grade PK-16 in August of 2011.

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