

*Evaluation of the
Kansas City
CDF Freedom Schools®
Initiative*

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Evaluation of the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools Initiative

Highlights

The Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools*[®] Initiative provides a six-week summer program for young people in kindergarten through the eighth grade. The *CDF Freedom Schools* program is designed to have a positive impact on educational enrichment, cultural appreciation, character development, parental support, leadership, and community involvement.

This report is based on data collected during a three-year evaluation of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites. It analyzes the effects that Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* have on scholars, their parents, interns, and the churches that host Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites. Findings from these data indicate that:

- ❑ A total of 18 churches hosted Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites.
- ❑ A total of 3,274 scholars attended Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites.
- ❑ Scholars benefited as a result of their participation in Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program.
 - ❑ Reading abilities of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars significantly improved over the summer. Reading abilities of scholars improved more than similar students not in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program; the reading abilities of students not enrolled in any academic summer program declined. Gains in reading were greater for:
 - ❑ older scholars in Level III (sixth through eighth graders);
 - ❑ girls;
 - ❑ scholars from lower income families;
 - ❑ scholars who attended multiple years; and
 - ❑ scholars attending schools that implemented the *CDF Freedom Schools* model best.
 - ❑ Parents report that their children demonstrate:
 - ❑ greater love of learning;
 - ❑ greater appreciation of their culture;
 - ❑ greater conflict resolution skills;
 - ❑ greater acceptance of responsibility; and
 - ❑ greater social adjustment.Parents of comparison students do not report similar growth.
- ❑ College-aged students were selected to be interns because they demonstrated leadership, community involvement, political awareness, and contributions to charity before they became interns. These interns were more likely to: retain their involvement at follow-up than comparisons were; increase their interest in the news and political involvement, while these decreased among comparisons; and plan to become teachers after they graduate from college.
- ❑ The Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program is an important addition to the ministry of the host church. These churches have histories of service to their communities and the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program allows them to provide additional support and service.

**CDF Freedom Schools*[®] is a federally registered mark of the Children's Defense Fund.

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The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) created the *CDF Freedom Schools*[®] program in 1993 under the leadership of Marian Wright Edelman as an initiative to mobilize the African American community to address the needs of children.¹ The program emphasizes reading enrichment, youth leadership development, parent education, and social action. Staffed by college interns, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program provides an enriching environment for children based on the following values:

- All children can learn when taught by knowledgeable and caring adults;
- Children should be treated with respect and taught about their cultural heritage;
- Reading is key to unlocking a child's potential; and
- Parents must be involved in their children's education.

The Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* Initiative began in the summer of 1995 when the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation provided support to Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church to establish a *CDF Freedom Schools* site in Kansas City. In 2003, the Kauffman Foundation supported the addition of four schools in Kansas City, increasing the total number to seven. Then in 2004, the Kauffman Foundation supported the continued expansion of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program with a \$12.9 million grant that incrementally increases the number of sites to twenty in 2008.

From 2005 through 2007, Philliber Research Associates, with the support of the Kauffman Foundation, conducted a three-year evaluation of the impact of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program on scholars, parents, interns, and the churches hosting them.

The CDF Freedom Schools Model

The *CDF Freedom Schools* provide a summer program for children between the ages of five and fifteen. Host organizations, usually churches, are responsible for managing the schools. A Project Director oversees each school and is the liaison between the school and the host. Site Coordinators manage the daily operation of the schools and supervise the college-aged interns who work directly with the scholars.

Mornings in *CDF Freedom Schools* are dedicated to reading enrichment. After breakfast, the scholars gather for a half-hour of Harambee, the opening, which includes the reading of a story often by an outside member of the community. There are two sessions of Integrated Reading using literature which has a strong Afrocentric orientation. This, plus the learning activities prepared by the interns, are designed to engage the scholars and motivate them to want to read. The morning ends with DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read) when scholars read silently to themselves.

There are four key elements in the *CDF Freedom Schools* model:

- *Educational Enrichment and Cultural Awareness.* The *CDF Freedom Schools* program utilizes an Integrated Reading Curriculum to foster a love for reading and an appreciation of

¹ The name is taken in honor of those schools established during the civil rights movement to provide education to African-American children in the South.

their cultural richness. The choice of materials and learning activities are intended to inspire a love of reading within young scholars.

- *Parental Involvement.* Weekly workshops are offered to parents to increase their understanding of child development and provide them with skills to assist their children to succeed. Parents are invited to help in the schools as chaperones, Harambee readers, and assistants.
- *Intergenerational Leadership.* *CDF Freedom Schools* sites are staffed by at least one college-aged intern for every ten scholars. The interns participate in an extensive training program before *CDF Freedom Schools* begin each summer. This training promotes the importance of community development, social action, and coalition building.
- *Community Involvement and Social Action.* The theme of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is *I Can and Must Make A Difference!* Scholars are encouraged to explore the problems facing their communities and to become active in working toward solutions. They take part in social action projects that address these problems. In 2005, for example, Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars developed and carried out a rally addressing the problem of violence in Kansas City.

Background: The Importance of a Quality Summer Program

Research has demonstrated that participation in academic enrichment programs during the summer can improve a student's achievement in school. Typically, learning loss occurs during the summer months when students are not in school. This is particularly true among low-income students.² While more advantaged children often have access to opportunities during the summer that advance their academic learning, less privileged children's academic achievement is more likely to remain stagnant or decrease. Studies have shown, however, that participation in academic enrichment programs during the summer can reverse the trend.³

Harris Cooper and his colleagues reviewed thirteen studies of summer learning loss conducted between 1975 and 1994.⁴ They found that, on average, the difference between more and less economically advantaged children amounted to an estimated three-month achievement gap annually. Between the first and sixth grade this would amount to an estimated year and a half of learning loss.⁵ As a result of this loss, lower income children enter middle school seriously behind their peers.

Out-of-school-time programs (after-school, summer, and weekend) have been shown to have a modest, but significant, impact on reading achievement among low achieving and at-risk

² Cooper H, et al. (1996) The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66: 227-268.

