

# Communities In Schools of Cape Fear CDF Freedom School

## Scholar & Family Handbook



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Dear Freedom School Families,

Welcome to the Communities In Schools of Cape Fear CDF Freedom School (CIS CDF Freedom School)!

This handbook is designed to give scholars and their families helpful insight into the CDF Freedom School program offered by Communities In Schools of Cape Fear. It includes detailed information about program activities, procedures, and policies. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it in a safe place for easy reference during the summer.

At CDF Freedom Schools®, we're not just educating. We're nurturing lifelong learners and advocates for progress. By equipping the youngest generation, we're sculpting a brighter tomorrow where we celebrate every young person's potential and affirm their profound impact on the world. Our staff and partners are committed to helping our Scholars succeed.

If you have any questions about the content of this handbook, please feel free to call the Freedom School Program Director at 910-343-1901 ext. 116 or 910-777-7397.

Best regards,

Keisha Robinson  
Communities In Schools of Cape Fear  
CIS CDF Freedom School Program Director

## Program Contact Information

### **Communities In Schools Contacts**

Communities In Schools Cape Fear Executive Director: Louise Hicks  
Communities In Schools Cape Fear Operations Manager: Marrio Jeter

### **Communities In Schools of Cape Fear Headquarters**

1209 Market Street, Suite A  
Wilmington, NC 28401  
Telephone: (910)-343-1901

### **CIS CDF Freedom School Staff:**

Program Director: Keisha Robinson  
Site Coordinator of Operations: Geralyn Love  
Site Coordinator Level 2: Hilary Ozenbaugh  
Site Coordinator Level 3: Anthony Nixon

### **2026 CIS CDF Freedom School Site**

Williston Middle School  
401 S. 10th Street, Wilmington NC  
*(Entrance on 11<sup>th</sup> street side by gym)*

For concerns about your child or questions about schedules, policies, or staffing, please call Keisha Robinson at (910)-777-7397 or (910)-343-1901 ext. 116 or contact your child's assigned Servant Leader Intern.

## **Communities In Schools Mission**

To surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

## **History of Communities In Schools**

Founder Bill Milliken began CIS in New York City in the 1970's. He came up with the idea of bringing community resources inside public schools, where they are accessible, coordinated and accountable.

"It's relationships, not programs, that change children," Bill once said. "A great program simply creates the environment for healthy relationships to form between adults and children. Young people thrive when adults care about them on a one-to-one level, and when they also have a sense of belonging to a caring community."

Forty years into our mission, Bill's principles continue to guide our work and serve as a beacon for the next chapter in our history.

## **What We Do**

At Communities In Schools, we work directly inside public schools, supporting vulnerable scholars and those with the greatest risk of dropping out. Our trained scholar support specialists do this by partnering with teachers and administration at each school site, mobilizing the community to offer scholars extra support, and doing whatever it takes to help them succeed. Our unique model works because it's based on national research, driven by community relationships and supported by local resources.

## **Communities In Schools 5 Basics**

We believe all students need and deserve access to 5 Basics:

1. A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult
2. A safe place to learn and grow
3. A healthy start and a healthy future
4. A marketable skill to use upon graduation
5. A chance to give back to peers and community

All programming revolves around supporting these basics and helping scholars stay in school and on the path to success.

## **Statement of Purpose**

CDF Freedom Schools incorporates the totality of CDF's mission by fostering environments that support young people. At the Children's Defense Fund, the mission is to build a community where young people grow up with dignity, hope, and joy. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® program stands as a beacon in CDF's larger movement to champion dignified, hopeful, and joyful engagement of young people, including parents and families. Your involvement in CDF Freedom Schools is not mere participation; it's a vital contribution to supporting both parents and children, in alignment with CDF's child advocacy approach. Our dedicated efforts focus on fostering an inclusive culture of equitable parent and family engagement.

## The Freedom School Model

Through the *CDF Freedom Schools* model, we empower youth to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, country, and world with hope, education, and action.

Rooted in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1964, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program has historically and continues to be a part of the Black Community Crusade for Children®. The *CDF Freedom Schools* program offers engagement through both a six-week summer and after-school literacy and cultural enrichment program designed to serve children and youth in grades K–12 in communities where quality academic enrichment programming is limited, too expensive, or non-existent. By partnering with schools, faith and community-based organizations, municipalities, colleges and universities, and juvenile detention facilities, we offer this program at no cost to families.

