

Beth Shiroishi, President AT&T - Georgia:

Many nonprofits confuse outputs with outcomes. At AT&T, we believe that the emotional stories of student success are great and needed, but we also want proof that the programs are holistically working - that lives are being changed and problems being solved. That's why we're constantly raising the bar for organizations we fund to articulate their outcomes. And it's why we're such big fans of CIS. We are aligned in our missions, and we share a commitment to quality and metrics.

Maybe that sounds a little clinical, but it's not. We know that people of goodwill are trying to make a difference in the world, and we want to fund organizations where those good people can have the greatest impact.

When I announced our contribution, I talked about the day I "fell in love" with CIS. That's a strongly emotional word choice, but I think it is an accurate reflection. I knew from the numbers that you folks were doing great work, but I needed to see CIS in action before my heart aligned with my head.

This was shortly after I assumed my current position at AT&T, and I was visiting a school in Washington, D.C., where several different nonprofits were meeting to discuss the needs of a particular set of students. Besides the nonprofit personnel, there were also teachers, administrators and guidance counselors in the room, and I slipped in late, so I had no idea who was who.

As all these groups discussed the students they were working with, I'd say the mood ranged from stressed to pessimistic to desperate. But in the midst of it all was this gentle, calm, professional woman who listened politely and then responded to almost every situation with some helpful background or context. Over and over again, she offered to meet with the student, or go check out what was going on at home, or check in to see if perhaps the student's medication had run out.

I honestly thought this woman must be either the principal or a guidance counselor because she had such command of the

situation and such obvious concern for every student under discussion. It was only when the meeting was over that I discovered she was actually the CIS site coordinator.

That's when it clicked for me: CIS can put up such amazing numbers because they have a model that attracts caring, qualified professionals and allows them to do what they do best. You take people like that, give them training and tools and resources, and it's amazing the difference they can make in individual lives.

I'm excited to be in a position where I can help put even more of these wonderful professionals into contact with the kids who need them most. I hope hundreds of site coordinators are reading this post, because I want to repeat what I said at the Summer Institute:

Thank you for your commitment, your tenacity, your belief in our young people, and most of all thank you for sticking with it on those hard days when I'm sure it would be so much easier to just walk away. We need you, our students need you, and I personally want to thank you.