³ Cooper, H., et al. (2000). Making the most of summer school: A meta-analytic and narrative review. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 65(1), 1-118. EJ 630 022.

⁴ Cooper H, et al. (1996) The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66: 227-268.

⁵ Mraz, M & Rasinski T (2007) Summer reading loss. *The Reading Teacher*, 60: 784-789.

students. Patricia Lauer and her associates conducted a meta-analysis of twenty-seven programs and found that, on average, reading abilities increased about one-tenth of a standard deviation.⁶ That small gain contrasted with an expected decline among students not engaged in a program. It did not make a difference whether the program operated after-school or during the summer.

While much of the research has focused upon the importance of academic enrichment programs, there is evidence that participation in quality out-of-school time programs that focus more on personal and social skills also promote academic performance. Programs that are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit are consistently successful in producing self-confidence, positive social behaviors, higher school grades, and higher achievement test scores.⁷

Three conclusions emerge from these studies:

- ❑ The reading skills of lower income and minority students decline during the summer leaving them behind their middle income and white peers when they return to school in the fall.
- ❑ Quality summer programs may be able to prevent this decline and even produce a modest learning gain.
- ❑ The gain that could reasonably be expected from a quality program would only be small.

The Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools Evaluation

Philliber Research Associates conducted a three-year evaluation of the impact the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* Initiative had on scholars, parents, interns, and host churches. The evaluation was funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

To assess the impact on scholars, Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluations (GRADE)⁸ were collected from scholars and a comparison group during the first and last week of each summer session. GRADE is a developmentally based, group-administered assessment of reading for pre-kindergarten to young adults. There are different forms for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students, with a common form used for those who are older. Each level has two parallel forms facilitating the use of the assessments at the beginning and end of the summer.

The GRADE is made up of a number of subsets. Students may complete the entire assessment or only particular subsets. *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars and their comparisons were asked to complete the sections on reading comprehension. In addition to raw scores, the assessments have been normed to provide stanines, percentile ranks, grade equivalents, and normal curve equivalents.

⁶ Lauer, PA, et al (2004) *The effectiveness of out-of-school-time strategies in assisting low-achieving students in reading and mathematics: A research synthesis*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

⁷ Durlak, JA & Weissberg, RP (2007) *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

⁸ http://www.pearsonlearning.com/content/File/GRADE_GMADE/GRADE_Program_Sampler.pdf

Staff from Philliber Research Associates trained the interns to administer GRADE assessments to their scholars. Research staff were present in each school to supervise and assist the interns during the assessment period. Assessments took about an hour to complete.

Initial and follow-up assessments were obtained from 763 scholars in 2005, 919 scholars in 2006, and 1059 scholars in 2007. Initial and follow-up assessments are available for one year from 1,101 scholars, for two years from 397 scholars, and for three years from 239 scholars. A total of 1,737 scholars participated in the evaluation.

A comparison group of children were recruited through the churches sponsoring Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites. These children lived in the same neighborhoods as Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars, were the same age, attended the same churches, but were not enrolled in a Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program. The majority (54%) were involved in academic programs, such as summer school, while 46% were not. GRADE assessments were administered to the comparison group by staff of Philliber Research Associates during the same week scholars completed assessments. Of the 651 assessed in the first week of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program, 529 (81%) returned for the follow-up assessment. Of the 221 participating in 2005, 125 (56%) returned in 2006 and 144 (65%) returned in 2007. Among the 266 comparison participants in 2006, 222 (83%) returned in 2007. Initial and follow-up assessments are available for one year from 32 comparison participants, for two years from 119 comparison participants, and for three years from 67 comparison participants.

It was not possible to randomly assign students to attend Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites or be in the comparison group. While that would have produced a better research design, it was not practical. The churches that host Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* have an established practice of serving people. If they could not accommodate all of the students who wanted to enroll in their school, they were sent to other nearby churches where there was room. However, it was possible to obtain a comparison group that lived in the same neighborhoods and were the same ages as the scholars. This made it possible to go beyond a mere descriptive study and assess the impact that participation in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program has on the students.

At the beginning of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program, 2,172 parents of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars completed surveys about their children. These surveys included questions to measure acceptance of responsibility, love of learning, cultural appreciation, community involvement, conflict resolution skills, and social adjustment. The parents indicated whether their children engaged in 27 different activities all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or almost never. Summary scales were created for each of the variables with reliabilities of at least .84 measured by Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula.⁹

⁹ Reliabilities for the individual scales were Conflict Resolution Skills (.84), Acceptance of Responsibility (.86), Love of Learning (.88), Cultural Appreciation (.94), and Social Adjustment (.91). A single question was used to measure community involvement.

Each year, a sample of parents of scholars were sent follow-up surveys in October, of which 765 (77%) were completed. Parents of the comparison students completed surveys while their children were assessed during the first week of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program and 688 (82%) completed follow-up assessments in October.

To assess the impact on parents' engagement in their children's academic achievement, the survey of parents included questions about their involvement with schoolwork, the child's teacher, and what the child should be learning. Similar questions were asked of the parents of children participating in the comparison group.

To assess the impact on interns' leadership skills and career choices, Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* interns were surveyed during their June training period and again in October after they returned to school. They were asked about their extra-curricular activities and whether they played a leadership role in them. They were also asked about volunteering, contributing to charity, civic participation and progress in school. Surveys were obtained from 363 interns during training, and 305 (84%) of these interns completed surveys in October. Follow-up assessments were obtained from 180 interns for two years and from 87 interns for three years.

Interns were asked to identify friends like them who were not Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* interns. These young people were also contacted during the summer and again in October and asked to complete surveys similar to those completed by interns. Follow-up assessments were obtained from 76 comparisons for two years and from 22 comparisons for three years.

To assess the impact on churches in the Initiative, interviews were conducted with key informants, usually the pastor, in each congregation to assess how being a Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* host had influenced their congregation. Informants were asked to discuss the benefits and challenges their church had experienced. These interviews were completed during May of each year.

