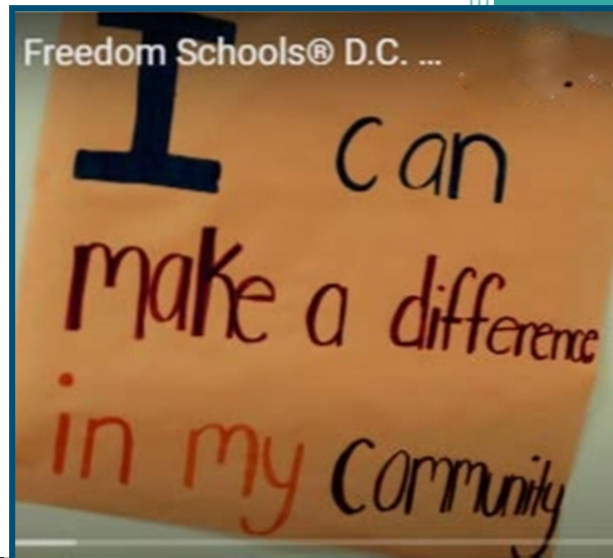


2023

# 21st CCLC Evaluation Report



## CDF's DC Freedom Schools 2023 Summer Programs

Suzanne Raber

Raber Education Research Consulting

September 2023

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Evaluation Framework and Design .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Program Overview.....</b>	<b>6</b>
School Community Profiles.....	8
Program Enrollment and Attendance.....	8
Staffing.....	9
<b>Implementation Successes and Challenges.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Positive Impacts on Children.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Positive Impacts on Staff .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Parent Engagement and Development .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: References.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Survey Results.....</b>	<b>25</b>

## Executive Summary

The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program to provide after-school and summer activities for children living in the poorest neighborhoods of Washington, DC. This evaluation report covers the last year of a three-year grant and describes the implementation and outcomes of the *CDF Freedom Schools’* program for children attending two sites in Summer 2023: the DC Dream Center-Southeast White House and the Social Justice School.

*CDF Freedom Schools* faced considerable challenges implementing its extended time learning programs during the COVID-19 public health crisis which closed all DC Public Schools and schools nationally in March 2020. As public schools struggled to deliver their instructional program through distance learning, *CDF Freedom Schools* (and other after-school programs, see Mitchell, 2020) strived to meet families and children’s most immediate needs first and then to develop an enrichment program that could be delivered online to those scholars and families they were able to reach.

The impact of COVID-19 continued into the 2022-23 school year with some students still struggling from lost learning opportunities during the previous two school years and *CDF Freedom Schools* striving to maintain regular participation in its after-school programs. In order to best serve the neediest communities in DC, CDF identified two summer sites that could best support the *CDF Freedom Schools* model. The DC Dream Center, a community recreation center in Ward 7, was chosen to serve students in grades K – 5 from some of the same neighborhoods that had attended *CDF Freedom Schools* in prior summers (e.g., Boone and Plummer Elementary Schools). The Social Justice School, a charter middle school in Ward 5, was selected to serve scholars in grades 5 – 8. This charter school has previously offered a summer program based on the *CDF Freedom Schools* model and offers a school year curriculum that features similar themes.

Registering about 70 children from the neighboring communities, 67 children actually participated in multiple program days and ultimately 56 children were regular participants in the *CDF Freedom Schools* summer programs. Data collection included staff interviews; child, parent and staff surveys; and a reading assessment for a sample of scholars at both program sites. These data allowed us to pinpoint program successes and challenges. The data also indicate that the program had a positive impact on the scholars’ instructional reading levels and on the attitudes of the Servant Leader Interns who staffed the program. In addition, the program helped scholars maintain positive character traits and social-emotional skills. Both the scholars and their parents expressed overall satisfaction with the summer program.

The experiences of the 2023 *DC Freedom Schools* summer program also suggest recommendations for future programming. These recommendations fall in the areas of program planning, staff training, coordination with program sites, and parent engagement.



## Introduction

Communities continue to explore the best ways to support children during the summer to enhance learning that goes beyond school year classroom instruction. The U.S. Department of Education funds 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center programs to provide students who are at risk of academic failure with opportunities for academic and personal enrichment. These 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs offer safe environments for students during extended learning time, after school and in the summer.

The Children’s Defense Fund has provided summer and after-school programs since 1995 and currently supports *Freedom Schools* programs in 88 cities, 28 states, and the District of Columbia. Through their program model, they strive to empower youth to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves and their families, and through social action, to make a difference in their communities and beyond. The program endeavors to enhance children’s motivation to read and their attitudes about learning by exposing them to a research-based, multicultural curriculum featuring culturally-relevant books. The books are designed to increase racial pride and encourage children to higher achievement, featuring heroes, heroines and settings that reflect the children’s own culture and history. At the same time, the program connects families to the appropriate resources in their communities and promotes engagement in their child’s education. The program focuses on enriching the whole child, providing children and families access to:



- High quality academic and character-building enrichment through a research-based, multicultural, social justice and conflict resolution curriculum (Integrated Reading Curriculum)
- Parent and family development through weekly parent meetings, frequent family check-ins, and engagement opportunities
- Civic engagement through lessons about social action and participation in civic events (e.g., CDF’s National Day of Social Action)
- Nutrition and physical and mental health by sharing resources for accessing food, mental health care and other basic needs.

In addition to the program’s focus on the literacy and civic engagement skills of its student participants, the program strives to develop the civic consciousness of its staff, most of whom are college students preparing for teaching or other social service professions, through intergenerational servant leadership development.

In September 2020 the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) received a three-year Nita M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to fund *Freedom Schools* after-school and summer programs serving children in the poorest communities of Washington, DC. This evaluation report covers the implementation and outcomes of the 2023 *DC Freedom Schools* summer program, serving children and families at the DC Dream Center in Ward 7 and at the Social Justice School, a charter middle school located in Ward 5. CDF is particularly concerned about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and school closures on Black families and resulting academic losses. As recent research shows, this has resulted in depressed academic achievement for many students, especially students of color from low-resource communities (McKinsey & Co., 2020). This presents an extra challenge for summer programs to not only prevent summer learning loss but also to help children make up for any learning lost during the pandemic.

## Evaluation Framework and Design

National studies have demonstrated that 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs can be effective in providing after-school and summer program supports to low-income families and their children and can improve academic outcomes for participants (e.g., Afterschool Alliance, 2015; American Institutes for Research, 2015; Mathematica Policy Research, 2003). The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine characteristics present in high-quality expanded learning programs<sup>1</sup>:

- Goal setting, strong management and sustainability
- Quality staffing
- Attention to safety, health and nutrition issues
- Effective partnerships with CBOs, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement and youth groups
- Strong involvement of families
- Enriching learning opportunities
- Linkages between school year and summer personnel
- Monthly program activities and timeline
- Evaluation of program progress and effectiveness.

CDF has incorporated these characteristics in its *Freedom Schools'* program model, as illustrated in Table 1.

The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant program requires a traditional implementation and outcome evaluation that examines program goals, services provided, and the impact of these services on youth participants, their families and the staff interns. While the *CDF Freedom Schools* model incorporates all nine characteristics present in high quality expanded learning programs, this evaluation will focus on implementation and outcomes with respect to four of these characteristics:

- Quality staffing
- Strong involvement of families
- Enriching learning opportunities
- Monthly program activities and timeline.

In addition, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant application (OSSE, 2020) requires that grantees include measurable objectives and targets in their evaluation and monitoring plan. CDF developed three measurable objectives and targets relevant to their summer programs:

- **Measurable Objective #2:** *50% of regular attendees will show improvement in their reading skills during the summer program, as measured by the Basic Reading Inventory.*
- **Measurable Objective #3:** *60% of regular attendees will show improvement during the summer program in their attitudes toward reading, learning (academic engagement) and self-*

---

<sup>1</sup> USED, *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs* (April, 2000).

*efficacy (empowerment) as measured by the Child Survey.*

- **Measurable Objective #4:** *Programs will offer at least three academically-enriched student/family events designed to increase parent engagement and knowledge of their student's academic program, as measured by program activity logs and surveys.*

**Table 1. Characteristics of High Quality Extended Learning Programs Found in CDF's DC Freedom Schools**

Characteristics of High-Quality ELPs	Program Features of CDF Freedom Schools Summer Programs
1) Goal setting, strong management and sustainability	CDF has more than 40 years of experience managing public, foundation and corporate grant-funded programs across the U.S. with repeated funding from multiple sources.
2) Quality staffing	Servant Leader Interns (SLIs) are recent college graduates or current college students with interest, training and experience working with children; staff members receive program-specific training (including one-week national training) and maintain 1:10 ratios with students.
3) Attention to safety, health and nutrition issues	Program is conducted on community campuses by staff with thorough background checks; children are served nutritious meals and snacks. The program shares resources with families for addressing food security and mental health needs.
4) Effective partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), Juvenile Justice agencies, law enforcement and youth groups	CDF partners with schools, faith- and community-based organizations, municipalities, colleges and universities to offer their programs at no cost to participants. In Summer 2023, <i>DC Freedom Schools</i> partnered with HBCUs (e.g., Howard University) to recruit SLIs; the DC Dream Center and the Social Justice School for program sites; and several vendors and other entities to provide enrichment activities (e.g., Fresh Energy Wellness, NASA Goddard Space Center).
5) Strong family involvement	Program includes virtual and in-person meetings for parents (e.g., workshops) and whole family events (e.g., Family Fun Day finale celebration; parents are surveyed on program priorities and connected to appropriate community resources. Parents can attend a spiritual retreat and training at CDF's national training site.
6) Enriching learning opportunities	Program includes the research-based Integrated Reading Curriculum (featuring high-interest, culturally relevant books with strong characters), STEM-themed enrichment activities, and culturally appropriate enrichment activities (e.g., African drumming).
7) Linkages between school year and summer personnel	Program staff members (SLIs and site coordinators) work with summer staff at each site to coordinate use of shared space, and in the case of the Social Justice School, serve the school's rising grade 5 – 8 students.
8) Monthly program activities and timeline	Program follows a weekly schedule for students with different activities each day of the week and field trips throughout the summer. It also offers a Parent's Weekend, weekly parent meetings, and a family celebration at the end of the program.
9) Evaluation of program progress and effectiveness	The summer program includes a program evaluation and monitoring plan; collection of child, parent and staff outcome data; and evaluation reports on program implementation and effectiveness.

