

Communities in Schools

Agency Mission:

Surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. We place staff inside targeted, high -need public schools, who work directly with vulnerable students and those with the greatest risk factors throughout the school day. Our unique model works because it's based on national research, driven by community relationships and supported by local resources.

Asking for a \$25,000 WIN Grant

Project Summary:

Our Freedom Schools empower scholars to discover their love of reading and to realize how they can make a difference in themselves, their families, their community, their national and their world by exploring these themes across the 6 weeks through the implementation of a research-based Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC), which incorporates reading and grade-level appropriate, culturally relevant books. The Freedom School model is designed to enhance its scholars' motivation to read and to make them feel good about learning, while connecting their families to resources in their communities.

CIS Freedom Schools provide a critical support during months when learning gaps typically widen and when students are often left unsupervised, leaving them more likely to engage in risky behavior. We work closely with school administration and counselors as well as the District's McKinney-Vento Coordinator, for student recruitment, and provide

the 6-week program free of charge. New Hanover County Schools provides transportation, breakfast, lunch, a counselor, and a school nurse for the duration of the program; and though our deep-reaching partnerships

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with other youth and family-serving organizations, participants and their families are connected to additional resources as needed.

Program Details:

Students are assigned to classrooms of no more than 10 scholars each, based on their reading/grade levels. The program uses intergenerational leadership and collaborative learning techniques to read and explore high quality books that are multiracial, multicultural, and socially significant. Direct reading instruction is provided daily through popcorn reading, literacy activities such as compare and contrast, vocabulary exploration, and others. Each classroom is staffed by a Student Leader intern (a current college Junior or Senior, or recent graduate) who is fully trained to implement the IRC. Additional CIS staff members provide behavior and Academic support.

We are requesting \$25,000 form WIN to fully fund the project and build capacity for the 2022 implementation of our Freedom In schools. In 2020 we served 48 students, in 2021 we raised that number to 78, and you your support we hope to reach 100 students in 2022.

Impact:

Our target population are rising 3rd – 8th grade students who have been identified as falling behind in school, and those who have been verified by NHCS as being homeless. Up to 100 scholars will be recruited from across the district, with particular emphasis placed on Alderman, Forest Hills, Freeman, Gregory, Snipes, Virgo, Sunset Park, Whitesboro, Holly Shelter, and Williston.

By implementing our Freedom Schools, we strive to increase reading proficiency, decrease or eliminate summer learning loss, and instill a love of reading and learning in students who have typically struggled in their traditional classroom settings. To put s simply we aim to create the new “in” crowd by showing our scholars – through their college student teachers and culturally relevant, engaging lessons – that learning is cool and being smart is more than OK. Participants are able to attend every summer, so

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long as they are rising 3rd – 8th grade, and high school volunteers are welcome. In fact, we hope to develop a pipeline of high school mentors who come back to Freedom School after they have aged-out to give back to their community and younger peers.

Our goals include increasing reading proficiency, decreasing summer learning loss, and engaging some of our region's most at risk youth, and their families in free, dynamic programming. Specifically, 85% of participants will attend at least 85% of the program days; and 75% will improve their reading skills by at least 1 reading level, whereby exhibiting a reduction of summer learning loss.

Since 2012, our Freedom School have served 126 students, 28 of whom were homeless. Postassessments inform us that an average of 81% improved their reading levels.