Who Participated in the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools Program

By the summer of 2007, *CDF Freedom Schools* sites operated in 18 churches in the Kansas City area. Twelve schools enrolled 1,338 scholars in 2005 while 1,598 enrolled in 15 schools in 2006 and 1,864 enrolled in 18 schools in 2007. A total of 3,274 scholars were enrolled over the three year period.

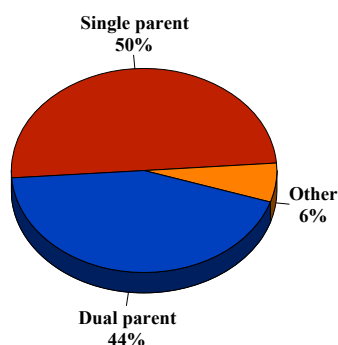
Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars are grouped into three levels determined by their previous year's grade in school. Level I includes scholars who were in kindergarten through the second grade in the previous school year; Level II scholars were in grades three through five; and Level III scholars were in grades six through eight.

Parents or guardians of scholars were asked to complete surveys about the demographic and family characteristics of their scholars. Information was provided for 2,033 (42%) of the scholars. The majority (89%) of those providing the information were parents of scholars. Almost all of the scholars were African-American (96%) and slightly over half were girls (52%).

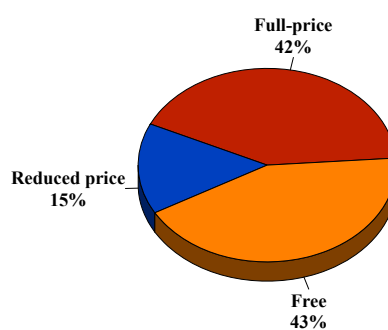
During the previous school year, 98% of the scholars attended school. The majority who were not in school were the youngest children who were not enrolled in either kindergarten or pre-kindergarten classes. The majority of scholars who were in the first grade or higher attended public school during the previous school year (73%). The rest attended private (8%), charter (12%), faith-based (6%) or other (1%) schools.

The socioeconomic backgrounds of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars are quite diverse. One-half come from single parent households, but 44% live with two parents. About two in five pay full-price for school lunch while one in six pay a reduced price and two-fifths receive free lunch.

Household Composition

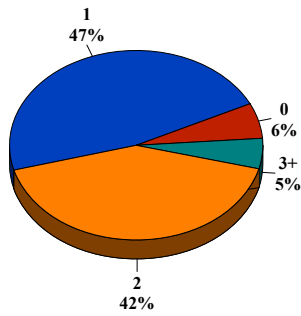


School Lunch

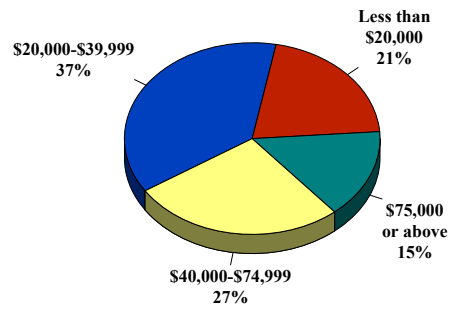


Almost all (94%) live in homes with at least one wage earner, but slightly less than half live in single wage earner families while the same number live in households with two or more wage earners. One in five scholars live in a household that has an annual income of less than \$20,000, but one in six have families with an annual income of more than \$75,000.

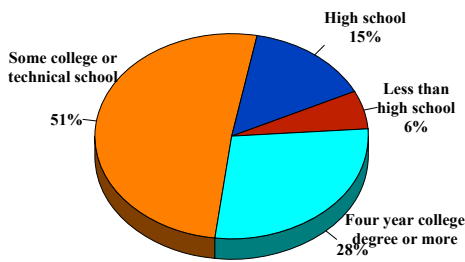
Number of Wage Earners in Home



Family Income



Parent's Education

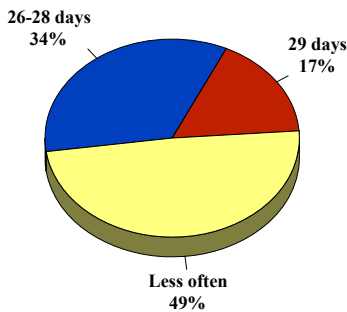


Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars have relatively well educated parents. Four out of five have a parent with at least some college or technical training while just over a quarter have a parent with a baccalaureate degree.

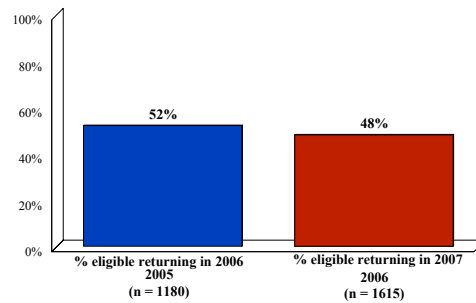
Of the 1,180 scholars who attended Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in 2005, 594 (52% of those eligible) returned in 2006 and 418 (40% of those eligible) returned in 2007. Among the 2006 scholars, 770 (48% of those eligible) returned in 2007.

Over the two years attendance was tracked, one-half of scholars attended at least 26 days during the 29 day period.

Attendance



Return Rate



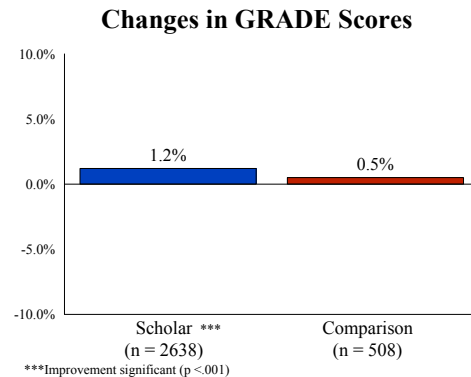
Impact on Scholars

Improvements in Reading Ability

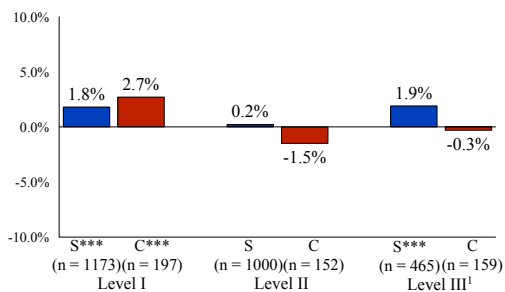
Scholars spend each morning of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program in activities based on the Integrated Reading Curriculum. While this curriculum is not specifically designed as a reading improvement program, it is reasonable to expect that scholars' reading abilities might not show normal summer declines and might show some improvement due to the reading enrichment activities.¹⁰

To measure reading abilities, scholars completed GRADE reading assessments during the first and last week of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program. A comparison group of similar students completed assessments on the same schedule. Over the three-year period, a total of 2,741 scholars and 522 comparisons completed both beginning and end of year assessments.