These objectives and their respective targets are also reflected in the evaluation design. Consequently, the evaluation collected the following data:

- Basic Reading Inventory administered to a sample of scholars before or during Week 1 and again in Week 5 of the summer program
- A child survey of character traits (academic engagement, self-empowerment, civic engagement, conflict resolution) and social and emotional learning skills administered before or during Week 1 and again in Week 5 of the summer program
- Interviews with program staff (site coordinators, servant leader interns) conducted at the end of the summer program
- Surveys of parents and program staff (servant leader interns) at the end of the summer program
- Program attendance.

## Program Overview

For summer 2022, CDF worked with the school communities where it provides after-school programs (e.g., Plummer ES, Kelly Miller MS) to find suitable summer program sites. They settled on Ward 7's **DC Dream Center** to serve neighborhood scholars in grades K – 5. CDF also identified Ward 5 as a community that would benefit from summer programming and **The Social Justice School** as a site that had previous experience with the *CDF Freedom Schools* program model and emphasizes similar themes in its school year program. These two sites continued to host the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in summer 2023.



The Social Justice School combined summer programming for their existing and incoming students with the *CDF Freedom Schools* model to provide a program for rising grade 5 – 8 students. The two sites followed the same program schedules, including the number of program days and hours per day. These schedules are shown in Table 2.



**Table 2. Schedules for Program Sites**

Program Site	Days in Session	Total Program Days	Program Hours per Day
<b>DC Dream Center</b>	Jul 5 – Aug 4	23	6
<b>The Social Justice School</b>	Jul 5 – Aug 4	23	6

Both program sites provided the same critical components of the *CDF Freedom Schools* model:

- Harambee!** Each day started with a live Harambee!<sup>2</sup> led by the site coordinators and SLIs to pull the scholars together in a communal gathering that set a motivational, high-energy tone for the day.
- Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC).** Each morning, staff led scholars through the IRC, using multi-cultural, social justice-themed books selected to engage and motivate scholars to read. At the DC Dream Center, SLIs used Level I (grades K-2), Level II (grades 3-5) and Level III (grades 6-8) of the curriculum. In addition to the mornings of IRC activities, scholars also benefitted from time set aside to select and read their own books (D.E.A.R.) just before lunch. The Social Justice School teachers and SLIs partnered to implement Level III (grades 6-8) of the IRC during the morning English Language Arts block (1.5 hours). Teachers also provided math instruction (1.5 hours) in the mornings.
- Enrichment.** The program provides enrichment activities designed to build character and support social-emotional development. Each afternoon, SLIs and the program partner vendors led the scholars through hands-on enrichment activities specifically selected to appeal to the age groups served and build on themes encountered in their reading. These included **the arts** (e.g., music, Capoeira<sup>3</sup>, West African drumming, drawing and painting), **crafts/trades** (e.g., cooking, gardening, cosmetology/hair styling), **sports and fitness activities** (e.g., First Energy and Wellness classes, yoga, double dutch jump roping), and **STEM-related activities** (e.g., egg drop; candy dispenser design, go-cart racing). Scholars also participated in field trips throughout the summer. DC Dream Center scholars enjoyed swimming, Anacostia Skate Park, Sky Zone, the African American Museum, and the NASA Goddard Space Center. The Social Justice School scholars benefitted from trips to the Spy Museum, Sky Zone and the US Capitol. The grade 6-8 scholars from both sites participated in an interactive career day sponsored by the Social Justice School where they learned about how various jobs impact the community (e.g., chef, journalist).
- Social Justice Themes.** The overarching theme for *DC Freedom Schools* is “I can make a difference.” This



<sup>2</sup> *Harambee* is a Kenyan tradition of community self-help events, e.g. education, fundraising or development activities. *Harambee* literally means "all pull together" in Swahili.

<sup>3</sup> Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian cultural practice – simultaneously a fight and a dance – that can be interpreted as both a sport and an art form.



theme is expanded upon as scholars examine how they can make a difference in themselves, their family, the community, the country, the world, and more generally through social action. Scholars explored the critical and timely theme of gun violence prevention<sup>4</sup> for this year's National Day of Social Action.<sup>5</sup> Sites incorporated this social action theme in multiple activities. For example, the DC Dream Center scholars wrote a song with the music vendor about gun violence prevention, made murals and posters, and staged a silent protest at the DC Attorney General's office in Judiciary Square. The older SJS scholars researched the statistics behind gun violence and its impact on families, made posters and TikTok videos, wrote letters to the DC task force and toured the U.S Capitol Building.

## School Community Profiles

The school communities served by *the CDF Freedom Schools* summer programs share characteristics of the poorest wards in Washington, DC. The DC Dream Center and the Social Justice School serve families in low resource communities with large numbers of Black students and large percentages of single parent households. The Social Justice School is a Title 1 charter school in Ward 5, enrolling roughly 100 students in grades 5 – 8 in school year 2022-23. The DC Dream Center serves children in Wards 7 and 8, most who attend either Boone or Plummer Elementary, Hart or Kelly Miller Middle School during the school year. Table 3 shows the profiles of students who attend these schools (latest data available from SY 2021-22).

**Table 3. Demographic Profile of Schools Attended by Scholars**

School	Demographic Characteristics			
	At Risk Students	Race/Ethnicity	2022 PARCC-ELA % meeting grade level expectations	2022 PARCC-Math % meeting grade level expectations
Boone ES	81%	93% Black 5% Hispanic	9%	1%
Plummer ES	67%	85% Black 13% Hispanic	23%	7%
Hart MS	80%	98% Black 1% Hispanic	13%	3%
Kelly Miller MS	76%	92% Black 7% Hispanic	9%	1%
Social Justice School	64%	91% Black 8% Hispanic	~7%	~7%

## Program Enrollment and Attendance

*DC Freedom Schools* recruited children in the school communities served by the DC Dream Center and children attending The Social Justice School during the school year. They registered children via a website that provided information about the program. Recruiting efforts were successful, resulting in a waiting list for the 40 grant-funded slots at each site. *CDF Freedom Schools* summer programs are offered at no- cost to families

<sup>4</sup> Note the president's September 22, 2023 announcement to open a new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

<sup>5</sup> All CDF Freedom Schools students nationwide participate in the National Day of Social Action (NDSA), a collective action to bring about social change.

and some families sign up still uncertain of their summer plans. Over the course of the summer, 67 different children attended multiple sessions of the program and 56 children were regular participants, attending more than half of the 23 program days. Participation levels were also reflected in the average daily attendance<sup>6</sup> at each site: 86% at the DC Dream Center and 63% at the Social Justice School.<sup>7</sup> See Table 4.

CDF Freedom Schools' summer programs were available to children in grades K through 8, based on the grade levels served by the program site. The DC Dream Center was set up to serve children who had completed grades K – 5 in school year 2022-23 but added one class of grade 6 and 7 scholars to accommodate siblings. The Social Justice School serves middle school students (grade 5 – 8) and thus provided *CDF Freedom School* opportunities for current or incoming students in grades 5 – 8. The CDF Freedom Schools' program continued to enroll slightly more to girls than boys. Overall 55% of program attendees were girls. All attendees were of Black race/ethnicity and most were from low income families, consistent with the student populations of their school communities. See Table 5.

**Table 4. Summer Program Enrollment and Attendance by Program Site**

Program Site (Program Days)	Number of Scholars			Average Daily Attendance
	Registered	Enrolled/Attended Multiple Sessions	Regular Participant	
DC Dream Center (23 days)	39	37	33	86%
Social Justice School (23 days)	30	30	23	63%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>76%</b>

**Table 5. Demographic Profile of Program Attendees**

School Site (All Attendees)	Number of Scholars				
	Grade K-2 (Level I)	Grade 3-5 (Level II)	Grade 6-8 (Level III)	Female	Male
DC Dream Center (n=37)	11	17	9	20	17
Social Justice School (n=30)	0	2	28	17	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>

## Staffing and Training

Groups of scholars were organized by grade level and staffed at a maximum ratio of 10:1 with 10 Servant Leader Interns (SLIs) and five full-time teachers across the two program sites. College students who had previous experience working with children were recruited to serve as SLIs; most were returning SLIs. Most staff were able to participate in CDF's national *Freedom Schools* 2-day training program, the Ella Baker Training Institute, this year delivered in-person at Haley's Farm in Tennessee. All staff also completed local training specific to the *DC Freedom Schools*. At the Social Justice School, staff implemented a co-facilitation model, with SLIs working side-by-side with summer school teachers in the classrooms. The Social Justice

<sup>6</sup> Average daily attendance (ADA) is a common indicator of participation levels in education, calculated as  $(\text{number of days present}) / (\text{number of days present} + \text{number of days absent})$  across all attendees.

