Report for Cape Fear Coastal Aviation at KILM

Region: Eastern

Below is a summary of scores and feedback from all the usable evaluations which were submitted for you during the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period. Many flight training providers receive exceptionally high scores so we also share with you the distribution of the overall aggregate scores for comparison.

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for an award, you needed to receive at least 10 unique evaluations, each at least 80% complete.

A survey response was considered 'usable' if the respondent answered at least 80% of the questions required for scoring.
A Flight School was considered 'eligible' for an award if they received at least 10 unique, usable responses.
Average scores were based on all usable responses received and have been rounded where necessary
Your percentile rank was calculated by comparing your score to scores of all other(nominated/eligible) Flight Schools
Percentile ranks were calculated at both national and regional levels and may have been rounded.
Your performance (percentile rank) compared to all other eligible Flight Schools in your region was one of many factors that informed award decisions.

You received 85 evaluations.

2. Free Responses

At the end of each evaluation, we ask the following open-ended question:

Why should or shouldn't your school win a Flight Training Experience Award?

3. Individual Overall Scores & Responses

Total Score	Student Review
87.00	Cape Fear coastal is a school like no other! I would say we make amazing AVIATORS compared to just pilots. Every student who comes thru our training just seems to be safer, better informed and overall a better aviator compared to most. As an instructor i try to hold my students to the highest level of training as i know they are the future of the school as well as airline pilots.
87.00	CFCA does a great job at ingraining safety early on as well as proficiency! They have beautiful equipt aircraft with G1000, and are always on top of maintenance! From top down the instruction is top notch.
89.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is dedicated to providing high quality flight training. Each instructors care for all students not only our owns, but for other instructors students as well. I am never afraid to admit when I don’t know the answer to a question from a student, and other instructors are always there to help me find the right answer when needed. We are a great team with a positive attitude and working here as an instructor has truly been a blessing!
88.00	Cape Fear Costal Aviation is a flight school like no other. They have created a great environment or students and their instructors. They strive on safety, quality, and excellence. There is confidently no flight school that I’ve seen to match their standards.

90.00	The instructors are professional yet so kind, and the one-on-one ground lessons provide amazing personal attention. They go above and beyond, offering extra materials, FaceTime sessions, and constant support, and even adjust their teaching style to meet you where you're at. Griffin Watkins and Annika Thomason are especially incredible; they're kind, funny, and so much fun to fly with while giving excellent pre-flight briefings and post-flight debriefs. My mom's boyfriend, who's a professional pilot, even joined one of our flights and had endless compliments about their ability to teach and relay information in such a calm and constructive way. Every lesson is enjoyable, motivating, and top-notch, and the admin team is always friendly and welcoming. I've learned so much in just a few months, and they push you in the best way possible.
87.00	I believe Cape Fear Costal Aviation (CFCA) deserves this award for several reasons. As a CFI at CFCA, I believe we provide high quality flight training and create a welcoming environment for our students. We teach our students how to become safe, smart, and skilled pilots, not just how to pass a checkride. Our students have gained a positive reputation around KILM and I consistently hear great things about how they are as pilots. Our team is dedicated to flight training and fostering a safe environment. We integrate risk management and aeronautical decision making at all levels during training. We foster a positive and enjoyable environment for our students. Our offices are often filled with laughter and excitement from both instructors and students. I originally was a student at CFCA. I completed my commercial ASEL, CFI and CFII at the school. I have nothing but good things to say about CFCA. It has been amazing to watch the school grow and expand over the years. I cannot wait to see the future of CFCA!
87.00	This flight school selects the absolute best instructors. Their staff is like no other. Coming in to train and seeing such a diverse group of instructors is amazing — it shows that no matter how you learn, there's someone here to help you reach your goals. Everyone at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is there to support you and has nothing but your best interests in mind. They are all intelligent and dedicated to aviation. I'm so grateful I found them!
89.00	I have trying to achieve my PPL since 1979. Life responsibilities and finances have kept me from achieving my goal over the years. I stared back flying 3 years ago with another flight school. Sadly that school didn't adhere to syllabi or tract student progress or at least not mine. I was assigned a "Time Builder" who was not focused on my success. I finally changed to Cape Fear Coastal Aviation. I have progressed greatly since I changed schools and look forward to completing my PPL soon. This is a very professional educational flight program.
90.00	Top notch flight school with an owner that has spared no expense on planes and maintenance. I've been there since the beginning with one 172S and a Cirrus. As the school grew, so did the fleet of planes making scheduling lessons easy. With their own maintenance department, planes are never down long. The instructors I've worked with are able to convey lessons in an easy, no stress manner, making it easier to learn at a faster pace.
86.00	I my opinion there is no other flight school in the Southeastern US that does a better all around job of properly preparing students to become not just pilots but all around aviators. The equipment they offer to train in is high quality and maintenance is also of very high caliber. Every employee for the owner to the folks that answer the phones and all inbetween are of top notch.
82.00	I believe Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should win the award for many reason. The instructores here are all amazing people who are fun to talk to and will go beyond to help you with things you need. They have structured curriculum that helps keep you on track to earning your license. They have many amazing planes which are all in great condition and our maintained quite well and last but not least are extremely fair priced.
88.00	This school has top notch instruction, high quality airplanes and presents a superior atmosphere for learning.
90.00	Instructor was very knowledgeable and helpful.
88.00	This flight school deserves to win a Flight Training Experience Award because it provides a truly exceptional learning environment that combines professionalism, patience, and encouragement. My instructor is consistently polite, thorough, and dedicated to ensuring I understand every concept clearly before moving forward. The personalized approach to instruction makes me feel comfortable and confident, which keeps me motivated to continue progressing toward my goals. The school's commitment to safety, communication, and student success sets it apart and creates an atmosphere where learning to fly is not only effective but genuinely enjoyable.
86.00	I got my private and instrument rating with Michael Pirrozzolo at this school and i believe that thanks to Michael, I am a more confident and proficient pilot than many of my peers. I am very thankful to them for being extremely available and always willing to help and fit me in for flights multiple days a week.