During the six weeks of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program, the average scholar demonstrated a significant improvement in reading. End-of-school scores were 1.2 percentile points higher than assessments completed during the first week. Scholars in the first through eighth grades increased an average grade equivalent of two months of school.¹¹ Students in the comparison group did not demonstrate similar improvements. The average comparison student only demonstrated an improvement of .5 percentile points which was not a significant gain.



Changes in GRADE Scores by Scholar Level



***Improvement significant (p < .001)

¹ Improvement significantly greater for scholars in Level III than comparisons (p < .05)

Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars are grouped into three levels. Level I scholars were in the second grade or lower during the previous school year; Level II scholars were in the third, fourth, or fifth grade; while Level III scholars were in the sixth through eighth grade. Scholars in two of the three levels demonstrated significant improvements in reading. Level III scholars had significantly greater gains than Level III comparison students. Almost half of the Level III comparisons (49%) had lower scores at the end of the summer compared to almost two-fifths (39%) of the Level III

scholars.¹² Scholars in Level III went up an average grade equivalent of .4, or an increase of about half a year.

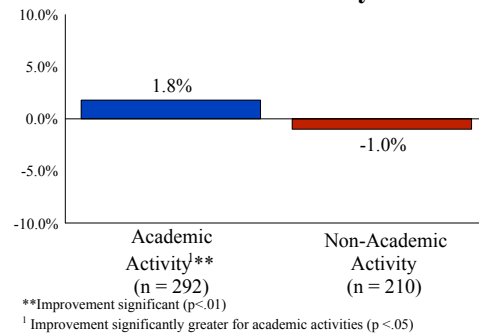
¹⁰ This expectation is in line with the achievements of academic enrichment programs reviewed in the earlier section on “The Importance of a Quality Summer Reading Program.”

¹¹ It was possible to obtain grade equivalents from raw scores for scholars in grades 1 through 8. Pre-school and kindergarten scholars are omitted.

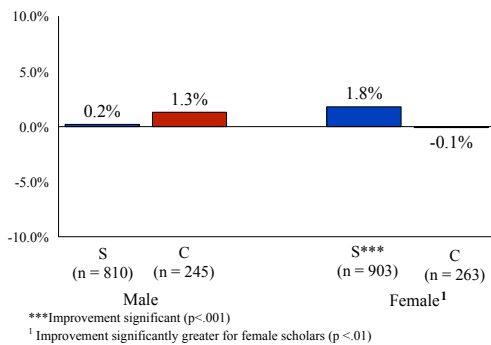
¹² Table not shown

Some of the students in the comparison group participated in other educational enrichment programs while others did not. Those involved in academic activities showed a significantly greater increase than those not involved in academic activities; those involved in non-academic activities actually declined. Almost all of the comparisons who were involved in a summer program with an academic emphasis were attending summer school. This formal educational activity seems to produce greater reading gains than the enrichment activities of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program.

Changes in GRADE Scores Among Comparison Students by Type of Summer Activity



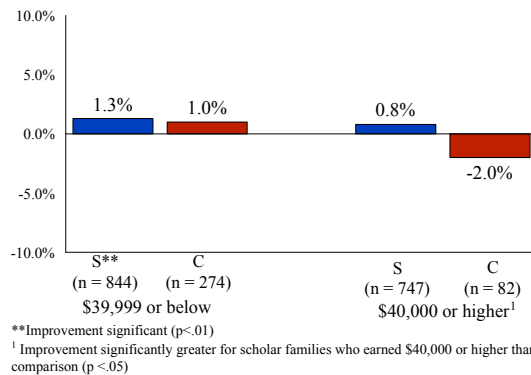
Changes in GRADE Scores by Gender



Female scholars demonstrated significant improvements in reading during the summer, while male scholars did not. The reading scores of female scholars were initially higher than male scholars.

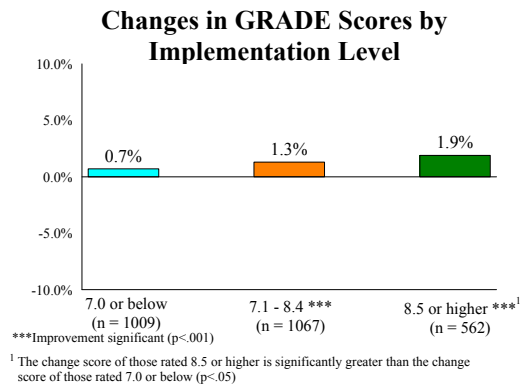
Scholars with a family income of under \$40,000 demonstrated greater increases in their average reading score than scholars from households with a family income of \$40,000 or higher. Both groups increased more than similar comparisons.