The *CDF Freedom Schools* program enhances a child's motivation to read and makes them feel good about learning. At the same time, the program connects families to the right resources in their communities. *CDF Freedom Schools* Scholars engage in a research-based, multicultural Integrated Reading Curriculum that supports them and their families through five essential components:

- High quality academic enrichment
- Parent and family development
- Civic engagement and social action
- Servant leadership development
- Nutrition, health, and mental health

Scholars receive two nutritious meals and a snack daily, as well as a book each week to build their home libraries. We believe in an intergenerational leadership model. That's why our program is staffed primarily by college scholars and recent college graduates, with a 10:1 child to adult ratio. As a result, many children make significant gains in reading achievement and do not experience summer learning loss.

## **Application & Enrollment Process**

Families can acquire applications for the CIS CDF Freedom School from CIS Student Support Specialists in their schools, counselors, school social workers, and our website at [ciscapefear.org/freedom-school](http://ciscapefear.org/freedom-school).

After the family has submitted the application, Freedom School staff will review the application to assess how many spots are available in the scholars' age group. The family will be contacted via email or phone call with an invitation to attend an enrollment orientation. Scholars are not fully enrolled in the CIS CDF Freedom School Summer program until their caregiver has attended an orientation session for the year that they have applied. Even families of returning scholars must attend enrollment orientation. In the case that the program is at capacity, scholars will be placed on a waiting list to be contacted if spots do become available. The orientation will review this handbook, expectations of Scholars for the Summer, expectation of the families of Scholars for the Summer, and any other pertinent information about the summer program. The scholar is officially enrolled at the completion of all of the forms and documents required at orientation.

All families are informed that their Scholar's participation in the CIS CDF Freedom School program is voluntary and that they may un-enroll their scholar at any time. The CIS CDF Freedom School also reserves the right to exit a Scholar from the program for any breach in the guidelines outlined in the Handbook or as deemed necessary by the program director.

## Schedule of Operation

Communities In Schools of Cape Fear CDF Freedom School will program from 8 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday from June 15<sup>th</sup> to July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026. **There will be no programming on July 3<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

### Early Dismissal

The CIS Freedom School program will be closed for operation on July 3rd. In the case that you need to check your scholar out early during programming, please contact the Program Director or the Servant Leader Intern contact given to you for your child.

### Incllement Weather

Families are also encouraged to monitor their emails and notes home to advise about closures and early dismissals.

## Attendance Policy and Procedures

Scholars that are enrolled in the CIS CDF Freedom School program are expected to attend the program at least 90% of the time that they are enrolled in the program. Only three days of programming can be missed for the entirety of the 6-week summer session. After the third absence, the scholar is in jeopardy of being exited from the program in an effort to afford another Scholar the opportunity to participate fully in the program. **The attendance policy is in place to allow the program to serve as many eligible families and Scholars as possible.** In the case that a scholar misses more than 90% of programming, CIS CDF Freedom School does reserve the right to place that Scholar on the waitlist and invite another scholar to fill the available spot.

### Daily Sign In

Scholars that are retrieved from home and transported by bus to the program site will automatically be signed in to the program each day.

### Daily Sign Out

Scholars that are picked up by parents may be picked up when an adult on their pick-up list arrives and signs them out. If someone that is not on your child's pick-up list needs to pick them up, please contact the Program Director or your assigned SLI to let them know the name of the person who will be picking the child up. Please have I.D ready upon picking up your child.

### Late Pick-up

Please inform the program director or your Scholar's SLI if there is a chance that your child may be picked up late from programming. We understand that emergencies do occur, however we encourage all families to pick up their scholars on time.

### Walkers Disclaimer

If a scholar will be departing from programming by walking, the parent or guardian needs to note that permission for the Scholar to walk on their initial paperwork. The parent must note the addresses that their child is permitted to walk to after programming. CIS CDF Freedom School does not assume responsibility for scholars after they leave the programming campus. It is requested that parents make accommodations for their walking scholars in the event of inclement weather.

## Programming

Each day of programming consists of breakfast, Harambee, Integrated Reading Curriculum instruction, lunch, and afternoon activities. Participation and willingness to attempt activities is crucial to each Scholar's positive experience at Freedom School. If a scholar is physically unable to participate in any activity, a parent is asked to provide a written note.

### Meals and Daily Snacks

Every Scholar will be offered breakfast and lunch provided by New Hanover County Schools Child Food & Nutrition at no cost to families. Scholars are permitted to bring their own breakfast and lunch as long as refrigeration and/or a heating element is not required. Scholars will be provided with snacks during programming. Scholars are permitted to bring their own snacks as long as they do not require refrigeration or a heating element. All allergies or dietary restrictions should be noted on the initial enrollment paperwork. Scholars are not required to eat the snacks that are provided, but they do have the opportunity to eat the snack if they choose to do so. A different snack may not be provided to a child simply because they do not like the snack that has been provided. On occasion, specialty snacks may be provided to the scholar in addition to the regular snack that they receive. These snacks will be offered to all scholars and are also consumed at the will of the scholar.

