



children's
defense fund
Leave No Child Behind®

FALL 2020 NON-PROFITS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction to CDF Freedom Schools®

The CDF Freedom Schools® program is the only six-week summer literacy and cultural enrichment program with a key focus on social justice. The *CDF Freedom Schools* model empowers scholars to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, country, and the world with hope, education, and action.

Rooted in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1964, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is 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 community and faith-based organizations, schools, municipalities, colleges and universities, and juvenile detention facilities, we are able to offer this program in these communities at no cost to the families and communities they serve.

The *CDF Freedom Schools* program enhances children'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 CDF's research-based, multicultural **Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC)** that supports them and their families through five essential components:

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

The lessons in the IRC consist of **social action skill development activities** and include opportunities for **civic engagement**, **conflict resolution**, and **self and community empowerment**. IRC books feature heroes, heroines, and settings that reflect the scholars' cultural images and history.



84% of children and youth in CDF Freedom Schools avoid summer learning loss.

Fostering Civic Engagement: The *CDF Freedom Schools* program encourages scholars throughout their childhood and adolescence to embrace their cultural history and reinforces confidence in their abilities to create positive changes in the world. *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars participate in book discussions and social action projects that address fairness, voting rights, and education access. In addition, each year in July, *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars across the country unite for the National Day of Social Action (NDSA).

More than 90% of parents said they were more likely to be engaged in their child's education after being involved in *CDF Freedom Schools*.

Why the *CDF Freedom Schools* Model Works

Our program is more than just a summer experience; it's a lifetime commitment to the movement of social justice. We believe that representation matters. For this reason, *CDF Freedom Schools* programs are staffed primarily by college students and recent college graduates, known as Servant Leader Interns. Servant Leader Interns come from communities similar to those in which *CDF Freedom Schools* programs are offered. Their interactions enable scholars to envision themselves as future college students, advocates, and leaders.

90% of parents saw a positive change in their *CDF Freedom Schools* scholar.

How Can *CDF Freedom Schools* Help Your Local Community?

CDF Freedom Schools creates spaces for scholars, parents, and educators to come together and engage in meaningful action that allows communities to grow academically and socially. With hope, education, and action, communities are able to learn from one another and provide resources and support to address community needs. **Here are a few benefits of hosting the *CDF Freedom Schools* program at non-profits and community-based organizations:**

- Expands current community outreach efforts and initiatives through expanded services
- Increases visibility in the community, attracting more community members to the work of the organization
- Encourages parent and family engagement through weekly meetings and volunteer opportunities as guest readers, field trip chaperones, and participants in other community activities

"Freedom Schools is helping people learn about their equal rights, and now, since stuff has been happening, Freedom Schools is even more into it,"

— **Marina**, *CDF Freedom Schools* scholar

We find ourselves having the conversations we might not be able to have in regular schools, and that's what makes freedom schools so important. We're paving the way for students to find their voice and use their voice."

— **Gabrielle Brown**, *CDF Freedom Schools* Servant Leader Intern

I went into the role of thinking I was going to pour into the youth, but they gave me so much. Youth, they're loyal. If you care for them, they'll care for you. I was surprised how much they uplifted me because I thought I was there to uplift them. It turns out that they served me instead."



— **Ashnee Young**, former *Ella Baker* Trainer and the Executive Director of New Evolution Educational Center

Types of Non-Profits and Community-Based Organizations that sponsor *CDF Freedom*

Schools sites: Community Development Corporations, Housing Coalitions and Affordable Housing Developers, Sports & Leadership Centers, Youth & Workforce Development Centers, Policy & Justice Coalitions, and more.

Interested in starting a *CDF Freedom Schools* site in your community?

To apply, sponsor organizations (such as churches, schools, and school districts, community organizations, etc.) should complete an application and budget worksheet online at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/cdf-freedom-schools/>

Some additional information:

- The Children's Defense requires sites to serve a minimum of 30 children.
- As a response to the ongoing pandemic, sponsor organizations can operate in-person, virtual, or hybrid programs based on their community needs.
- The cost to sponsor a program is set at \$285 per scholar.
- As a part of the partnership, the Children's Defense Fund provides sponsoring organizations training on its multicultural, research-based Integrated Reading Curriculum, accompanying reading and site library books, training, program monitoring, and evaluation.
- Staff working in *CDF Freedom Schools* programs must attend mandatory virtual training meetings throughout the year.
- Contact the *CDF Freedom Schools* national office to learn more about how you can start your application to sponsor a *CDF Freedom Schools* site. Our team can be reached via phone at (202) 662-3543 or by email at freedomschools@childrensdefense.org.