Changes in GRADE Scores by Income



Visits were made to individual Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites during the middle of each summer to observe how well the *CDF Freedom Schools* model had been implemented. Two observers visited each school; one observer was an adult and the other the age of the older scholars. Using an implementation checklist, each observer first observed the physical set-up of each room (whether there was a welcome sign, weekly theme, lyrics to theme song, lesson agenda, books on display, etc.). Moving independently from room to room, the observers assessed the teaching styles of the interns (whether cooperative learning, role plays,

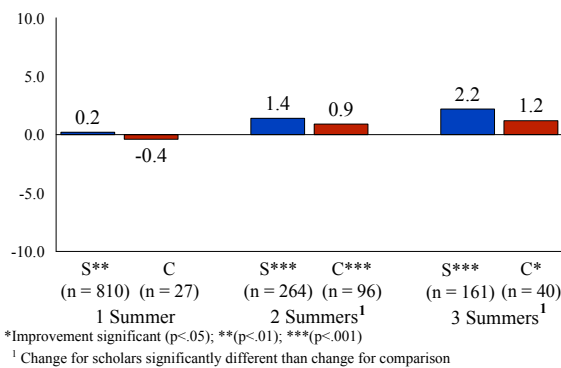
group discussions, creative writing, or visual arts were used, for example). Finally, using the checklists as a guideline, each observer gave the schools a rating based on a scale of 1 to 10. The two ratings were averaged to obtain an implementation score.



Scholars attending the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites that received average ratings of 8.5 or higher demonstrated greater improvements than scholars in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program that received an average of 7.0 or below. Scholars in schools with scores 7.1 or above also had significant changes between the beginning and end of the summer. Schools whose implementation scores increased from one year to the next had corresponding gains in reading improvement while those whose scores decreased had reduced gains.¹³

Over the three-year evaluation, a scholar may have participated one summer, two summers or three summers. Their change in scores was determined from their first to last assessment in the time period they participated. For example, a scholar attending three summers' first assessment would be June 2005 and last assessment would be July 2007. When looking at changes in grade equivalents, scholars who participated three summers went up an average of 2.2 grade levels. During this time, the scholars attended three summers of the Kansas City *CDF*

Changes in Grade Equivalents by Length of Participation



Freedom Schools program and two years of school. Scholars who attended two summers of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program with a year of school in between increased 1.4 grade equivalents. Gains among comparison students were only half those of scholars, creating an ever widening gap in reading achievement over time. These data suggest that Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars not only increase their skills during the summer, but enter school in the fall more ready to continue learning.

Summary: Scholars participating in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program increased their reading ability an average of .2 grade equivalents, or about two months. While this may not seem like a large gain, it compares favorably with other out-of-school-time programs and offsets the decline in reading abilities many students experience.

Gains in reading were greater for:

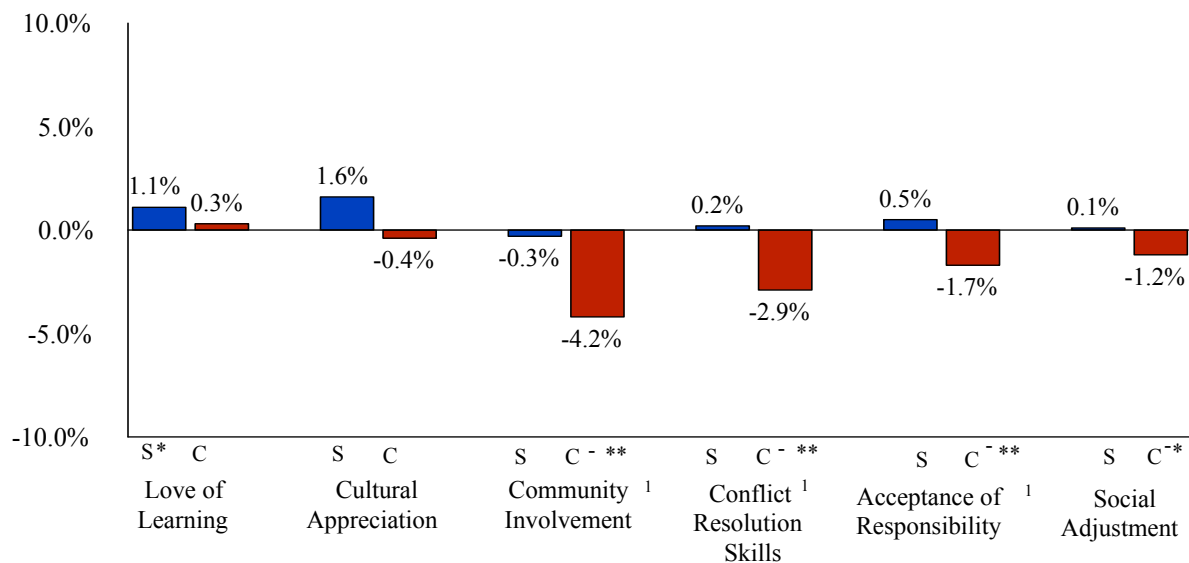
- ❑ older scholars in Level III (sixth through eighth graders);
- ❑ girls;
- ❑ scholars from lower income families;
- ❑ scholars attending multiple years; and
- ❑ scholars attending schools that implemented the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* model best.

¹³ Data not shown

Growth in Character Development

In addition to reading ability, scholars' attitudes toward learning, cultural appreciation, community involvement, conflict resolution skills, acceptance of responsibility, and social adjustment were also assessed. These data were obtained from surveys completed by parents of scholars at the beginning of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program and again in October after the resumption of the regular school year. Comparison parents completed surveys on the same schedule. Changes in these attitudes and skills are shown in the following table.

Changes in Character Development



S = Scholar (N = 755) CA=625
C = Comparison (N = 610) CA=412

*Difference significant ($p < .05$); **($p < .01$)

¹ Change for scholars significantly different than change for comparison

Changes in Attitudes Toward Learning: Parents were asked seven questions about how often their children liked reading or liked school. A summated scale was created with a reliability of .88. Parents of scholars report a significant increase in attitudes toward learning while the parents of comparison students do not support as much of a gain.

Changes in Cultural Appreciation: Parents were asked five questions to assess cultural appreciation. They were asked whether their children felt it was important to learn about their ethnic group, knew of important things done by their ethnic group, knew about the history of their ethnic group, felt good about their own group, and liked learning about their own group. The summated scale yielded a reliability of .94. Although changes in cultural appreciation were not significant, parents of scholars report an increase in cultural appreciation while the parents of comparison students report a decline.

