

CIVIL AIR PATROL

CADETS AT SCHOOL



CAPP 60-13
August 2025

Program Overview for Educators



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Civil Air Patrol provides middle and high schools with a character education curriculum through its Cadet Program

This guide is intended for professional educators who are interested in making the Cadet Program part of their school community. It outlines the program's goals and benefits, describes the curriculum, and explains how the program is managed.

CIVIL AIR PATROL

is a non-profit corporation that was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1946 and is the all-volunteer auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Its 65,000+ members support its aerospace education, cadet program, and emergency services missions.



KIM CAMPBELL

Colonel USAF (Ret), A-10 Pilot

"I knew I had to be a part. It gave me an early start into what I wanted to do."



SEAN FULLER

Gateway International Partner Manager, NASA

"I was learning it (aerospace and leadership) before I was even in college."

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Part 1 INTRODUCTION

Through partnerships with middle and high schools, Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Program is fulfilling its mission of developing tomorrow's aerospace leaders.

CAP offers schools an exciting form of character education that uses the students' enthusiasm for aviation, space, and technology as a motivator. An Air Force-affiliated program, high schools find Civil Air Patrol a low-cost alternative to Junior ROTC. Middle schools find that the challenge of cadet life provides the structure early adolescents need. A middle school CAP squadron can be a great complement to a high school JROTC program.

1.1 AIR FORCE AFFILIATION

Cadets are never obligated to join the military, nor does CAP attempt to recruit cadets for the armed forces. However, the uniform, military customs and courtesies, and drill and ceremonies are important features of cadet life that contribute to individual self-discipline. Moreover, 10% of the cadets at the Air Force Academy got their start in CAP.

1.2 CADET ADVANCEMENT

The Cadet Program is a self-paced program of sixteen achievements. Cadets complete one task in each element of cadet life — leadership, aerospace, fitness, and character — during each achievement. There is a degree of academic rigor to the program; cadets study their textbooks and must pass written tests to advance. Along the way, cadets earn promotions, acquire new leadership responsibilities, and collect awards.

1.3 ADDING VALUE TO THE SCHOOL

Some of the benefits students and schools receive by partnering with CAP include:

Students

- Develop leadership skills
- Experience the thrill of flying
- Test-fly potential careers
- Earn rank and awards
- Qualify for college scholarships
- Solidify their moral character
- Make friends and have fun

Schools

- Strengthen students' discipline and reduce referrals
- Offer an alternative to drugs and violence
- Boost attendance through high student morale
- Acquire new opportunities for peer mentoring
- Improve student participation in community service
- Provide students with a meaningful after-school activity
- Provide an enhanced STEM-based curriculum proven interesting and challenging to students

Part 2 PROGRAM CONTENT

The program content is set by CAP, and schools are expected to adhere to the program guidelines. However, within the broad parameters of cadet life, local squadrons have a good deal of flexibility to adapt the program to match their cadets' interests and needs.

CAP provides each school with lesson plans, activity guides, and other program resources at no cost. A detailed activity schedule provides the weekly meetings with structure and continuity. Additionally, each cadet receives the textbooks and training materials they need to participate in the program.

2.1 ELIGIBILITY

Students attending grades 6 through 12 are eligible to participate in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program, with the permission of their parent or guardian. All prospective cadets are required to have a Social Security number. Additionally, each participant must pay annual dues, which vary by state, but range from \$25 to \$50.

2.2 CURRICULUM

Civil Air Patrol is a character education program. To achieve its goal of developing tomorrow's aerospace leaders, the Cadet Program is organized around four main themes:

Leadership

CAP introduces cadets to Air Force perspectives on leadership through classroom instruction, mentoring, and hands-on learning. First, cadets learn to follow, but as they progress, they learn how to lead small teams, manage projects, think independently and develop skills for adult life. Popular leadership activities include color guard, public speaking, and team leadership problems.

