

2023-24 

Quarter 2 Report

Oct. - Dec. 2023



Communities
In Schools®

Memphis



FROM OUR CEO *Teshanda Middleton*



At Communities In Schools of Memphis (CISM), we wholeheartedly believe in the idea of strength in numbers; by increasing relationships, we are increasing impact. As I reflect on our journey of Quarter 2, I am energized by the contributions and collaboration of our partners who have helped strengthen our programs and expand our reach over these first several months of the academic year.

Earlier this fall, we announced our intention to extend CISM's programming into 30 additional Title I schools over the next three years thanks to a generous investment from Ballmer Group.

In Quarter 2, we took the first significant steps towards this vision by initiating our presence in the first 10 of these schools in partnership with Memphis-Shelby County Schools. This monumental endeavor has allowed us to forge meaningful connections with approximately 500 additional students and their families, laying the foundation for impactful engagement and support over the next several years.

Furthermore, I am pleased to report on the fruitful collaborations that have blossomed within our broader community. Through ongoing dialogue and partnership with CIS-TN and CIS of the Appalachian Highlands, we've explored avenues to enhance our collective impact and advocated for increased resources to better serve the diverse needs of Tennessee's students and families. It is through such collaborative efforts that we continue to reaffirm our commitment to equity, access, and opportunity for all.

As we celebrate these milestones, I am particularly excited to spotlight the strides we've made in our College and Career Readiness Program, and specifically the impact of our Work Experience Program (WEX) and Alumni Network. These initiatives epitomize our drive to empower students with the skills, experiences, and confidence needed to thrive beyond the classroom.

Through WEX, our students have earned over \$297,000 in wages through the first two quarters of the program year while gaining invaluable real-world experience.

This is not only building their confidence but also equipping them with essential workforce skills. Simultaneously, our Alumni Network has actively engaged 17 alumni, who have contributed nearly 100 combined hours of civic engagement and workshop experience. This network serves as a support system, guiding our graduates toward lifelong success and fulfillment.

On the next page, you will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the impactful work of our Career Pathways team, as our esteemed Director, JaMeko Williams, illuminates the transformative power of WEX and our Alumni Network.

CISM has made remarkable strides in Quarter 2, and I am filled with profound optimism and joy heading into the second half of the year because I believe we have laid the groundwork for meaningful change and a future where every student has the opportunity to flourish and succeed.

Committed to equity and opportunity,

- Teshanda



Nurturing Futures **WITH PURPOSE**

True to the CISM mission, our College and Career Readiness team strives every day to empower our students not only to dream but to flourish in their aspirations. This is evident within the purpose-driven pathways of our Work Experience Program (WEX) and our Alumni Network.

The overarching vision of the WEX Program is to provide students with tangible, real-world experiences that transcend the classroom walls.

Through partnerships with local businesses and organizations, we are cultivating avenues for students across Shelby, Fayette, Lauderdale, and Tipton counties to immerse them in diverse career environments. The impact speaks volumes: students emerge more confident, equipped with invaluable workforce skills, and primed to navigate the intricacies of professional life.

Similarly, our growing Alumni Network serves as a lifeline for our graduates, fostering a sense of community and support as they embark on their journey towards Achieving in Life. This network isn't just about connections; it's a testament to the enduring bond between CISM and our alumni, providing a platform for continued growth and exploration even beyond high school.

In Quarter 2, multiple accomplishments underscored the dedication and resilience of our students and team alike. WEX participants embraced ownership of their experiences, utilizing tools like Effcenter to navigate their roles with confidence. Moreover, employer partners also actively engaged in our broader programming and even provided incentives for workshop attendance, illustrating the ripple effect of our initiatives within the community.

Our Alumni Network thrived as well, with notable events like Mocktails & Money Moves drawing praise and participation from both alumni and industry professionals. The tangible impact was apparent, as alumni expressed newfound confidence in navigating professional spaces.



Ja'Meko Williams
Director of Career Pathways



As we chart our course for the upcoming quarters, we're focused on expanding our network of WEX partners and empowering our graduates to take the reins in more alumni program development. Thanks to the passion and unrelenting commitment of our team, we're highly encouraged to build on the culture of leadership and ownership growing in these programs and making an impact on our students that will endure long after graduation day.

DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISES



ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

- As part of our expanded partnership with Memphis-Shelby County Schools, CISM entered the first set of 10 Title I schools in Quarter 2, allowing us to build relationships with about 500 additional students and their families. Thanks to an investment from Ballmer Group, we will expand our ISS programming into 30 total schools over the next three years.
- CISM was represented among More For Memphis (MFM) leaders and supporters at William Julius Institute's EdRedesign Lab Summer Institute held at Harvard Graduate School of Education. The three-day event involved 30 leading and backbone organizations from across the country who shared strategies for transforming place through neighborhood leadership.
- CEO Teshanda Middleton joined MFM leaders at the "Power of Place: A Gathering of Leaders" convening hosted by the William Julius Institute and Harlem Children's Zone in New Orleans to begin the work of transitioning into the implementation phase of the More For Memphis plan. This annual event features cross-sector leaders, practitioners, and policymakers working to drive social and economic mobility for the most vulnerable children and families in our country.
- Blue Meridian met with MFM partners to begin discussions about how capital can be aggregated alongside national partners, as well as a high-level overview of the intended impact of the MFM plan.
- Collaborative conversations continued with leaders of CIS-TN and CIS of the Appalachian Highlands around how to work together to better serve the students and families of Tennessee. The group also lobbied at the state capitol to increase resources for those most deserving in our communities.
- CEO Teshanda Middleton graduated from the executive director cohort offered by CIS National, expanding relationships and opportunities for collective impact organization-wide. She was also accepted into Leadership Memphis, which will help connect CISM to more than 60 organizations positively impacting eight local communities.





PREPARE MORE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE

• Integrated Student Support (ISS)

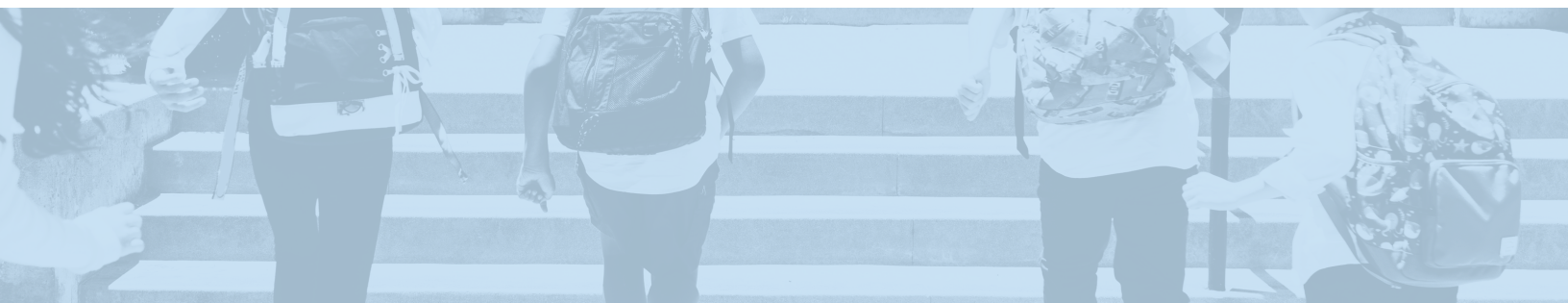
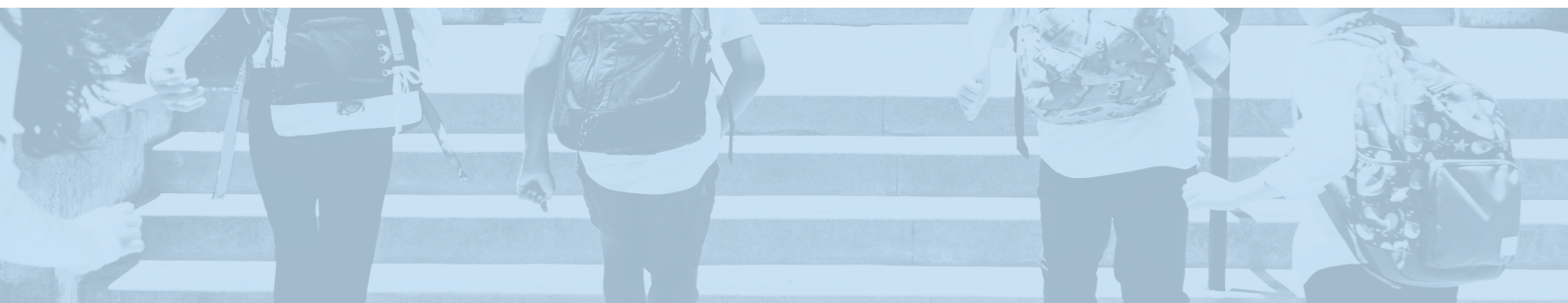
- The ISS team developed a postsecondary plan to assist middle and high school students in navigating their options after graduation, connecting them to appropriate resources and providing access to opportunities and experiences that will assist them in planning for a successful future.
- ISS specialists all received Youth Mental Health First Aid training, equipping them with the necessary tools to handle crisis intervention and support students and families through difficult situations they may face.