<sup>7</sup> These calculations include children who started the program late and those who withdrew before the last program day.

School teachers participated in the national *CDF Freedom Schools* training which provided grounding for teachers in the *Freedom Schools* model and co-facilitation strategies for both teachers and SLIs. Each program site was managed by a site coordinator with previous *Freedom Schools* experience.

## Implementation Successes and Challenges

### Program Successes

Based on information from interviews with staff and surveys of the scholars, their parents and the staff, the *DC Freedom Schools* summer program appears to have been successfully implemented. This success is documented in the information provided by staff.

- **Enrichment activities.** Because of the successful partnerships with community vendors, *DC Freedom Schools* was able to offer a wide array of diverse activities that students were motivated to engage in. Cited as most engaging were the:
  - Cooking classes
  - STEM-related activities (e.g., egg-drop, go-cart racing)
  - Capoeira
  - African drumming
  - Field trips connected to the books read.
- **Collection of books.** *Freedom Schools* offers a diverse selection of books<sup>8</sup> about topics that students could relate to in their own lives (e.g., conflict resolution) and in current events (e.g., racial profiling, political figures). These books stimulated rich group discussions.
- **Parent development and engagement.** In summer 2023 *CDF Freedom Schools* renewed its emphasis on the importance of engaging parents in their child’s education and on the value of parent development in areas that support the healthy growth of their children. See report section on Parent Engagement and Development (page 20).



Surveys administered to scholars and their parents at the end of the program reflected general satisfaction with the program. Among the 39 scholars surveyed at the end of the program:

- Most scholars agreed or strongly agreed that *Freedom Schools helped me prepare for school.* (89.7%)
- Most scholars agreed or strongly agreed that *I was excited about going to Freedom Schools.* (82.1%)

Parent survey responses also indicated strong overall satisfaction with the summer program (see all parent survey responses in Appendix B, Figure 3):

<sup>8</sup> Among scholar favorites were the following books: *Chess Rumble*, *Teen Anxiety Tool Kit*, *Illegal*, *Ban this Book*, *H is for Harlem*, *Spotlight on Syria*, *Grandma of Juneteenth* and a graphic novel.

- All respondents *would recommend the Freedom Schools program to other parents.* (100%)
- All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *I am satisfied with the Freedom School as a whole.* (83% and 17%)
- All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *my child was excited about going to Freedom Schools* (74% and 26%).
- Nearly all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *Freedom Schools helped their child prepare for school* (61% and 35%).

## Program Challenges

These program successes took place despite challenges cited by program staff in four areas:

- **Staff training.** This year the national *Freedom Schools* training returned to an in-person format at CDF's Haley Farm in Knoxville, TN. The training was held while schools were still in session. This prevented staff members who were teachers during the school year adequate time to fully participate in the training. Returning staff appreciated the opportunity to train in-person because they could see the program practices modeled in action and learn from other SLIs. Staff mentioned the need for additional training in classroom management, the difficulty working with children who were not yet reading, and the challenge of working with groups comprised of children at many different reading levels. And while staff generally found the IRC training very helpful, the site coordinators would have liked more training to help them manage their young staffs, for example on communication skills and how to supervise less experienced staff who needed a lot of modeling and check-ins. While the staff debriefs at the end of each program day were helpful, they did not always provide junior staff with enough feedback.
- **Parent engagement.** The *Freedom Schools* program is built around parent engagement. This summer CDF renewed their efforts to both engage and develop parents, starting with a Parent's Weekend at CDF's Alex Haley Farm in Knoxville, continuing with an orientation for parents at the DC Dream Center and then providing weekly parent meetings. The meetings at the Social Justice School were held virtually to accommodate its commuter population. And despite providing parents with information and resources of greatest interest, it continues to be a challenge to get parents to participate in such weekly meetings on a regular basis. The DC Dream Center had more success engaging families in meetings in-person by using part of each meeting to gather permission slips for the weekly field trips.
- **Site dynamics.** The *DC Freedom Schools* found themselves having to fit their summer program into the existing structure at each program site. At the DC Dream Center, the program had to share the



available spaces, the recreation center building and the adjacent neighborhood house (the Southeast White House). While the house provided a warm and welcoming environment, the rooms had to be adapted to accommodate the 10:1 scholar to staff ratio. And while the program had some access to the community center as well, they had to coordinate with other summer programs to use the space and thus the scholars' room assignments moved around and varied by day and by week. At the

Social Justice School, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program was combined with the existing summer school program which required setting up joint training for the teaching staff and SLIs as well as establishing administrator and teacher buy-in of the *Freedom Schools* model. In addition, it was difficult to fully implement the IRC with fidelity when the teaching staff had to split the morning instructional time between English Language Arts using the IRC and summer school math instruction.

- **Program planning.** It is difficult to fully plan ahead all aspects of a program when program leadership does not know the exact number of scholars who will attend the summer program until they arrive, nor all members of the summer staff. While *DC Freedom Schools* staff worked with the school communities most likely to attend this summer program and asked parents to register in advance, staff and scholar recruitment did not begin in earnest until spring. A few staff were onboarded after training, some scholars who registered did not attend, and some scholars started the program late. In addition, the decision to include scholars who had just completed grade 6 and 7 at the DCDC site was made after parents requests to enroll older siblings. These Level 3 scholars were not budgeted for and consequently their IRC books and other program supplies arrived late. DCDC had to share Level 3 IRC books with SJS. Thus books could not be taught in the order intended, typically moving from child-centered to family-centered to community-centered to world-centered. Staff who onboarded late did not participate in all of the training. And other planning tools like scholar and parent rosters were not accessible by all staff when the program started.

Suggestions to mitigate these challenges are presented at the end of the report in *Conclusion and Recommendations* (see page 22).

## Positive Impacts on Children

Through the program's critical components (Harmabee!, Integrated Reading Curriculum, enrichment activities, and social justice themes), *DC Freedom Schools* summer programs strive to support scholars to maintain or improve their reading skills as well as their character and social emotional skills. The program evaluation plan for CDF's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant included two measurable objectives to reflect these desired outcomes for children enrolled in their summer programs:

- **Measurable Objective #2:** *50% of regular attendees will show improvement in their reading skills during the summer program, as measured by the Basic Reading Inventory.*
- **Measurable Objective #3:** *60% of regular attendees will show improvement during the summer program in their attitudes toward reading, learning (academic engagement) and self-efficacy (empowerment) as measured by the Child Survey.*

## Reading

The Children's Defense Fund has implemented its patented Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC) in its *Freedom Schools* summer programs across the nation to provide its scholars with reading materials and instruction at four grade level spans, K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Books are selected to engage young readers in stories featuring characters and themes that are relatable and inspiring. SLIs receive national training on how to implement the IRC, using its 300-page curriculum guide.

CDF's national evaluation of the *Freedom Schools'* summer programs uses the Basic Reading Inventory<sup>9</sup> to measure scholar's instructional reading levels at the beginning of its 5-week summer program and again at the end of the summer program. The BRI assesses sight vocabulary (with graded word lists), fluency and decoding skills (with graded reading passages) and reading comprehension (with corresponding comprehension questions) to estimate the child's instructional reading level, with materials at pre-primer, primer, and grade levels 1 through 12.<sup>10</sup>

Summer reading programs for children in low-achieving schools have in recent years focused on preventing summer reading loss<sup>11</sup> as well as strengthening children's foundational reading skills. With the pandemic, DC-area students experienced a shortened 2019-20 school year, mostly virtual instruction in school year 2020-21, and some interrupted instruction in school year 2021-22. National and local assessments conducted in 2022 and 2023 show marked declines in reading scores since before the pandemic with little evidence of recovery (see NAEP, 2022, 2023 and DCPS, 2022, 2023). Consequently, we have focused our assessment efforts on the extent to which scholars either maintained or improved their instructional reading levels over the course of the 5-week summer program. The BRI was administered individually to children in attendance during Week 1 of the 5-week programs at the DC Dream Center<sup>12</sup> and the Social Justice School and again to those children in attendance during Week 5.<sup>13</sup>

The capacity of the testing to measure true change in scholars' reading skills was limited by several factors, most notably the short duration of the summer program and among some scholars, a lack of interest in reading in a testing situation only 4 weeks after the original assessment and during the last week when program staff and scholars were engaged in closure activities. Among the 56 scholars available to test during the Week 1 and the 38 scholars tested in Week 5, we saw considerable variation in initial reading levels and moderate growth over the 5-week program.

### ***Considerable Variation in Initial Reading Levels***

At the DC Dream Center which ended up serving children who had just completed grades K – 7, initial reading levels ranged from scholars who had just completed grades K or 1 and were not yet reading, to grade 1 and 2 scholars reading from the pre-primer level to grade 7, to grade 3 – 5 scholars who ranged from the pre-primer level to grade 9. The Social Justice School served students who had just completed grades 4 through 7 and planned to attend the charter school in grades 5 – 8 in Fall 2023. All scholars received the Level 3 IRC which is designed for students reading at grade levels 6 – 8. Initial reading levels ranged from scholars who had just completed grade 4 or 5 and were reading at grade levels 3 – 9, to grade 6 – 7 scholars who were reading at grade levels 5 – 12. Such variation in reading levels presented challenges for staff in accommodating such a wide reading range in each IRC level group. This variation is shown in Table 6. Also note the relatively large number of scholars already reading above grade level.