### Integrated Reading Curriculum

The books for Integrated Reading Curriculum are chosen by the Children's Defense Fund. They're revered as being culturally responsive and providing both windows and mirrors into the world of scholars. Engaging the students in stories that have characters that look like them are important because we know that "you cannot be what you cannot see." Some of the stories may evoke questions about the world around us and the systems that exist that perpetuate disparities in access to resources. The Integrated Reading Curriculum does not shy away from these conversations and invites scholars to think critically

### Life/Social Skills Development and Instruction

CIS CDF Freedom School seeks to cultivate Scholars' social skills by engaging them in activities that foster teamwork, leadership skills, compassion and empathy for others, as well as opportunities to give back to their community in various ways. We also recognize the need for scholars to have an understanding of basic hygiene practices, organizational skills, and conflict resolution skills. Programming encourages life skills by emphasizing personal responsibility and requiring scholars to clean up their work spaces daily. Programming stresses the importance of strong social awareness, relationships, problem-solving, responsible decision-making skills, and sets time aside for scholars to review and practice these skills to ensure their successful transition to adulthood. During this time, scholars will work on community building; conflict resolution; developing pro-social, listening and communication skills; understanding others' perspectives; managing anger and aggression; resolving conflicts; developing character; making decisions; avoiding peer pressure; understanding culture; respecting differences; and avoiding stereotyping.

### Afternoon Activities

All scholars are encouraged to participate at their level of comfort and to inform staff of any physical or emotional discomfort that they experience during programming. This summer, Scholars will have the opportunity to participate in the following afternoon activities:

- Art
- STEAM
- Dance/Step
- Sports
- Engineering
- Wilmington History
- Creative Writing
- Film
- Teen Court
- Cooking

### Use of Online Resources

There are times during programming when scholars will have time to access the internet using Communities In Schools of Cape Fear or New Hanover County Schools' devices. It is the expectation that Scholars will use technology for educational purposes and only access appropriate websites. It is also the expectation that Scholars will **not** use the technology to access social media or Facetime, chat applications, or otherwise engage

with persons that are not present in the programming space. If a Scholar violates these expectations, CIS Freedom School reserves the right to restrict that Scholar's access to the available technology and the parent or guardian will be notified. Disciplinary actions will be taken if it is deemed necessary by staff.

### **Showcases and Family Events**

CIS CDF Freedom School will host Family Nights and a Finale showcase during the summer. Please refer to the calendar to be advised about dates for such events. Parent and Family engagement is a key component in the success of each of our Scholars, so we invite families to attend Morning Harambee from time to time, ask their Scholar about what they are learning, read the weekly newsletter, answer correspondences from staff, and join us at Family Night events.

### **Scholar Attire**

It is the expectation that scholars will adhere to the New Hanover County Schools dress code when participating in CIS CDF Freedom School programming. Please have scholars wear appropriate shoes for programming. Crocs and similar footwear are permissible, as long as there is a strap to secure the shoe to the scholar's foot. Please do not allow scholars to wear mesh or "see through" materials, ski masks, or graphic tees with profane images or words. Out of respect for our growing scholars and those around us, we will not permit any clothing that allows underclothing to be seen.

### **Personal Items**

CIS CDF Freedom School is not responsible for the safe return of personal belongings. It is the expectation that scholars will leave personal items such as fidget toys, slime, cell phones, tablets, hairbrushes, etc. in their backpacks during programming. Use of any personal items during programming is done at the Scholars' own risk.

### **Cell phones and Tablets**

In the case that a Scholar does choose to use their personal cell phone or tablet during programming, it is the expectation that these devices will only be used during dismissal time and for emergencies. Scholars should not have these devices out during presentations, group activities or discussions. Scholars should not have any vulgar or crude videos or media content playing at any time. Scholars are not permitted to record, take pictures, or refer to other Scholars using their personal devices. If the use of a device use becomes problematic, disciplinary actions will be taken.

## **Health Policy**

### **Scholar illness/ Accident/ Emergencies**

If a Scholar becomes ill, is injured during programming, or exhibits any of the following conditions, their parent/guardian or emergency contact will be contacted and asked to pick the Scholar up within one hour of notification:

- Contagious disease
- Fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Accident requiring medical attention
- COVID19 Symptoms

If a Scholar is in need of urgent medical attention, staff will call 911. Please report any changes of emergency contact information, employment, telephone numbers, or addresses to program facilitators as soon as the information becomes available. Although this information will be kept confidential, it will be shared with appropriate staff members to facilitate communication with parents/guardians in emergency situations.