Aerospace

CAP inspires in youth a love of aviation, space, and technology. Cadets study the fundamentals of aerospace science in the classroom, and experience flight first-hand in CAP aircraft. Optional summer activities allow cadets to explore aerospace careers. Popular aerospace activities include model rocketry, satellite tracking, and hands-on projects.

Fitness

CAP encourages cadets to develop a lifelong habit of regular exercise. The Cadet Program promotes fitness through calisthenics, hiking, rappelling, volleyball, competitions and other activities. The cadets' fitness test is aligned with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program.

Character

CAP challenges cadets to live the CAP core values of integrity, volunteer service, excellence and respect. Through character forums, cadets discuss ethical issues relevant to teens. CAP also encourages cadets to promote a drug free ethic in their schools and communities.

2.3 TEXTBOOKS & ACTIVITY GUIDES

Pictured at right is a sampling of CAP's cadet textbooks. All materials are objectives-based. The aerospace materials are often used in for-credit courses at the high school level and meet national standards. Aerospace modules for advancement are completed in order, but aerospace lessons can be done at any time.

Some of the topics covered in the aerospace curriculum include:

Science of flight
Space and spacecraft
Weather
Model rocketry
and more



Some of the topics covered in the leadership curriculum include:

Character
Air Force traditions
Leadership theory
Communications
Critical thinking
and more



2.4 THE UNIFORM



Cadets wear an Air Force-style uniform as part of their leadership and character education. In sponsoring a cadet squadron, the school agrees to allow cadets to wear their uniform to school one day per week.

The Curry Uniform Voucher provides cadets with financial support to assist them in purchasing their first uniforms, upon their earning Achievement 1, The Curry Achievement. The cadets are responsible for the costs above the voucher. Most cadets also choose to obtain a camouflage uniform. CAP is often able to issue cadets BDUs or ABUs from military surplus. Learn more at GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CurryUniform

Every adult leader wears a CAP uniform similar to what the cadets wear (provided the adult meets certain weight and grooming standards), or a simple CAP polo shirt and gray slacks or a gray skirt.



Part 3 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

3.1 ADULT LEADERSHIP

Every cadet activity requires adult supervision. All adults must be age 21 or older. They are required to submit their fingerprints to the FBI. A minimum of three adults are needed to charter a squadron.

The lead adult holds the position of squadron commander. This individual is appointed and removed by the wing (state) commander. The squadron commander appoints additional adults to the staff, but all participating adults must be official CAP members. Because CAP is a volunteer organization, CAP does not pay a salary to the adults. However, the school is welcome to provide stipends.

With the school's permission, parents may support the cadets by becoming Cadet Sponsor Members. CSMs may serve as chaperones or help with transportation.

Adult leaders from other CAP squadrons may be available to support the school's squadron. The school may want to consider how it wants to handle these situations, in keeping with routine school policies regarding visitors, security, and the like.

3.2 ADULT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CAP supports adult leaders in several ways. Adult training begins with "Level One," an online introduction to CAP that can be completed in about two hours. Level One concludes with a 1-hour "summary conversation" with the new member's mentor.

Second, Training Leaders of Cadets is a three-part course for adult leaders to learn how to mentor cadets and manage cadet activities. TLC Basic and Intermediate are each one-day courses hosted by the wing. It is essential that every school squadron send at least two adults to TLC Basic. It is highly recommended that the squadron commander attend TLC Intermediate.

Third, every squadron commander will be matched with an experienced adult leader of cadets who will serve as their mentor. This individual will help the school squadron get established and provide advice and guidance to the squadron commander.

Finally, CAP offers a full library of leader guides, web pages, regulations, manuals, and other program resources that are outlined in the Cadet Programs Resource Guide and reviewed in depth at the Training Leaders of Cadets courses.

3.3 FACILITY

In sponsoring a cadet squadron, the school is expected to make classroom and storage space available. The squadron also will need access to computers, printers, and the Internet.

3.4 SUPPLIES & UNIFORMS

Upon joining CAP, every cadet is mailed a [New Cadet Kit](#). Schools may find it easier to have cadet kits sent directly to the school, rather than to the cadets' individual homes. To arrange this please contact Cadet Programs.