---

<sup>9</sup> Johns, Jerry L. (2012). Basic Reading Inventory, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition: Pre-Primer through Grade Twelve and Early Literacy Assessments, Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> The BRI is similar to other literacy assessments that measure a student's frustration, instructional and independent reading levels. See for example Virginia's Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (2015).

<sup>11</sup> A number of studies have shown that low-income and minority students undergo larger summer reading losses than their middle-class and White classmates (e.g., Kim, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> We pre-tested 23 DCDC scholars the week before the program started during Parent Orientation meetings.

<sup>13</sup> The BRI was administered by five experienced assessment specialists trained specifically on the BRI. At both sites all scholars in attendance during the pre- and post-test dates were tested (DC Dream Center, n=33 and n=23; Social Justice School, n=23 and n=15).

**Table 6. Reading Levels at Program Start**

IRC Level	No. of Scholars Reading Below, At or Above Grade Level at Program Start			
	Not Reading Yet	Below grade Level	At grade Level	Above grade Level
Level 1 (Grades K-2)	5	1	1	5
Level 2 (Grades 3-5)	0	3	2	12
Level 3 (Grades 6-8)	0	5	8	14

**Moderate Improvement in Reading Levels**

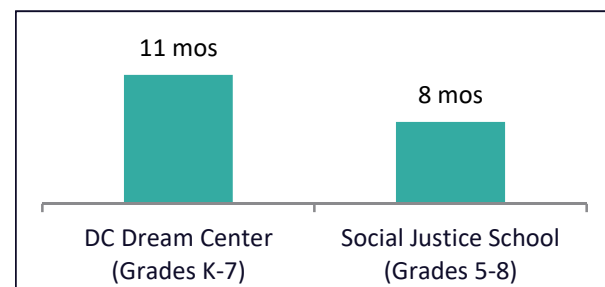
Despite these initial challenges, we found that scholars' instructional reading levels improved overall by approximately 10 months on average over the 5-week summer program; the difference between pre and post-test scores was statistically significant ( $p < .01$ , paired t-test,  $n=38$ ). This improvement included average growth of 11 months at the DC Dream Center (grades K-7) and 8 months of growth at the Social Justice School (grades 5-8), as can be seen in Table 7 and Figure 1.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 7. Baseline & End-of-Program Reading Levels**

Program Site	Instructional Reading Levels	
	Baseline Week 1	End of Program Week 5
DCDC (Grades K-7) ( $n=23$ )	5.22	6.17
SJS (Grades 5-8) ( $n=15$ )	7.73	8.40

*The analysis of reading growth was limited by several factors:*

- *Among the scholars who had just completed kindergarten or grade 1 in the spring, a few were non-readers at the beginning of the program and still not reading at the end of the program. The program is not designed to teach children to read but rather to build upon their foundational reading skills. Thus 4 non-readers were omitted from this analysis.*
- *About three-fourths of those scholars tested at baseline were available for post-testing in Week 5.*
- *Scholars may have been less motivated to read at post-test, only 4-5 weeks after the pre-test and during the last week of the program.*

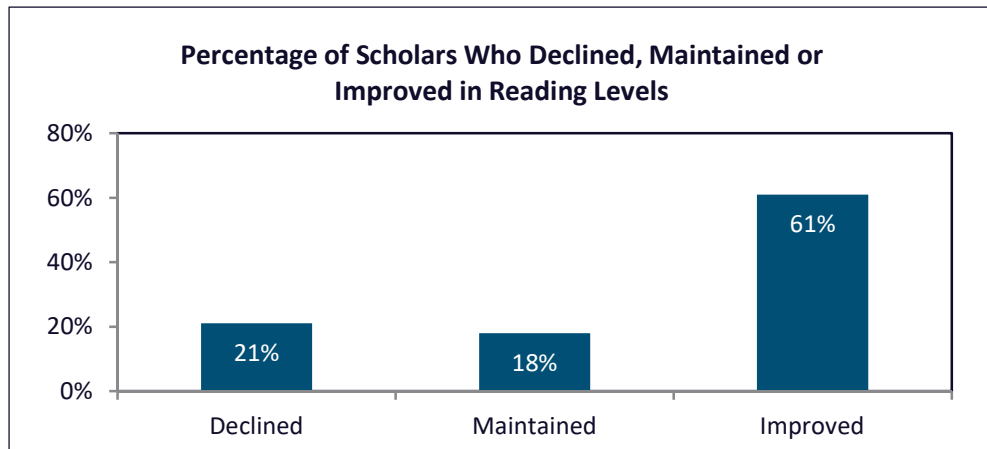
**Figure 1. Reading Level Growth in Months**

We also examined reading improvement in the context of the grant's measurable objective, that is, the percentage of scholars whose instructional reading level was maintained or improved over the 5-week program. Most scholars gained ( $n=23$ ) or maintained ( $n=7$ ) in instructional reading level and did not experience summer reading loss ( $n=30$ ); see Figure 2. Thus 79% of scholars maintained or improved their instructional reading level, exceeding the 50% target indicated in measurable objective #2.

To summarize, these data show that 79% of scholars participating in the two *CDF Freedom Schools* summer programs maintained or gained an average of 10 months in their reading levels, which is comparable to gains shown in national studies.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Growth is measured in grade levels and based on a 12-month school year. Thus average growth of .95 at DCDC is equivalent to .95 of 12 months or 11.4 months. Average growth of .67 at SJS is equivalent to 8 months.

<sup>15</sup> A national evaluation completed by CDF in 2022 found that 84 percent of students participating in *CDF Freedom Schools* maintained or gained (52%) an average of 8 months in their reading levels. Independent evaluations have found similar

**Figure 2. Percentage of Scholars, Maintaining or Improving Reading Levels**

### Child Attitudes

In previous national evaluations, CDF administered a Child Survey to gauge the impact of their program on the promoted **character traits**: academic engagement, civic engagement, self-empowerment, and conflict resolution. Starting in 2020, the same 15 survey items were also used to measure the impact of the program on the **social and emotional learning (SEL) skills** considered so important in the healthy development of youth: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.<sup>16</sup>

To evaluate the impact of the *CDF Freedom Schools* summer programs on child attitudes in these important areas—character and SEL, we administered the Child Survey individually to students either before or during Week 1 (baseline) and again during Week 5 (end of program) to measure any change in their attitudes over the course of the program. While the time between surveys was short, this pre-post comparison provides the strongest possible measure of any changes in attitudes.

#### **Pre and Post Child Surveys**

Of the 67 *CDF Freedom Schools* participants at the DC Dream Center and the Social Justice School, 52 completed the survey before or during Week 1 (baseline) and 39 scholars in grades 1 – 8 were available to complete the survey again during Week 5 (end of program). A comparison of responses of only those 39 scholars who completed the survey at baseline and again at the end of program, suggested that scholars maintained relatively high scores on the four **character skills** measured by the survey. At baseline and again at post-test, the respondents averaged between 3 and 4 on a 4-point scale, indicating strong agreement or

---

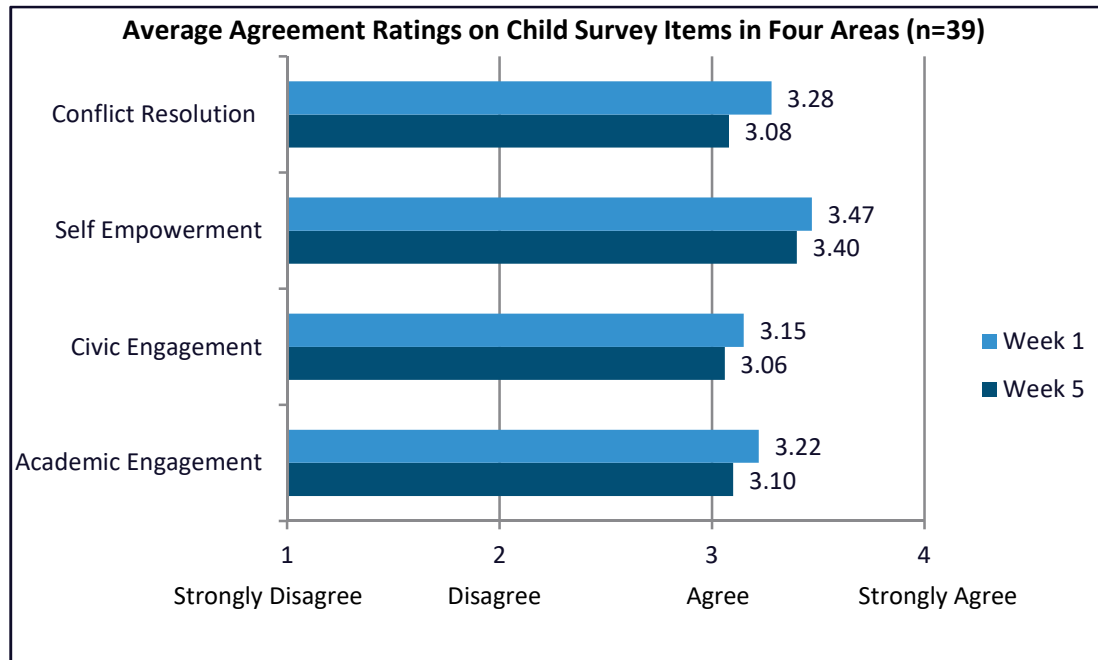
results. For example, the Center for Adolescent Literacies at UNC Charlotte found that 80-90% of scholars maintained or improved in their ability to read as measured by the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) pre- and post-tests (Lara-Cinisomo, et al., 2020).