## **Abuse and Neglect Policy**

The CIS CDF Freedom School program and its staff members are mandated reporters and as such, are required by the state of North Carolina to report all suspected instances of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

## **Weapons Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to assure a safe environment for Scholars, staff and all stakeholders. It provides for clear understanding of intent, expectations, and parameters for Scholars and non-scholars alike. It also provides for strict rules of enforcement and consequences for weapons violation in cooperation with law enforcement and according to state and federal laws. A “weapon” means any object, device or instrument designed as a weapon or through its use is capable of threatening or producing bodily harm or which may be used to inflict self-injury, including, but not limited to, any firearm, whether loaded or unloaded; air guns; pellet guns; BB guns; fake (facsimile) weapons; all knives; blades; clubs; metal knuckles; nun chucks; throwing stars; explosives; fireworks; mace and other propellants; stun guns; ammunition; poisons; chains; arrows; and objects that have been modified to serve as a weapon. Any Scholar that is found with possession of any weapon will be exited from the program.

## **Behavior Management and Discipline Policy**

It is our hope that all Scholars can respect rules, follow directions, and have an enjoyable experience during all of our programming. That being said, we understand that behaviors do occur and actions must be taken to ensure the safety, respect, and experience for all Scholars, staff, and stakeholders involved. The following is our discipline procedure:

### Expectations

Each scholar will adhere to the following expectations:

- Be Safe- Scholars are expected to do their best to make safe choices in all that they do.
- Be Respectful - Scholars are expected to show respect to self, to staff, to equipment, to peers, to guests, and to opportunities.
- Remain in Area- Scholars are expected to ask permission before transitioning to another area. Scholars are expected to stay in supervised areas and communicate any need to exit that space with staff.
- Follow Directions- Scholars are expected to adhere to staff directives and scheduled programming.
- Be Responsible- Scholars are expected to help clean up their messes and be accountable for their words and actions.
- Use time wisely- Scholars are expected participate and engage in scheduled programming.

### Behaviors/ Discipline

A three-strike rule will be implemented during programming.

Minor infractions of expectations will be met with (1) a redirection, (2) a verbal warning, (3) a reflection sheet and consequence from the consequence list.

### Consequence list

Loss of play time  
Copy discipline  
Policy Writing  
Time Away  
Call Home  
Sent home Early  
Reflective Walk

If the scholar does not make adjustments to their behavior after serving their consequence and reflecting, a “strike” will be earned.

Strike one- Written notice to parent and verbal warning.

Strike two- Written notice or a conference will be held with parents and admin. Scholars cannot return until a conference has been completed. A correction plan will be in place.

Strike three- Written notice to parent and scholar will be suspended for one week

Any strike after 3 will result in the scholar being exited from the program.

\*NOTE: Serious, dangerous, or disruptive/destructive behavior that interferes with normal program operation will not be tolerated and will result in immediate dismissal with no previous notice to the parent/guardian.

Write ups from the bus may result in suspension from the bus even after a first offense.

### Communication

CDF CIS Freedom School maintains an open-door policy. Please feel free to direct questions or concerns related to any facet of programming to the **Freedom School Site Coordinators** or the **Program Director** at any time. Any questions regarding policies, staffing, activities, or a scholar’s participation in the program may be directed to the **Program Director** at 910-777-7397 or 910-343-1901 ext 116. Voicemail is in place 24 hours a day and will record a message if no one is available to answer your call.

If a concern involving a staff member arises, please speak with a site coordinator or the Program director. If the matter cannot be resolved at that time, the Program Director may meet with the staff member and arrange a meeting to discuss and resolve the parental concern. The program will communicate with parents’ email and via a site newsletter. The program will also speak to parents during pick-up time and any time that they request a call or conference.

### Scholar Confidentiality

Each staff member must exercise scholar confidentiality per FERPA and HIPAA Guidelines. This applies to communication including emails, phone calls, and scholar data collection. FERPA refers to The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), a Federal law that protects the privacy of education records. HIPAA refers to the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act.

### Scholar Bullying Prevention Policy

All Scholars must adhere to the policies in the New Hanover County Schools Code of Student Conduct while participating and programming at CIS CDF Freedom School - <https://www.nhcs.net/divisions/student-support-services/bullying-information>

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## Enrollment & Consent Forms