Changes in Community Involvement: Community involvement is one of the four key elements of a *CDF Freedom Schools* site. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that positive

changes in this area might be observed among scholars. Parents were asked how often their children looked for ways to help people they did not know. Parents of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars reported a decrease in community involvement, while parents of comparison students reported a significant decrease.

Changes in Conflict Resolution Skills: Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites strive to equip scholars with skills to address conflict in positive ways. Parents were asked about their children's ability to solve problems by talking, meeting others half way, and disagreeing without becoming angry. The summated scale had a reliability of .84. When parents were surveyed in October, parents of comparison students reported significantly lower levels of conflict resolution skills, significantly lower than parents of scholars. Parents of scholars reported an increase in skills.

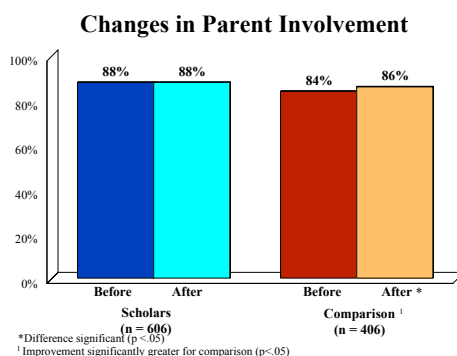
Changes in Acceptance of Responsibility: The positive focus in Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program and its emphasis on character development may lead to greater acceptance of responsibility among scholars. Five questions were used to measure students' acceptance of responsibility. Parents were asked how often the student follows directions, does chores, listens to what other people say, completes things, and accepts consequences of behavior. The resulting scale had a reliability of .86. While parents of scholars report a slight increase in acceptance of responsibility among their children, parents of comparison students report significant decreases.

Changes in Social Adjustment: The experience of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program may help the scholar get along with other people. Parents were asked eight questions to measure levels of social adjustment. These questions included how often the student was happy, got along with others, and was respectful toward others. The reliability of the scale was .91. Parents of scholars report no change in skills, while parents of comparison students report significantly lower levels of social adjustment at follow-up.

Summary: On five of the six dimensions of character development, parents of scholars report a slight positive change in their children. Parents of comparison students, on the other hand, report declines on five of the six dimensions. Declines in four of these areas are significant: community involvement, conflict resolution skills, acceptance of responsibility, and social adjustment.

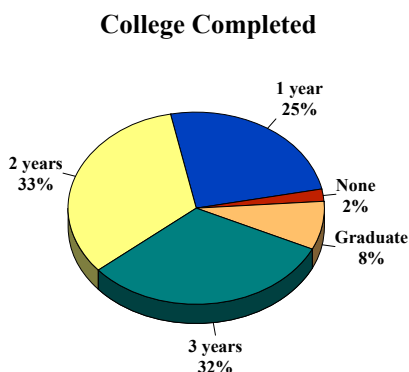
Impact on Parents

The Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program encourages parents to be involved in their children’s education. Workshops are held to teach parents how to effectively help their children in school. To assess parents’ involvement in children’s education, parents of scholars and comparisons were asked a series of six questions. They were asked how often they felt they were able to help their child with schoolwork, talk to their child’s teacher, and work with their child’s teacher. High majorities of both groups report involvement in their child’s education. There was no difference between the abilities of parents of scholars to do these items either before or after the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program. However, there was a significant increase in the abilities of parents of comparison students to do these items.



Impact on Interns

Interns are the people who work directly with the scholars in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program. They are typically college students chosen with the expectation that they will be good role models for the scholars. In the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites, 363 interns completed surveys during training about their involvement and interest in their community. In October, 305 of these interns returned follow-up surveys.¹⁴

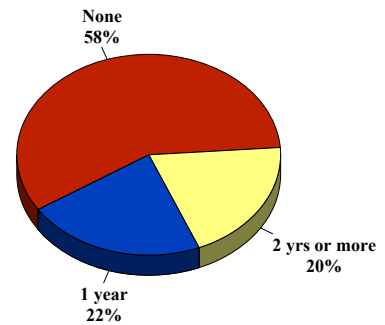


Almost all of the interns were African-Americans (93%) and the majority were female (63%), although a substantial number were male. Nine-tenths were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. In the year before, almost all (92%) attended college. Most (65%) had completed either two or three years.

¹⁴ To obtain information from a similar group of young people for comparison purposes, interns were asked to identify friends like themselves who were not interns. A total of 143 returned surveys in the summer and again in the fall.

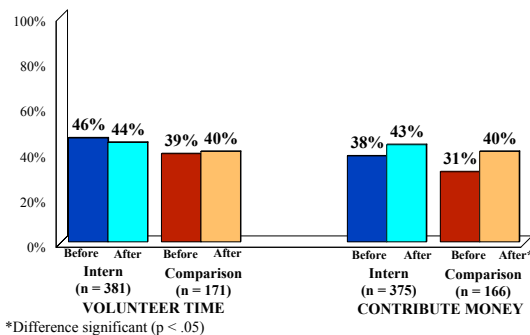
Very few interns (6%) had been Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars themselves. The rapid growth of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in Kansas City may contribute to this as well as the number of years between the time a person ages out of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program and becomes eligible to be an intern. The majority (58%) had not been interns previously and equal numbers served as an intern only once (22%) or for 2 years or more (20%).

Prior Intern Experience



Contributions to Charity: At least forty percent of the interns report volunteering time or contributing money to charitable organizations when follow-up surveys were collected in October. The same is true for comparisons, however by the fall, they reported a significant increase in contributing money.

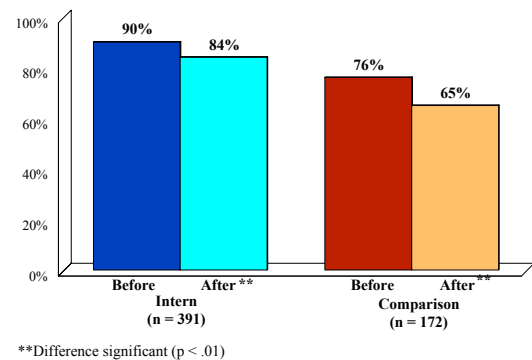
Changes in Charitable Contributions in Past Two Months



In both the summer and fall, two-fifths of the interns report volunteering time within the past two months to charitable organizations. These activities include volunteering to help the homeless, helping in youth development programs, tutoring, building homes, and blood drives.