• College & Career Readiness:

- CISM's annual Career Exploration Week provided students with access, exposure, and a direct connection to real-world occupational knowledge during a week of virtual workshops and in-person tours across the Greater Memphis area. Dozens of students learned about potential career opportunities from professionals at Marvin Windows & Doors (Ripley, TN), U.S. Cold Storage (Covington, TN), the U.S. Armed Forces, Charles Rivers Lab (Memphis), TCAT Memphis, and more.
- A group of 11 students, including several first-generation college students, toured the campuses of Middle TN State University and Tennessee State University, where they learned about the schools' histories, enrollment requirements, scholarship opportunities, and more. They also got a sense of campus life by visiting the dorms and talking to current students about leadership opportunities, athletics, and other activities. All of the attendees felt the tours gave them information to help them make a better decision about their own college choices.
- A virtual FAFSA workshop was held for nearly 20 students in the graduating class of 2024 and their families to explain how to properly complete the new FAFSA form, as well as important due dates, and required documents for financial aid. One-on-one sessions were also available for any students who needed more assistance.

• Care Coordination:

- The Care Coordination team proudly hosted its second annual Holiday Luncheon for case-managed families of the Driving the Dream program. Every case-managed client could attend with up to two guests. The event featured games, prizes, delicious food, and memorable photo opportunities. This initiative aligns seamlessly with our Achieving Our Purpose (AOP) goals by fostering genuine social connections among program peers.



DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISES



BUILD A VIBRANT CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY

• Alumni Network:

- CISM sent three Memphis alumni to the CIS National Achieve In Life Summit in Birmingham, AL. The three-day event provided insight about the pivotal role that the city played in the Civil Rights Movement and opportunities to be actively involved with educational advocacy. The alumni gained a better understanding of why CIS exists and will collectively form a CISM Alumni Leadership Council to offer their unique voice to all future Alumni Network planning.
- The CISM Alumni Network held its first “Mocktails & Money Moves” event in December. Alumni and a few select high school students were invited to engage with working professionals and CISM staff to enhance their communication skills and practice navigating this type of social environment. They were able to practice their networking skills in a low-stakes setting, which helped to boost their confidence and prepare them for similar real-world experiences, and also get better acquainted with fellow CISM Alumni.

• Collective Impact:

- Department leads gathered to share progress on their Annual Operating Plans. Quarterly meetings will continue throughout the year to evaluate and monitor progress.
- CISM held its annual Angel Tree, a gift-giving holiday event for case-managed families across the organization. Over 60 students and siblings received gifts, which was a 26 percent increase from the prior year, during a holiday event for students and families with light refreshments and photo opportunities. The Tau Iota Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. provided a \$2,500 donation in support of Angel Tree.
- Through the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program, CISM hosted the first Homeless to Hopeful donation drive to provide much-needed resources, food, toiletries, and winter accessories to students and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. More than 130 individuals benefitted from the event, which was held in partnership with Methodist LeBonheur, OUTMemphis, Catholic Charities, Memphis-Shelby County Schools, Regional One, and others.
- Director of Pathways JaMeko Williams was one of 24 Memphis area leaders from the nonprofit, government, academic, and business sectors selected for the Greater Memphis Chamber’s year-long Memphis Workforce Leadership Academy. The fellowship will showcase strategies for improving outcomes for workers and employers from some of the world’s leading workforce development practitioners in a series of retreats, workshops, and action-learning projects.