88.00	I am a student at the school and I also manage a flying club here at KILM. I have seen how several other organizations here operate and I believe CFCA is the best Wilmington has to offer. I have 3 main reasons I think CFCA should win. They are top notch when it comes to professionalism and organization. They do an incredible job of empowering me to take charge of my own experience, while also ensuring I am receiving the best possible training. I have been taught, not just how to pass a check ride, but how to be a safer pilot. From my perspective, safety is a top priority for CFCA. In an environment that can be dangerous if not following proper procedures, they teach us how to best to mitigate risk. I have never been pressured to do anything I was uncomfortable with. With all their safety procedures, I feel we are as safe as can be, all while maintaining a friendly and fun learning environment. CFCA also has some incredible planes to fly. If I'm not mistaken, all their planes are Technically Advanced Aircraft and all feature high tech glass cockpits. I have been taught to not depend on these creature comforts, but to use them to my advantage when they would be useful. I believe having these tools at my disposal helps me to be as safe as possible, and also can help check rides be as simple as possible. I believe this all works together to foster a friendly and fun learning environment, while also maintaining a culture of safety and professionalism. I believe that's what makes CFCA special and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.
74.00	I earned my Private Pilot License at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation, and my experience there was outstanding from start to finish. From day one, the instructors made me feel welcome and confident in my training. They're not just skilled pilots, they're patient, professional teachers who genuinely care about helping every student reach their goals. Whether it was ground school, flight lessons, or preparing for the checkride, the instruction was thorough and tailored to my learning pace. The school's focus on safety, consistency, and hands-on experience helped me build a strong foundation as a new pilot. Their aircraft are well-maintained, scheduling was flexible, and the team was always willing to work around weather or life's curveballs to keep training moving forward. What stood out most was the atmosphere, supportive, motivating, and filled with people who truly love aviation. Cape Fear Coastal Aviation goes beyond just producing pilots; they build confidence and community. For those reasons, I believe they absolutely deserve recognition through the Flight Training Experience Award. They represent what great flight training should look like: safe, professional, and inspiring.
90.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should win a flight training experience award because they value safety, providing quality instruction, and a strong community environment. As an instructor at CFCA, I could not ask for a better school to work for. The aircraft that make up our fleet are all equipped with the latest and greatest Garmin avionics. CFCA takes maintenance very seriously to ensure the safest flight training environment possible. When aircraft do go down for maintenance, the fleet is so similar that there is never really a struggle to find times to reschedule lessons. When I first started teaching for CFCA I immediately felt welcomed into the community environment CFCA has built. From other instructors, office staff, and administration, I immediately felt welcomed into the CFCA family. From work events to group outings, CFCA establishes that community feeling.
86.00	CFCA is a one-of-a-kind place, from instructors to airplanes, and has worked tirelessly to produce and educate the next generation of confident, conscientious and safe pilots through pushing risk mitigation techniques and thought processes. What an amazing place to work and build!!
86.00	Very professional. Great instructors. Top notch equipment maintained to the highest standards.
74.00	They are always very professional and educated!
88.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation stands out as a premier example of what a modern flight school should be. They focus on extreme safety with a student centered mindset ad commitment to aviation excellence. They create a personal touch and create a culture where every student pilot is known and supported. The aircraft are modern up to date well cared for and respected. The instructors are not only highly and broadly experienced they invest in their students success and build confident pilots and instill a love and joy of all things aviation. The administration are extremely responsive and are ready to help and provide assistance to their clients as well as their instructors. Their dedication has produced many wonderful pilots but also ambassadors for aviation in general. In short Cape Fear Coastal Aviation represents the best of general aviation training and makes them truly deserving of this award.