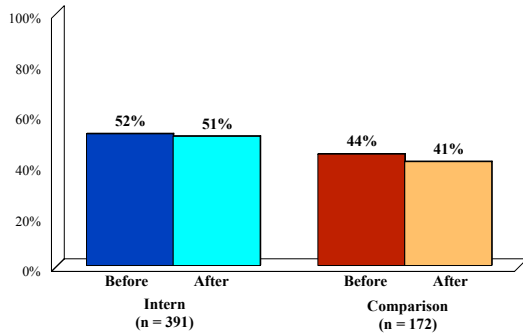
Involvement in Community: Interns and their comparisons were asked if they were involved in extra-curricular activities at school, church activities other than worship services, or other community organizations. At the beginning of the summer almost everyone reported involvement with at least one group. Fewer interns and comparisons reported the same community involvement in the fall; both declines were significant. Five out of six interns continued to report involvement.

Changes in Community Involvement



Leadership: Just over half of the interns and almost half of comparisons reported having a leadership position in one of these organizations. They served as officers, committee chairs, and coordinators within their groups. Leadership involvement slightly declined between summer and fall for comparisons and remained stable for interns.

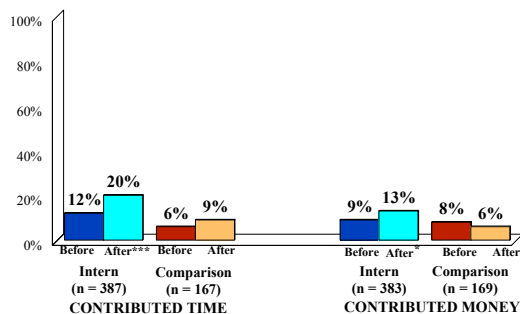
Changes in Leadership Involvement



Political Involvement: At the beginning of the summer, two out of five interns and almost half of the comparisons reported they were very interested in the news. This interest increased significantly among interns, but decreased among comparisons. The percentage that followed the news daily similarly increased, though not at a statistically significant level.

Interns and comparisons were asked if they had contributed either time or money in support of or opposition to some issue during the two months before the survey. Interns reported a significant increase in the amount of time and money contributed, while comparisons did not.

Changes in Political Involvement

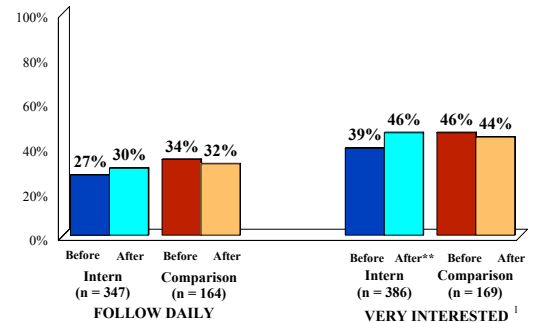


*Difference significant (p < .05); ** (p < .001)

At the last assessment, 32% of interns wanted to pursue a career in teaching, while only 12% of comparisons did; this was a significant difference.

Summary: Both interns and comparisons were involved in charities, community organizations, leadership, and politics before the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools program began. However, interns were more likely to retain their involvement at follow-up than were comparisons. Interest in the news and political involvement increased for interns and decreased for comparisons. Lastly, interns were more likely to want to pursue a career in teaching.

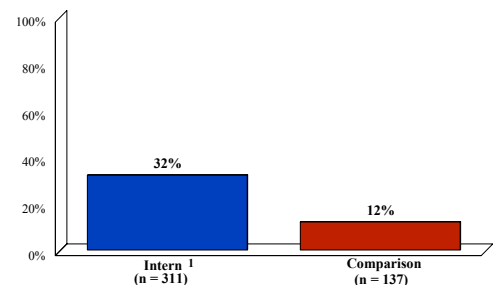
Changes in Interest in the News



**Difference significant (p < .01)

¹ Change for comparisons significantly different than change for interns (p < .05)

Plans for a Career in Teaching



¹ Significantly greater for interns (p < .001)

Impact on Churches

Eighteen churches in the Kansas City area hosted *CDF Freedom Schools* sites over the summers of 2005, 2006, and 2007. One Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* site opened in 1995, thirteen opened in 2002, three in 2005, three in 2006, and three churches sponsored *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* sites for the first time in 2007.

A church must be fairly strong to host a *CDF Freedom Schools* program. First, it must be large enough to have several rooms for different classes because the typical Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* site has at least ten classes of scholars. Second, it must be financially strong enough to provide support. While the Kauffman Foundation provides the majority of funding, each church is expected to contribute at least 10% of the cost of the school. In addition to the direct costs of the school, there are significant costs in additional utilities and maintenance that the host must bear.

Preparation for a school begins in late summer of the previous year. Church staff are required to do much of this preparation. In addition, members of host churches volunteer their time to support the Freedom Schools. Most of the churches hosting Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites have between fifteen and thirty members who volunteer time preparing meals, assisting interns, doing clerical work, and providing logistical support.

Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* churches have a prior history of service to their community. One church, for example, provides a comprehensive ministry to teen parents that includes housing where teen parents can live with their children, child care while the young mothers complete their education, scholarships to support higher education, parenting education classes and support groups. Many of the churches provide academic support programs during the school year and food and clothing assistance programs. Several assist people returning to the community after release from prison. At least one church serves people who are HIV positive and another has adopted a shelter serving women who are victims of domestic violence. The typical Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* host church is engaged in eight or more other ministries reaching those in need.