Upon earning Achievement 1, cadets (and their parent, Unit Commander, and Deputy Commander for Cadets) are emailed their [Curry Uniform Voucher](#). Vouchers are for \$175, \$125, \$75, or a voluntary opt-out with a discount code to purchase uniform items from our uniform partner, Vanguard. **Vouchers are good for 45 days and cannot be reissued.** More details about the Curry Uniform Voucher can be found at GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CurryUniform. Cadets can also find uniform items on online marketplaces, from local military surplus stores, or borrowing from neighboring units.



Part 4 PROGRAM FORMAT

Community-based cadet squadrons meet once a week in the evenings for two to three hours. This is the recommended format for school programs, simply substituting after-school time for the evening timeframe. Newly chartered units can take advantage of CAP's current lesson plans and schedules, as well as the school's existing after-school infrastructure and transportation.

Some school-based squadrons conduct the Cadet Program during class time for credit. Depending on the school's schedule this can mean that cadets receive significantly more contact hours with this type of schedule. Consequently, the instructor will need to make a greater effort to adapt materials to this format. The Cadet Program's leadership and aerospace curriculums are aligned with national standards, but the school will need to navigate the local accreditation processes.

Additionally, community-based cadet squadrons meet year-round and offer at least one weekend activity each month. Due to the constraints of transportation and staff availability, school-based squadrons are not required to meet outside the school year or offer these elective activities, though they may as resources allow. All cadets are allowed and encouraged to participate in wing activities such as encampment.

Squadrons are welcome to choose the format and scheduling that works best for them as long as the monthly training requirements are met.

4.1 SUGGESTED SCHEDULES

SUGGESTED WEEKLY SCHEDULE

{20 min}	{Pre-Arrival & Admin Time}
5-15 min	Opening Ceremony & Inspection
10-20 min	Training
40-50 min	Education 1
40-50 min	Education 2
5-10 min	Announcements & Closing
Ceremony	
Total	2.0 – 2.5 hrs

SUGGESTED MONTHLY SCHEDULE

Week	Training	Education 1	
	Education 2		
1	Drill	Leadership	Open
2	Drill	Fitness	Aerospace
3	Drill	Leadership	Open
4	Safety	Character	Aerospace
5	Open	Fun Event	Fun Event

4.2 ANATOMY OF THE WEEKLY SQUADRON MEETING

Pre-Arrival Administrative Time

Prior to the meeting's official start, about 20 minutes is set aside for administrative time. Accordingly, a couple of key members of the senior staff (but not all) are needed to process cadets' paperwork, issue uniforms, and perform similar chores.

Opening Ceremony & Inspection

As part of their structured, regimented program, the cadet squadron begins each meeting with an opening ceremony. Cadets assemble into formation and render honors as the National Anthem is played. A few moments are available for brief announcements before the ranking cadets conduct a uniform inspection.

Training Block

Drill is placed within a 15-minute training session on three of the four weeks of the month. The idea here is to acknowledge the importance of drill, and yet schedule it such that it will not dominate the program. During the month's final remaining training session, cadets participate in a safety briefing, as required by regulation.

Education Blocks

The main events of cadet life take place within the education blocks, which are 40 to 50 minutes in duration. This is the time where cadets focus on the four main program elements – leadership, aerospace, fitness, and character. Leadership and aerospace activities occur twice per month during these blocks because those program elements are the most prominent aspects of cadet life. An education block can be further divided into two parts: a 20-minute introductory presentation followed by a 20- or 30-minute hands-on activity. Local leaders use CAP's curriculum resources to conduct the education blocks.

Open Blocks

During every month there will be at least two education blocks that are not programmed. These "open" slots give the local unit flexibility to pursue special projects and/or devote more time to one of the four main program elements. The open blocks are also useful for administering tests, holding a fun event, planning future events, etc.

Announcements & Closing Ceremony

The cadets assemble in formation one last time, listen to brief announcements about upcoming activities, and then are formally dismissed.