<sup>16</sup> The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has developed an SEL framework comprised of these five skills. The benefits of social and emotional learning (SEL) are well-researched, with evidence demonstrating that an education that promotes SEL yields positive results for students. Meta-analyses of hundreds of studies show that SEL leads to beneficial outcomes related to: social and emotional skills; attitudes about self and school; social behaviors; conduct problems; emotional distress; and academic performance (CASEL, 2021).



agreement with items reflecting the four desired character traits: conflict resolution (3.28 and 3.08), self-empowerment (3.47 and 3.40), civic engagement (3.15 and 3.06), and academic engagement (3.22 and 3.10). See Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Pre and Post-Child Survey Results on Four Character Traits**



Looking at individual survey items, we found that:

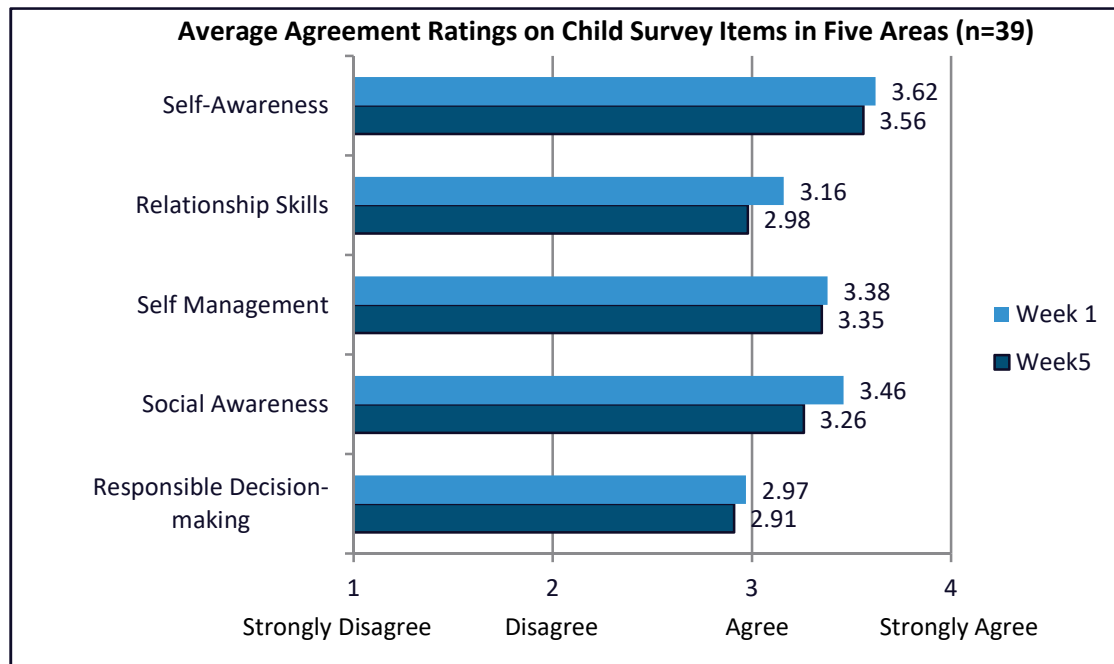
- Most scholars agreed or strongly agreed with statements measuring the four character traits with average ratings ranging from 3.06 (civic engagement) to 3.47 (self-empowerment) on a 4-point agreement scale.
- Scholars reported the highest ratings for **self-empowerment**; all except 1 or 2 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements measuring self-empowerment at program's end:
  - *I am confident to achieve my goals (98%).*
  - *I feel proud of myself (97%).*
  - *I feel supported by an adult (94%).*

Responses to these same 15 survey items were analyzed to reflect five social-emotional learning skills considered important in the healthy development of youth. The comparison of the responses of only those 39 scholars who completed the survey at baseline and again at the end of program, suggested that scholars maintained relatively high scores on the **five SEL skills** measured by the survey, as shown in Figure 4. At baseline and again at post-test, the respondents averaged between 3 and 4 on a 4-point scale, indicating strong agreement or agreement with items reflecting the five social-emotional learning skills: self-awareness (3.62 and 3.56), relationship skills (3.16 and 2.98), self-management (3.38 and 3.35), social awareness (3.46 and 3.26), and responsible decision-making (2.97 and 2.91).

Looking at individual survey items, we found that:

- Most scholars agreed or strongly agreed with statements measuring the five SEL skills, with average ratings ranging from 2.91 (responsible decision-making) to 3.62 (self-awareness) on a 4-point agreement scale.

Figure 4. Pre and Post-Child Survey Results on Five SEL Skills



- Scholars reported the highest ratings for **self-awareness**; all except 1 respondent agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements measuring **self-awareness** at program's end:
  - *I am confident to achieve my goals (98%).*
  - *I feel proud of myself (97%).*
- Scholars also reported relatively high ratings for **social awareness**; roughly 90 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements that measure **social awareness** at program's end:
  - *I feel confident I can make a difference around me. (92%)*
  - *I show respect to my friends at Freedom Schools. (90%)*

The pre- and post-testing at the DC Dream Center and the Social Justice School allowed us to also examine the program's performance against one of the measurable objectives in the 21stCCLC grant evaluation plan:

- **Measurable Objective #3:** *60% of regular attendees will show improvement during the summer program in their attitudes toward reading, learning (academic engagement) and self-efficacy (empowerment) as measured by the Child Survey.*

Applying this standard to the four character traits and the five SEL skills for the 39 regular attendees surveyed and allowing for several scholars who measured at the same level at baseline and 5 weeks later, the program approached or exceeded this measurable objective for most traits and skills, as can be seen in Figures 5 and 6.<sup>17</sup> However, for two character traits (civic engagement and conflict resolution) and one SEL skill (social awareness), slightly more than half of respondent scores decreased from pre to post-program survey.

<sup>17</sup> Note that the SEL skills were not included in the measurable objective as originally written.

Figure 5. Program Performance on Character Traits

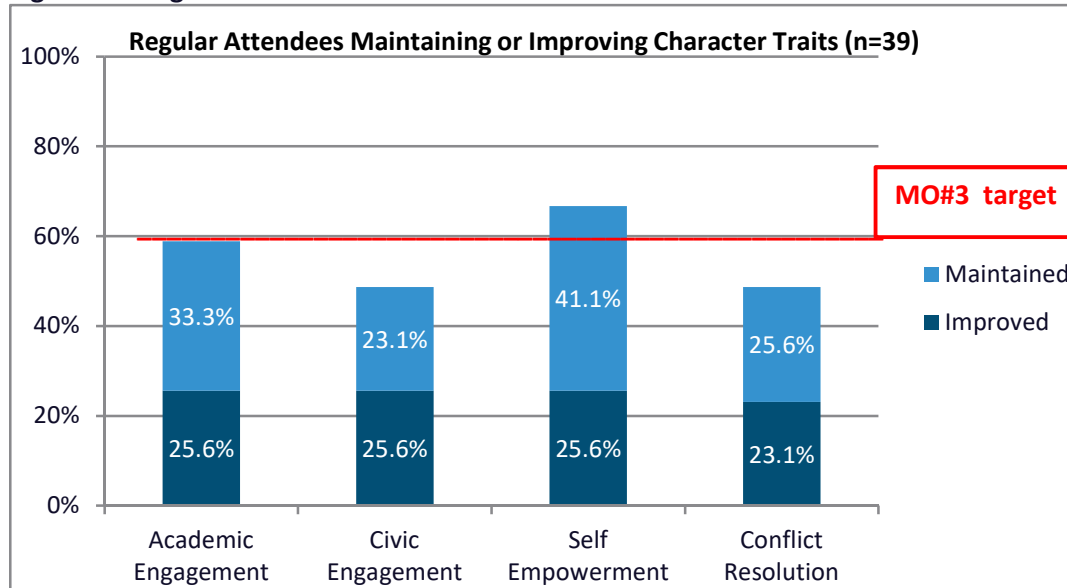
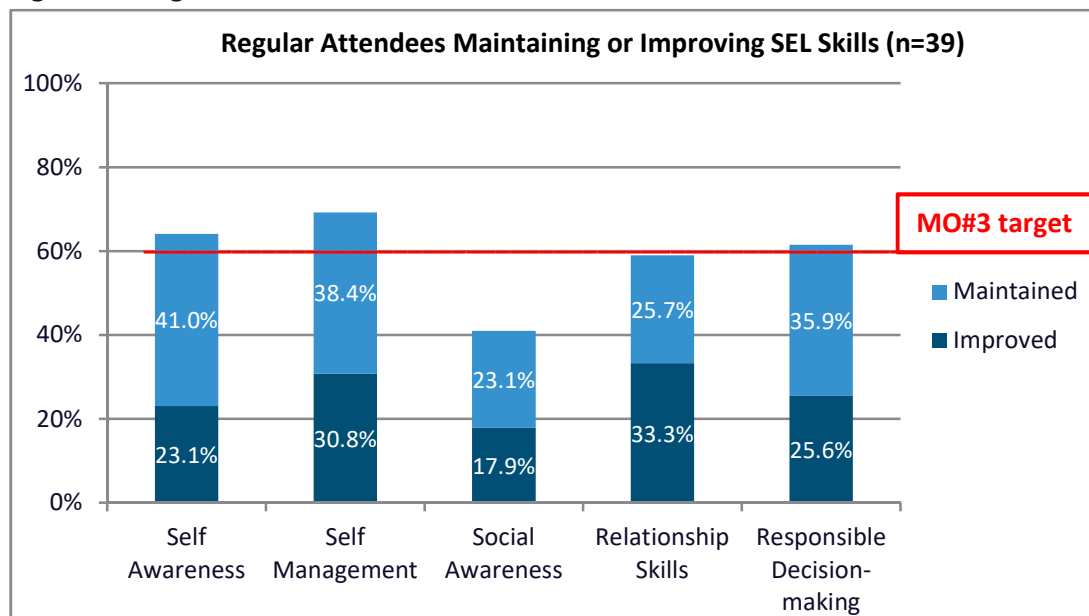


Figure 6. Program Performance on SEL Skills



The end-of-program results from all 15 Child Survey items can be found in the Appendix B, Figures 1 and 2.