• Operations:

- The annual CISM Winter Celebration provided a festive opportunity during the holiday season for our staff to experience joy, celebration, and belonging together.



CISM BY THE NUMBERS



Homeless to

Hopeful

In December, CISM held a first-of-its-kind donation drive that aimed to provide much-needed assistance to the homeless population in our city. Thanks to generous support from partners and the public, the “Homeless to Hopeful” event successfully delivered hope and fulfilled our mission to not only provide immediate relief for basic needs, but to also empower youth and adults to regain their self-confidence and take steps towards a brighter future.

**A Donation Drive to
Support Youth &
Families Experiencing
Homelessness**



**138 INDIVIDUALS
RECEIVED MEALS,
SHOES & CLOTHING**



**90+ HEALTH &
WELLNESS SERVICES**



**8 COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS**



**30+ COMBINED
VOLUNTEER HOURS**



**\$875 IN MONETARY
DONATIONS**



PROGRESS SNAPSHOT — Quarter 2



Integrated School Supports (ISS)

>> Student Goals

- **70%** - Making Progress Toward Academic Goals
- **73%** - Making Progress Toward Attendance Goals
- **100%** - Making Progress Toward Career Readiness Goals
- **100%** - Making Progress Toward College Readiness Goals
- **96%** - Making Progress Toward School Behavior Goals
- **80%** - Making Progress Toward Social-Emotional Learning Goals

>> School Goals

- **60%** - On Track to Achieve Chronic Absenteeism Goals
- **100%** - On Track to Achieve Parent Engagement & School Climate Goals

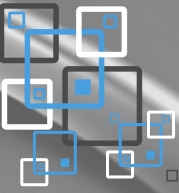


College & Career Readiness Goals

- **\$297,000+** - Student Wages Earned (Q1 & Q2)
- **\$45,000+** - Student Services & Incentives
- **118** Students - Transportation
- **43** Students - College Tours
- **7** Students - Rental Assistance/Utilities
- **7** Students - Books/Applications
- **1** Student - Tools/Work Supplies
- **39** Students - Workshops
- **2** Students - Uniforms
- **2** Students - Screenings
- **1** Student - Certification/Exams
- **1** Student - Obtaining IDs

Alumni Network

- **17** - Engaged in Alumni Programming
- **74.5** Hours of Civic Engagement
- **23.5** Hours of Workshop Participation



Building Dreams: Keturah's Journey of Resilience and Redemption

Success Story *By: Teresa McClatchey, Homeless Youth System Navigator*

When Keturah moved to Memphis after graduation, she had high hopes of starting a new chapter, only to find her dream deferred when she arrived to find a flooded apartment. To make matters worse, it was managed by a landlord who had no interest in helping her resolve the issue.

Despite facing homelessness, 22-year-old Keturah embraced the powers of resilience and resourcefulness. Working tirelessly as a delivery driver, she saved diligently while living in her car.

Keturah's story eventually took a turn for the better when she stumbled upon a brochure for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) during a visit to the local library. This discovery marked a pivotal moment in her journey. With courage and determination, she reached out for assistance, and I was able to be the passionate partner and ally Keturah needed in her journey. Together, we navigated the complex landscape of housing resources, eventually securing a room for Keturah at Hub Hall, a transitional housing facility. This newfound stability provided her with the foundation she needed to begin rebuilding her life.

Empowered by her resilience and supported by dedicated professionals, Keturah secured employment at Amazon, signaling the beginning of a new chapter filled with promise and opportunity. Through her unwavering determination and the assistance of the Rapid Rehousing program offered by Catholic Charities, Keturah not only secured stable housing but also laid the groundwork for a brighter future.