Part 5 CHARTERING PROCESS

The following diagram illustrates the process of chartering a school squadron:

ACTIONS REQUIRED OF THE SCHOOL

1

School: "We're interested. Please send us some information."

3

School Leaders review information kit.

6

School principal nominates an adult to serve as the squadron commander.

10

Having recruited at least 3 adults and 12 cadets, the school requests a charter using CAP Form 27.

ACTIONS REQUIRING COOPERATION

5

School and CAP leaders meet to discuss the Cadet Program

7

Optional: School leaders complete and sign an agreement with CAP, if the school desires.

9

Commander and mentor develop a plan to recruit cadets and launch the program.

12

Commander and mentor work closely together to help the squadron succeed during its first year.

ACTIONS REQUIRED OF CAP

2

National HQ sends a "Cadets at School Information Kit."

4

Wing commander appoints an expert to serve as project officer and mentor.

8

In consultation with the principal, the wing commander appoints the squadron commander.

11

National HQ issues the school a charter.

Part 6 SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

One step in the chartering process involves an in-person meeting between wing-level CAP leaders and the school principal or assistant principal. It would also be helpful to include the school's new squadron commander and the CAP member who will mentor the commander. Listed below are suggested discussion topics to guide the meeting:

- 1. LEADERSHIP.** Who is the school appointing to staff the new squadron? What is their background? Do any come with prior CAP, cadet, or military experience?
- 2. PROGRAM RULES.** Does the school understand the adult leadership requirements, cadet eligibility rules, and cadet protection and anti-hazing policies? Are there any concerns?
- 3. PROGRAM CONTENT.** Does the squadron's key adult staff (i.e.: commander and deputy) know what the four main program elements are? Are they generally familiar with the curriculum? Are they familiar with the structure of the weekly squadron meeting?
- 4. WING HQ SUPPORT.** How will the wing headquarters support the new school squadron? Who is the primary officer assigned as the new squadron commander's mentor? Will neighboring squadrons be available to help support the school squadron? How soon can the new adult staff complete the Training Leaders of Cadets Basic course?
- 5. FINANCE ISSUES.** How will the squadron manage its finances? Can the school and CAP agree on an arrangement that is consistent with CAP regulations and honors the public trust? Will the new squadron have enough start-up money to support cadet activities (e.g.: color guard equipment, uniform insignia, rocketry supplies, etc.).
- 6. LEGAL ISSUES.** What legal issues do CAP and school leaders need to discuss? Are there any concerns about liability insurance, student transportation, weekend activities, fundraising, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), or other issues?
- 7. SCHOOL COMMUNITY.** Do the school leaders have a vision for how the Cadet Program will become part of the school community? Does the school understand that students can only volunteer to become cadets and that CAP is not to be forced on anyone or used as a form of punishment? Is there a JROTC unit nearby? How will the new squadron connect with the JROTC unit so they can work together when possible?
- 8. PROGRAM LAUNCH.** Have CAP and school leaders come to a consensus on how and when the new squadron will launch? Is there a plan for staffing the squadron with

enough adults? Is there a plan for orienting prospective cadets and their parents? What milestones need to happen and when? Is there a consensus about the timeline?

9. FIRST YEAR. What do CAP and school leaders hope to accomplish during the squadron's inaugural year? Are the goals specific and measurable? Are they realistic, in the judgment of experienced CAP leaders?

10. OPEN FORUM. Does anyone have any concerns that still need to be addressed?





THE CADET OATH

I pledge to serve faithfully in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program and that I will attend meetings regularly, participate actively in unit activities, obey my officers, wear my uniform properly, and advance my education and training rapidly to prepare myself to be of service to my community, state, and nation.



CADETS AT SCHOOL

This booklet provides educators with an overview of how the CAP Cadet Program can be implemented as a school-sponsored extra-curricular activity.

To get started with this exciting youth program, or for more information, contact:

CIVIL AIR PATROL CADET PROGRAMS

877.227.9142

cadets@capnhq.gov

GoCivilAirPatrol.com/schools