### Parent Perceptions

We also surveyed parents of scholars about how their child had changed as a result of participation in the *CDF Freedom Schools* summer program. DC Dream Center parents completed an online survey the week after the program ended; SJS parents completed paper surveys on the final day of the program. All parent respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed with six statements suggesting that their child had grown in

self-empowerment, civic engagement, conflict resolution and academic engagement. Four survey items indicated what parents perceived as the strongest program impacts on their children:

- *My child more strongly believes that he/she can make a difference. (57% strongly agree)*
- *My child learned ways to resolve conflicts. (57% strongly agree)*
- *My child is more likely to be involved in community groups. (52% strongly agree)*
- *My child is a better reader. (52% strongly agree)*

See Appendix B, Figure 3 for all parent survey results.

#### Parent comments:

-- *This is an AMAZING program. It gives our kids great opportunities that they will always remember and use in their day to day lives.*

-- *It showed my children how to be helpful, bring about change and be a part of the community.*

-- *The experience as a whole is very powerful . . . the staff, reading curriculum and social justice outings.*

-- *I really appreciate all of the exciting things that SJS [Freedom Schools] does for my child. My biggest thing was his coming out of his shell and becoming more outgoing.*

## Positive Impacts on Staff

One of the goals of *CDF Freedom Schools* is to promote the character skills of the Servant Leader Interns (SLIs) and Site Coordinators, through staff training and their experiences working with children at risk of academic failure. Similar to its work with children, the program strives to foster in its interns a sense of self-empowerment, a focus on academic and career pursuits, and civic responsibility. Staff members were surveyed at the end of the summer program on the extent to which their program experience had changed their opinion about statements reflecting these three character traits: self-empowerment, academic/career engagement, and civic engagement. Survey items were designed to measure these three traits.<sup>18</sup>

Six of the 10 SLIs completed the survey, representing both program sites. Almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each of the 12 survey items, suggesting a positive impact of their summer program experience on each of the character traits measured (see Appendix B, Figure 4). Survey highlights include:

- Staff members' program experience most strongly impacted their **civic engagement** with an average rating of 3.47 on the 4-point agreement scale, followed by **self-empowerment** at 3.38 and **academic/career engagement** at 3.00.
- Six survey statements received the highest average agreement ratings, reinforcing the impact of the program on civic engagement and self-empowerment:
  - *I will volunteer with a group to help my community. (3.67)*
  - *I feel more confident that I can make a difference around me. (3.50)*
  - *I can make people listen to what I have to say. (3.50)*

---

<sup>18</sup> A factor analysis conducted on similarly-worded items in a national survey of *CDF Freedom School* SLIs during summer 2020 confirmed the survey's conceptual framework.

- *I am more likely to vote.(3.50)*
- *I feel more confident to achieve my goals.(3.50)*
- *I feel prouder of myself. (3.50)*
- Respondents were somewhat less confident about the impact of the program on their career goals, not surprising given that most of the SLIs were still college students:
  - *My career goals are set. (2.83)*
  - *I am more committed to a career in the education field. (3.00)*
  - *I understand what I learn in school and how it relates to my career goals.(3.17)*

Overall, the survey showed that the program had a positive impact on staff attitudes about civic engagement (3.47), self-empowerment (3.38), and academic/career engagement (3.00).

We also interviewed the two site coordinators and five of the SLIs. Multiple staff members cited the following positive impacts of their CDF Freedom Schools' experience:

- Emerging leadership skills and how the experience will help in leading a school (becoming a principal) or community program
- Considering a career in education
- Building on their experience and skill sets, learning things that they can take back to their school and classroom
- Understanding how to implement the *CDF Freedom Schools* program with fidelity
- Recognizing the importance of parent engagement.

#### SLI comments:

*--It's a wonderful program that makes a difference in the staff and scholars' lives. It reduces reading loss during the summer and keeps scholars engaged.*

*--It was a great experience working with CDF. I have definitely gained a lot of knowledge and developed new skills.*

*--I feel like I've grown professionally and in my everyday life. I was able to improve my skill set. I've found ways to implement different activities to increase student interest and to get them involved in their learning. I've also increased my collaboration skills by co-teaching with staff to increase student's overall performance.*

## Parent Engagement and Development

Following US Department of Education guidance on the characteristics of successful after-school and summer programs, the Children's Defense Fund has incorporated parent and family engagement as an essential component of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program. As part of their 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant evaluation and monitoring plan for their after-school and summer programs, CDF focused one of four measurable objectives specifically on parent engagement:

- *Measurable Objective #4: Programs will offer at least **three** academically-enriched student/family events designed to increase parent engagement and knowledge of their student's academic program, as measured by program activity logs and surveys.*

CDF promotes a broad vision of family involvement with parents viewed as assets and engaged as partners in supporting the academic and social justice goals of *CDF Freedom Schools*. They have created **communities of practice** to support parent and family engagement with the goal helping *“marginalized children flourish by urging leaders to prioritize child well-being, and supporting communities to wield their*

power to ensure that children thrive.”<sup>19</sup> CDF has explicit goals around engaging and involving families and around parent development. Summer 2023 activities included:

- **Weekly parent meetings** that provided relevant and actionable information about how parents can become more engaged in their child’s education and support their scholar outside of school programming. Topics included social-emotional learning, activities to do with your children at home and energy/wellness activities like yoga.<sup>20</sup> Weekly parent meetings were built into the *Freedom Schools* summer programming and held in-person at the DC Dream Center and virtually at the Social Justice School. In addition, some parents participated in the wellness, fitness and cooking activities at the DC Dream Center site.
- A 3-day **Parents Weekend** at CDF’s Alex Haley Farm Retreat and Training Center in Knoxville, TN, attended by 13 parents from multiple *CDF Freedom Schools* program sites. The goal of this parent retreat was to engage parents in communities of practice to support active involvement in their child’s education (e.g., through PTO/PTA membership), parent and family well-being, and advocacy.
- A **Family Fun Day** celebration at both sites as a finale and program culminating event. Parents were asked to support the Family Fun Day scheduled on the last day of the summer program to celebrate their *Freedom School* scholars with food, games and scholar presentations demonstrating their summer learnings.



## Parent Survey

As part of the national evaluation of its *Freedom School* programs, CDF has developed a Parent Survey for administration at the end of their summer programs. DCDC parents (n=13) completed an online survey the week after the program ended. SJS parents (n=10) completed the survey at Family Fun Day.

The survey included four items asking parents to reflect on how their participation in the *CDF Freedom Schools* program had changed them, in terms of academic and civic engagement. At least 21 of the 23 parent respondents (91%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- *I plan to be more engaged in my child's school work next year. (70% strongly agree)*

<sup>19</sup> From Children Defense Fund’s *Parent Engagement Report 2022-2023*, August, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Parents were surveyed at the beginning of the summer about the topics and resources they would like to learn more about at weekly parent meetings. Based on survey responses from 27 DC Dream Center parents, the following most often requested topics were covered at parent meetings, coordinated with what scholars were learning: strategies for social-emotional learning; Black authors and literacy at home; fitness and healthy eating; and parent advocacy and social action.