Host churches are excited about the benefits Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* bring. Many already offered summer programs for young people but saw the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* as an opportunity to strengthen what they offered. Four characteristics of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites were frequently cited by church leaders. First, *CDF Freedom Schools* have a strong emphasis on reading and the love of books. Second, scholars have an opportunity to learn about African-American history and culture. Third, scholars have an opportunity to interact with college-aged interns. Fourth, *CDF Freedom Schools* have an extensive training program.

Church leaders suggest that the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program benefits their congregations in other ways as well. Many church members have moved out of the community and the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program gives these churches greater recognition in the community. Each school typically enrolls young people from the community who are not part of the congregation. Because of this, these churches are experiencing greater outreach. Some churches have developed outreach programs for those whose children enroll in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program.

Lessons Learned

This report is based on data collected during the three year evaluation of the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program. It analyzes the effects that the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program has on scholars, their parents, interns, and the churches that sponsor a *CDF Freedom Schools* site. Some lessons are suggested from these findings.

LESSON 1: Scholars' reading abilities benefit directly from participation in the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools program. One of the most exciting findings is the scholar's positive reading gains. While the gains are not large, they are real. The reading skills of comparison students not enrolled in any other academic program declined over the summer. Reading gains among Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars are greatest among some of the hardest to serve groups. Middle school students gained more than younger students and scholars from low-income families gained more than those who were more affluent.

LESSON 2: Scholars demonstrate positive character development from participation in the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools program. Parents of Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* scholars see small, but positive changes in their children. Four to five months after attending *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* program, the parents rate their children higher on five of the six dimensions assessed. Parents of comparison students see declines in their children's cultural appreciation, community involvement, and acceptance of responsibility. Growth in these areas is important because it translates to improved attitudes, improved behavior, and improved academic performance.¹⁵

LESSON 3: Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools sites that most fully implement the CDF Freedom Schools model have the best results. *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City were rated on a scale from one to ten based on how well they implemented the *CDF Freedom Schools* model. The higher the implementation score, the greater the average reading gains among scholars. The most obvious difference between strong and weak Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* sites is the attitude of the staff. In strong *CDF Freedom Schools* sites, staff prepare for their scholars; they stay involved in activities such as Harambee even when they do not have a leadership role; and they consistently use active learning to engage their scholars.

LESSON 4: Continued participation in the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools program increases the impact on reading achievement. Scholars who participated for at least three years increased their reading skills by 2.2 grade equivalents, compared to 1.4 for those who participated two years, and 0.2 for those who participated only one.

The average student does not advance a full grade equivalent in an average school year.¹⁶ However, a scholar who was in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program just one summer increased 0.2 grade equivalents on average, a scholar who attended a Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* site for two summers with a school year in between increased an average of 1.4 grade equivalents (a full year plus 0.4) and a scholar who attended for three summers with two

¹⁵ Durlak, JA & Weissberg, RP (2007) *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

¹⁶ Kane, TJ (2004) *The impact of after-school programs: Interpreting the results of four recent evaluations*. A working paper of the William T. Grant Foundation.

years in between increased an average of 2 years plus 0.2 grade equivalents. The average student in the comparison group increased less than a grade equivalent each year. Scholars who attended a *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* site for three years demonstrated gains almost twice the size of those in the comparison group.

LESSON 5: Interns are positively influenced by their Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools experience. Both interns and comparisons were involved in charities, community organizations, leadership, and politics before the *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* program began. However, interns were more likely to retain their involvement at follow-up than comparisons were. They also increased their interest in the news and political involvement while these decreased among comparisons. A substantially greater number of interns plan to enter the field of teaching.

LESSON 6: Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools sites are a valuable asset in host churches. Churches that host a *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* site have histories as strong churches. However, *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* programs have provided them a way to fill an important gap in their ministries and attract families from the community that were not previously part of their church. Host churches are developing outreach programs to retain these families after the *Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools* program ends.

LESSON 7: There are some features of CDF Freedom Schools sites in Kansas City that may not exist in other locations, and it is not clear how these changes affect outcomes for scholars, parents, and interns. First, *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City have a more intensive training program than may be found in other places. In addition to the week of national training, *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City have a week long local training directed by people with fifteen years of *CDF Freedom Schools* experience.

Second, *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City are supported by a central office with a Program Director, a Program Manager, and a staff of four proven interns who move from school to school providing continuous technical assistance. The Program Director and Program Manager are year round staff who begin the work for the following year even while the current year is still in session. They have the ability to move strong Project Directors and Site Coordinators into schools that are weak and unsure than even new schools have a mix of new and experienced interns.

Third, all of the *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City are hosted by churches. In other locations the host may be a community-based organization or some other group. In addition to paid staff, the average church in Kansas City has about a dozen people who volunteer their time. These volunteers prepare meals, clean rooms, supervise recreation, act as assistants and do whatever else that is requested.

Churches are often the strongest institution in inner city neighborhoods. They are able to reach people for programs at a level that is difficult for other organizations to do. The membership of many of the host churches in Kansas City are people who have moved out of the inner city. They have seen the *CDF Freedom Schools* program as a vehicle to reconnect with the neighborhood. As a result, they effectively recruit the hundred children expected to enroll in each school.

Fourth, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in Kansas City operates for six weeks. In other locations, schools may be in session only five weeks. No one knows what difference it makes whether a program operates for five or six weeks, or perhaps even longer in some places.

Fifth, all of the *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Kansas City are in urban neighborhoods. Whether scholars from suburban areas, small towns, and rural areas do as well or better is not known.

Sixth, almost all of the schools in the Kansas City *CDF Freedom Schools* program are African-American. The model has a strong afro-centric approach. It is not known how the model will work with other groups.

One of the strongest findings in the evaluation of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in Kansas City is the relationship between implementation of the model and scholar outcomes. Scholars attending schools which implemented the model best had the best outcomes. Scholars from schools with weak implementations did not demonstrate gains. The rapid expansion of *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in new areas where there is little opportunity to network, receive coaching, or learn from those sites more experienced makes quality implementation more difficult.

These factors make it clear that the successes of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in Kansas City can not be unquestionably generalized to other areas. There may be no differences in the impact of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in other areas or they may be stronger or they may be weaker.