



Endowment Investment Opens Doors for Thousands of New Hanover County Students

***Communities In Schools of Cape Fear awarded transformative grant from
New Hanover Community Endowment***

WILMINGTON – Communities In Schools of Cape Fear announced today it was awarded a \$3.2 million grant from the New Hanover Community Endowment. The three-year grant cements the future for existing CIS programs like Freedom School, supports the expansion of CIS services into new schools, and allows CIS to take its work to new heights with funding for the region’s first Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) project.

“As honored and grateful as we are to be provided the opportunity to grow our offerings, I’m most excited for the families we serve. All students have the potential to succeed and deserve educations that lead to successful futures. This grant helps bring that vision to life in ways we never thought possible,” said Communities In Schools of Cape Fear Executive Director Louise Hicks.

For over 18 years, CIS has worked to ensure students have what they need to be successful in the classroom and in life. CIS places trained staff directly inside 29 targeted, high-need public schools to work with vulnerable students and those with the greatest risk of dropping out of school. CIS Student Support Specialists link students and their families with resources including mental health counseling, tutoring, attendance monitoring, mentoring, and afterschool programs. Last year, CIS Cape Fear provided services to more than 22,000 families across the region.

“The Endowment is excited to support the work of Communities In Schools. Their focus on creating conditions and interventions like the Full-Service Community School model helps students to thrive inside and outside the classroom, positioning them to have choices and options, and ultimately building a stronger community. Making intentional investments in children gives us one of the best opportunities to make transformational change,” said William Buster, president and CEO of the New Hanover Community Endowment.

The grant from the New Hanover Community Endowment also allows CIS and New Hanover County Schools to partner with other nonprofits across the county to work together to create an environment where students thrive and can carve their own path to healthy, prosperous lives-- a wholistic way of reducing poverty, crime, and adverse health outcomes across the Cape Fear.

“This investment will change the trajectory of countless lives and we’re incredibly grateful for the Endowment’s partnership,” added Hicks.

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CONTACT: Kendall McGee Englehart
Communications Manager, Communities In Schools of Cape Fear
704-996-2546 kendall@ciscapefear.org

The Endowment funding will support three distinct projects over the next three years:

1. *Childrens Defense Fund Freedom Schools*

The six-week summer program, held in partnership with New Hanover County Schools, improves student reading scores while empowering youth to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, and the world. Continuing CDF Freedom School will provide a safe and enriching place for rising 3rd-8th grade students to spend their summers for the next three years.

2. *Funding to support expansion into New School Sites*

The funding from the Endowment allows Communities In Schools of Cape Fear to expand into six new schools over the next three years. Two sites went live in August 2023 and CIS will expand to two more for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years. Adding CIS student support specialist to these additional schools will result in better outcomes for more students across New Hanover County.

3. *Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Project*

The Endowment funding will kickstart a first-of-its kind project for New Hanover County aimed to support student achievement and meet family needs deriving from trauma and poverty. The FSCS model will be implemented at one New Hanover County School site next school year and provide access to multiple evidence-based, wrap-around services, including high-quality extended learning opportunities, workforce/job skill development, and mental and physical health supports by bringing nonprofits and businesses together under one school's roof.