- *I have a better understanding of how to help my child be successful. (65% strongly agree)*
- *I am more likely to vote. (57% strongly agree)*
- *I am more likely to volunteer with a group to help my community. (52% strongly agree)*

DCDC parents were also asked about any parent meetings they attended and provided the following relevant comments:

- *I enjoyed the interaction with staff; they were very friendly and courteous.*
- *I love that we came together as a whole to accomplish goals.*
- *I enjoyed the cooking classes.*

The complete parent survey results can be found in Appendix B, Figure 3.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The Children’s Defense Fund met the challenge of delivering high-quality summer programming to roughly 70 scholars grades K – 8 at two sites. CDF worked with community organizations to develop and structure summer programs at the DC Dream Center and the Social Justice School. Both community sites were able to implement the critical components of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program model: Harambee!, the Integrated Reading Curriculum, a diverse selection of enrichment activities, social action events, and parent engagement opportunities. While somewhat challenged by the less than 100% attendance of the scholars during summer vacations, the program still resulted in moderate improvement in children’s average instructional reading levels among the 5-week participants as well as maintenance of relatively high levels of the promoted character traits and social-emotional learning skills. Staff also showed positive impacts on some of these same character traits (i.e., civic engagement, self-empowerment, and academic/career engagement). Based on the challenges the summer program faced and the information shared through staff interviews and surveys, we offer recommendations in four areas: staff training, parent engagement, coordination with program sites, and program planning

- **Staff training.** One of the cornerstones of effective expanded learning time programs is high quality staffing (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The *CDF Freedom Schools’* summer programs are primarily staffed by college students studying in fields related to working with children such as education or social work. These Servant Leader Interns typically have prior experience working with children and participate in the national training provided by the Children’s Defense Fund. Many of this summer’s staff had previously worked as SLIs. Still, feedback from the current program staff on implementation challenges suggest that staff would benefit from additional in-person training, particularly on best practices in classroom management, reading instruction for children not yet reading, and managing reading instruction with children at diverse reading levels. The co-facilitation model at the Social Justice School, where experienced classroom teachers worked side-by-side with interns should serve as a model for future program training and implementation efforts. If feasible, *CDF Freedom Schools* should consider holding the national and local trainings when staff members who work in schools during the school year can attend. Training earlier in the spring would help staff make connections and form partnerships before the programs actually begin. And site coordinators would benefit from training that includes how to work with and manage young, less experienced staff members who may require lots of feedback. Again, consider the SJS co-facilitation model.

- Parent engagement.** Another characteristic of quality expanded learning time programs is strong family involvement. *CDF Freedom Schools* has recognized the importance of parent engagement and each year has planned events and activities to get parents more meaningfully involved in the program. This year they renewed their efforts to promote parent engagement as well as parent development, starting with a Parent’s Weekend Retreat at their national training site in Knoxville, TN. Continuing with parent outreach to recruit scholars, effective communication with parents to ensure families can support their scholars, and finally program activities that meet parent needs, *CDF Freedom Schools* has still at times struggled to get parents effectively engaged in their child’s summer program. Ideally the parents of all scholars would attend the weekly meetings. CDF recognizes the need to continue their efforts to work with parents to better engage them in their child’s educational experience.
- Coordination with program sites.** A third characteristic of effective summer programs is the linkage or coordination between the summer program and school year or site staff. This coordination has both a logistical and an instructional component. Logistically, because these summer programs are working in community settings, there needs to be good communication with these program sites regarding expectations around shared space and possibly shared activities. *CDF Freedom Schools* staff at the DC Dream Center suggested that the program would be easier to implement in a dedicated space rather than moving from one building to another. And instructionally, the *CDF Freedom Schools* summer program includes components that support the school year instructional program, in particular the Integrated Reading Curriculum. Summer program staff might benefit from more information about children’s reading abilities upon entering the summer program. This coordination was facilitated at the Social Justice School by teachers who taught in both the charter school year program and summer *CDF Freedom Schools* program. In addition, *CDF Freedom Schools* should be able to access DCPS student data for participants in order to, for example, check end-of-year instructional reading levels.
- Program planning.** A final critical component of any effective program is good program planning. Summer programs offer special challenges to effective planning, especially when students and staff cannot be recruited well in advance of the summer. Still, *CDF Freedom Schools* staff may be able to better plan for each summer’s programs based on their experience in a community the previous summer. Prior experience should help them anticipate the number of children likely to attend and the number of staff needed. And *CDF Freedom Schools* staff should continue to maintain a relationship with each community served during the school year to better anticipate their needs.

Following the Summer 2022 *CDF Freedom Schools*’ experience and consistent with 2023 staff interviews, staff shared **lessons learned** that should be incorporated in future programming:

- At the structural level, both the administration and management of the program need to be fully staffed to accommodate grant management requirements, program oversight, and the provision of growth opportunities for staff.
- Family engagement efforts should be continued; parent involvement in program activities is a critical program component.
- CDF should continue to utilize local enrichment providers from the community to support a culture of community caring.



## APPENDIX A: References

- Afterschool Alliance (2015). *Evaluations backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of afterschool programs' impact on academics, behavior, safety and family life*. Available at [http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Evaluation\\_Backgrounder.pdf](http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Evaluation_Backgrounder.pdf).
- American Institutes for Research (2015). *What we know about the impact of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program*. Brief developed for the U.S. Department of Education, June 2015.
- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2021). See <https://casel.org/>
- D.C. Public Schools (2022). *D.C. math, reading test scores fall to lowest levels in more than 5 years*. The Washington Post (Laura Lumpkin), Washington DC: September 2, 2022.
- D.C. Public Schools (2023). *D.C. student test scores improve incrementally after pandemic-era plunge*. The Washington Post (Laura Lumpkin), Washington DC: August 24, 2023.
- Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J. and Viruleg, E. (2020). *COVID-19 and learning loss—disparities grow and students need help*. Washington, DC: McKinsey & Company, 2020.
- Invernizzi, M., Meier, J. and Juel, C. (2015). PALS Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS): Technical Reference 1-3. University of Virginia and Virginia Department of Education, 2015.
- Johns, Jerry L. (2012). Basic Reading Inventory, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition: Pre-Primer through Grade Twelve and Early Literacy Assessments, Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2012.
- Kim, J. (2004). Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap, Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 9:2, 169-188.
- Lara-Cinisomo, S., Taylor, D. & Medina, A. (2020). *Summer reading program with benefits for at-risk children: Results from a Freedom Schools' program*, Reading & Writing Quarterly, 36:3, 211-224.
- Mathematica Policy Research (2003). *When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program*. Report to the U.S. Dept. of Education, January 2003.
- Mitchell, Corey (2020). *COVID-19 has left thousands of after-school programs in jeopardy*. Education Week, July 27, 2020.
- NAEP (2022). *NAEP long-term trend results in reading and mathematics: Reading and mathematics scores decline during COVID-19 pandemic*. In The Nation's Report Card, August, 2022.
- NAEP (2023). *NAEP long-term trend results in reading and mathematics: From reckoning to recovery: student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic*. In The Nation's Report Card, June, 2023.
- Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) (2020). *District of Columbia Nita A. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers 2020-21 School Year Request for Applications*, June, 2020.
- U.S. Department of Education (2000). *Working for children and families: Safe and smart after-school programs*, April 2000.

## APPENDIX B: Survey Results

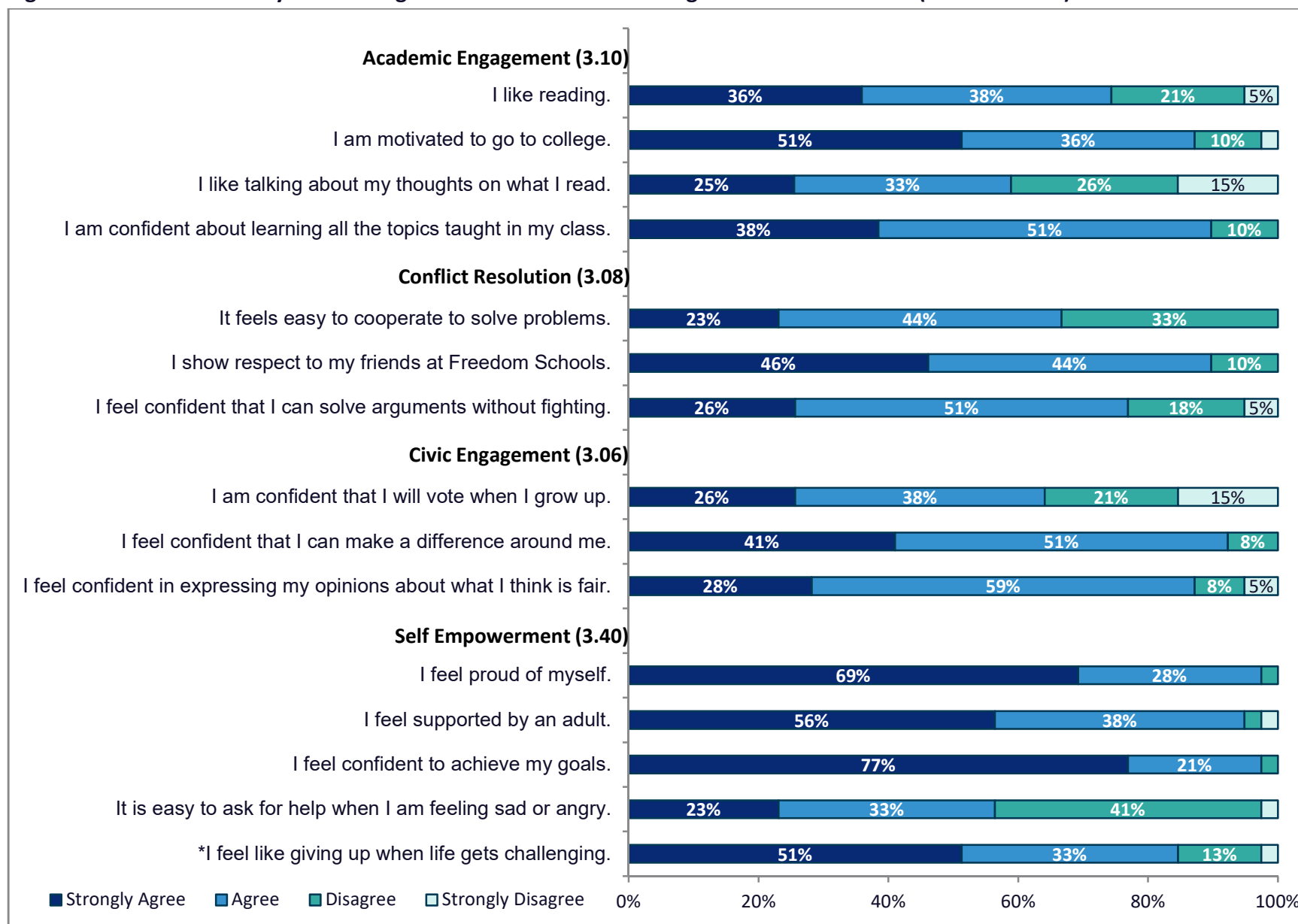
Figure B1: Post Child Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Four Character Traits

