



Communities  
In Schools

Brunswick County

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# Communities In Schools of Brunswick County

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



## Spotlight: Cedar Grove Middle School Eighth Grade Boys Group

### Social and emotional learning for success



Today's education should compliment academic focus with the development of social skills that are essential for students to succeed in school, career, and life. The Communities In Schools (CIS) program at Cedar Grove Middle School (CGMS) in Brunswick County is delivering social and emotional learning to the students. CIS Success Coach at CGMS Laura Hicks has created a program for eighth grade boys that integrates social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD) and social and emotional learning (SEL). Evidence shows social and emotional learning for students has long term results with positive impact on academics and behaviors. Students with healthy social

emotional development are more successful in school, in the workplace, and experience greater lifetime well-being.

The CGMS Eighth Grade Boys Group is a mentoring group that began in January 2020. The group is made up of ten students who regularly attend meetings twice a month. CGMS teachers and administrators recommend students to join the group who would benefit from SEL or are leaders among their peers and can positively influence others in what they learn from group involvement.

The Eighth Grade Boys Group is led by volunteer Coach Joel Johnson. Coach Johnson grew up in the Cedar Grove community, attended CGMS, graduated high school and college, then came back to the area to make a difference in the community he holds dear. Coach Johnson uses the SEL sessions twice a month with the students to “change their trajectory.” He works to teach the students about positive life decisions and incorporating SEAD and SEL into life choices instead of getting caught up in negative influences and bad situations. Coach Johnson is teaching the students how to grow into positive male leaders and role models. He reminds them to always think about the future and what decisions and steps they need to make to ensure a positive, successful life – every decision means something and has outcomes. “Make good decisions today to help you reach your goals for the future. Don't get derailed by outside influences,” said Coach Johnson. Every session topic is developed to improve students' lives and promote good choices. The sessions are interactive and lively between the eighth-grade boys and Coach Johnson which is evidence of the trust built over three months of sharing and lessons learned.

CIS Success Coach at CGMS Ms. Hicks shares Coach's vision and sees the Eighth Grade Boys Group as a “trajectory changer” for students. CGMS has a large male student population that need positive male influence. Middle school, specifically eighth grade, is a pivotal turning point for students going from middle to high school where their choices and decisions are more impactful. Middle school girls have a group called I Am Extraordinary that focuses on positive life choices, decisions, outcomes, and social emotional well-being. Middle school boys need the same positive support. The CIS Eighth Grade Boys Group at CGMS provides male students with increased opportunities for their future, surrounds them with strong support in SEL, and positive life influences as much as possible.



(continued)

**#AllinforKids**



“I believe that all youth can realize their full potential when surrounded by a caring, supportive community of adults. The CIS model puts this belief into action,” said Ms. Hicks.

Students involved in the group are quick to share why they like it and need it. The boys even hold each other accountable for their behaviors outside of the regular sessions and keep a check on fellow group members. Ms. Hicks shared when she passes a group member in the hall at school, they look forward to meeting and regularly ask if Coach Johnson is coming to talk this week.

“I like meeting new friends and having a bond with fellow students that we can share things and help each other with problems,” said a Boys Group participant. Another student said, “Coach Johnson is a model of what we can achieve. Group helps me to create goals and work towards them.”

In the same way that academic skills can be developed, social and emotional skills can be nurtured and developed. Using SEAD/SEL methods in student groups prepares students to connect with others, make responsible decisions, communicate, solve problems, think critically, be resilient, persevere, and work in teams—key skills needed for the workplace and for life.



Coach Johnson loves giving back to the students in his home community. He wants to share as much positive influence and support in student lives as possible. Coach shared some parting words with the students at the end of their most recent session, “Get better every day, one day goes by where you don’t get better and improve is a missed opportunity.”

The mission of CIS is built on student success. CIS’ mission is “to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.” CIS Action for Success Dropout Prevention Program is a primary partner for providing opportunities and supporting student achievement and success in Brunswick County Schools. CIS Success Coaches working in CIS Action for Success programs provided at Cedar Grove Middle School, Leland Middle School, Shallotte Middle School, South Brunswick Middle School, Waccamaw School, and Supply Elementary School, are trained in implementing SEAD/SEL curricula to improve student outcomes. Helping more students succeed and preparing them for a strong future is important work and CIS is striving to reach more students every day.



CIS staff and volunteers are focused on the mission of improving student lives and find ways to be a student resource, delivering excellent programs and services. For more information about CIS of Brunswick County and our Action for Success program, please visit [www.cisbrunswick.org](http://www.cisbrunswick.org) and be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**Happy Easter!**



**Happy Passover!**



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