Keturah's journey serves as a powerful reminder of the human spirit's capacity to overcome adversity. Her story inspires us to embrace challenges with courage and perseverance, knowing that with determination and support, anything is possible.

As we celebrate Keturah's triumph, let us recommit ourselves to creating a community where everyone has access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Together, we can build a brighter future for all.



Shakira's Advocate: The Power of Mentorship in Overcoming Challenges

Success Story *By: Shakira, CISM Student*

My name is Shakira, and I am a junior at Melrose High School. When I first met my student support specialist, Ms. McNeill, who I call “mentor,” I was feeling all kinds of frustrated. I was always storming out of class because, most of the time, my teachers did not understand me. Ms. McNeill didn't let me walk away; instead, she talked to me, and we laughed a lot. It felt good to have someone listen to me and give me some direction.

Ms. McNeill asked me to get a consent form signed by my parent so that she could support me. I did it, and my dad helped fill out the parts I missed. After that, I started going to Ms. McNeill's area in the school every day. We talked about what mindset I needed for the day.

After about two weeks, my teacher noticed I was acting differently. I told her it was because my mentor talked to me and I listened. I made a promise to Ms. McNeill that I wouldn't get into trouble for the rest of the school year, and I meant it. I didn't want to let her down, and I didn't want her to hear about me getting into fights or anything negative.

When Ms. McNeill asked me why I fought and I didn't have an answer, we decided to focus on positive behavior instead. I realized that getting into fights wasn't helping me at all, so I stopped arguing with other students and kept my hands to myself.

Ms. McNeill always made sure I felt comfortable talking to her. She never told me what to do; she just listened and gave me advice when I needed it. She also always had snacks, hugs, or jokes to share whenever I stopped by her area, and saying “goodbye” to her at the end of the day always came with an “I love you.”

I'm grateful to have a mentor and an advocate on my side. She's made such a big difference in my life. Even though I still have struggles, I know I can count on her and the support I receive to help me through. CISM and Ms. McNeill have shown me that I'm more than enough, and for that, I'm truly thankful.

Quarter 3 - January - March 2024

>> Integrated Student Support (ISS):

- Read Across America week is coming up March 4th-8th, and CISM will hold its annual bookmark contest for students in grades K-5, along with a Raps & Rhymes contest for students in grades 6-12. The school with the highest amount of submissions will win the annual reading carnival. CISM families will also be invited to join our book club and read “Black Cake” by Charmaine Wilkerson with us.
- ISS specialists will begin implementing Junior Achievement programming at all 20 CISM partner schools this spring through the rest of the year. The new partnership with Junior Achievement will help further prepare students for the workforce, college and career readiness, and financial literacy growth.

>> College & Career Readiness (CCR):

- Five CISM students will take part in the annual Spring College Tour in March. The four-day trip to New Orleans will include visits to Xavier University and Dillard University. They’ll also be exposed to unique industries, learn more about New Orleans culture by visiting museums and landmarks, and experience fine dining with successful businessmen and women. In addition to the unforgettable trip, each student will receive new luggage, CISM swag bags, and hygiene kits.

>> Care Coordination:

- CISM will expand its support for families by adding a new bilingual Care Coordination specialist to the team to better serve the Spanish-speaking community.
- The Care Coordination team will restart quarterly workshops in Quarter 3 to support participants with a range of integrated services and training throughout the year.

>> Alumni Network:

- The Alumni Network is hosting an event at STAX Museum, called “Building Alumni Leadership Community.” CISM Alumni will be invited to learn about Memphis music history and engage as leaders within their own spheres of influence.

>> Collective Impact:

- The leadership team will come together for the annual AOP Planning Retreat to begin constructing our AOPs for the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- Equity Fundamentals 2.0, hosted by CIS National, will launch in January. This DEIB-focused professional development series, co-led and designed by our senior director of strategy and impact, Jessica Pontoo, builds upon the success of previous workshops. This next phase will examine the importance of considering intersectionality in effective DEI implementation.