Figure B2. Post Child Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Five SEL Skills

Figure B3. Parent Survey: Percent Agreement on Items in Three Areas: Child, Parent, *Freedom Schools* Experience

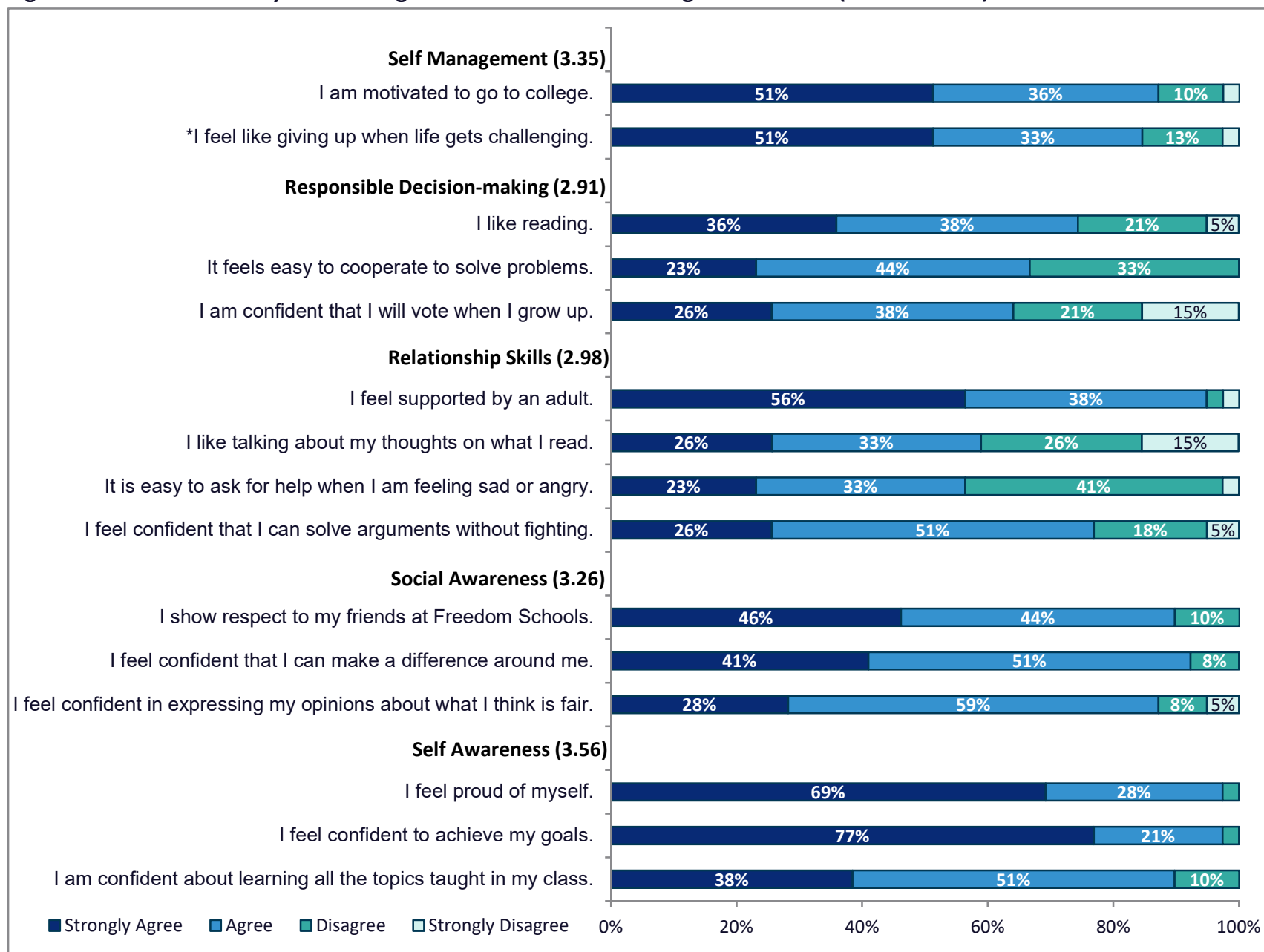
Figure B4. SLI Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Three Character Traits

Figure B1. Post Child Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Four Character Traits (n=39 Scholars)



\*Note that coding was reversed on this survey item to reflect positive self-empowerment.

Figure B2. Post Child Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Five SEL Skills (n=39 Scholars)



\*Note that coding was reversed on this survey item to reflect positive self-management.

Figure B3. Parent Survey: Percent Agreement on Items in Three Areas: Child, Parent, *Freedom Schools* Experience (n=23)

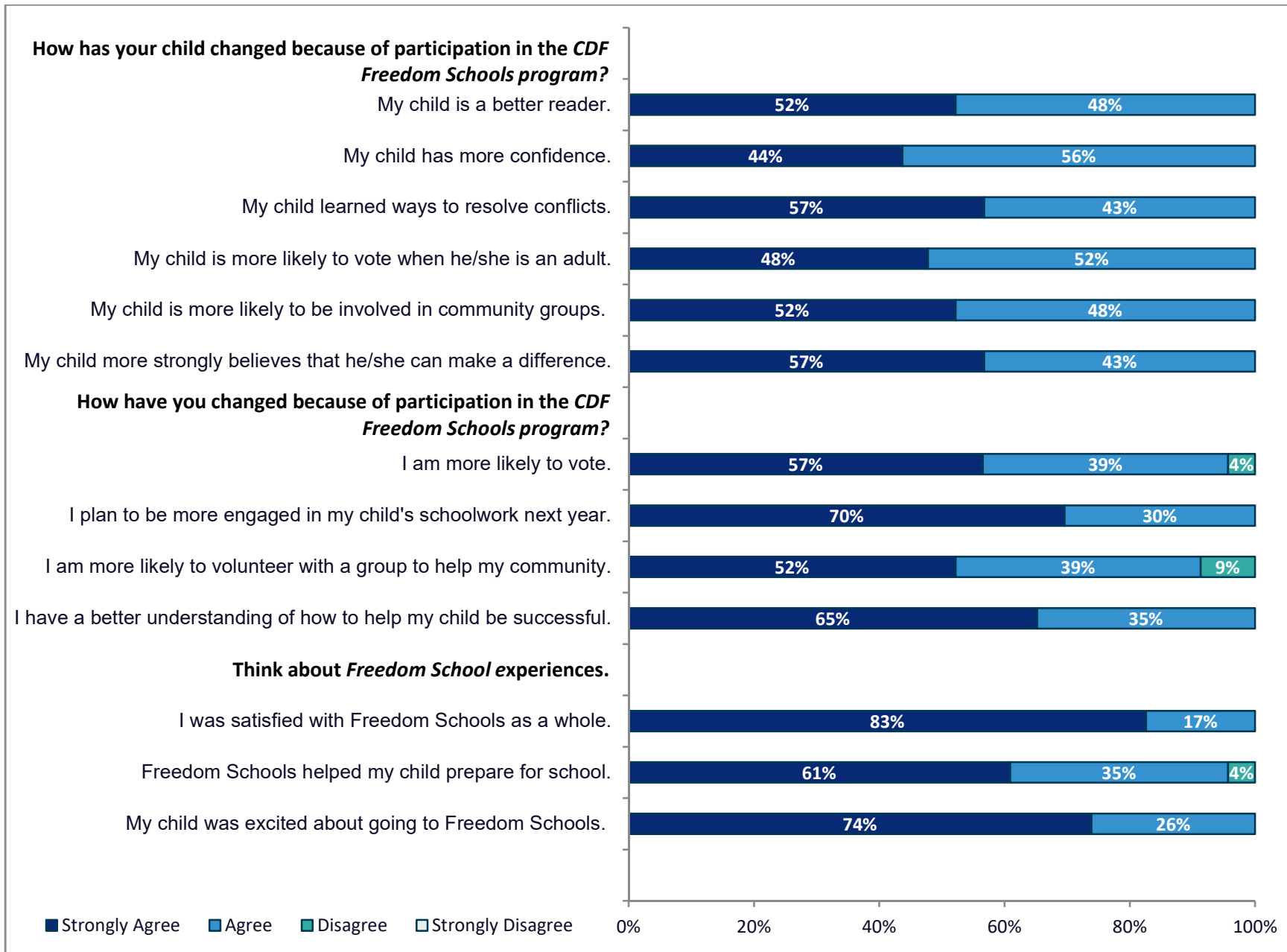


Figure B4. SLI Survey: Percent Agreement on Items Measuring Three Character Traits (n=6 SLI)