90.00	I started my flight training almost 10 years ago, and after 2 years of trying different instructors and flight schools, I stopped flying due to poor instruction, poor communication, poorly maintained aircraft and unacceptable levels of risk. I was introduced to Cape Fear Coastal Aviation about a year ago, and was thoroughly impressed with how tight of an operation they were running. I met with Kelli Canup who reviewed my previous training, and discussed my goals with me. Kelli partnered me with Michael Pirozolo, who has been a phenomenal instructor. I learned more in my first few flights with Michael, than I had in my previous two years of flight training. The syllabus is clear and easy to understand. I've never had the sense that I am being rushed through anything, and if I am having trouble with a subject or procedure, Michael really takes the time to help me to understand and get better. Michael has happily helped me outside of our scheduled lessons, if I have questions or need help studying. All of Cape Fear Coastal Aviation's employees are very kind and helpful, and I think that this is a direct reflection of their management (especially Kelli). I think that all of the students would agree with me in saying that we feel like we truly matter to their staff; and that we aren't just another student or source of income. The staff shows that the care about the success of all of their students. A few additional notes: -Safety and risk mitigation is quite obviously at the forefront of their operation. All flights are prefaced by a thorough brief and risk assessment. -All of the aircraft are maintained to a pristine condition, both mechanically and aesthetically. I personally have never had to cancel a training flight due to unscheduled maintenance -The staff has a very high expectation of their students and train to a level that is above standard. That said, I strongly feel that they give everyone the tools, training and resources to meet those expectations. I would love to see Cape Fear Coastal Aviation recognized and awarded for their hard work and dedication to raising the bar for flight training.
88.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation has been a first class organization since day 1 all around. It is managed extremely well and the flight instructors are all great I have been training with them since they opened up and it has been a great experience. They have built such a great aviation community around their program. You can always get great advice and conversation from their instructors since they are always around full time. From Cirrus transition training and consistent recurrent training to stay proficient, I feel like I have had the best of the best instructor, Kelli Canup. She has trained me well to feel confident handling any situation that I might encounter. They offer so many different ratings, I am looking forward to training for commercial and multi-engine in the near future with CFCA!
88.00	Having been to three schools over the years, this school doesn’t cut corners. They hire instructors who are well versed in conveying information to students in ways that best suit the students learning style. Their aircraft are modern and meticulously maintained. They have their own maintenance shop as well, and the organization and cleanliness of the shop is very impressive.
90.00	They should be awarded for excellent training experience given how well they treat their students, how robust their training program is (organized, detailed, well communicated and well laid out), and how well their instructors are trained themselves and how much they have a heart of a teacher. I felt I was in good hands during the entirety of my experience with them!
90.00	CFCA is a professional organization. I am a fire captain for the local municipality and I have high standards for safety and professionalism. My flight instructor and CFCA demonstrate both of these standards. In addition , the aircrafts are well kept and serviced.

90.00	My experience with Cape Fear Coastal Aviation (CFCA) has been nothing short of exceptional. From the outset, the school demonstrated a commitment to professionalism, structure, and safety that sets it apart in the field of aviation education. Training follows a comprehensive and thoughtfully designed syllabus which carefully optimizes time spent in ground training, the simulator, and the airplane. Lesson plans are communicated well and in advance. Each stage of training is clearly defined, providing a transparent pathway toward the successful achievement of individual and certification goals. This organized and methodical approach instills confidence and ensures that students always understand their progress and next objectives. Feedback throughout the training process is candid, specific, and actionable, enabling students to make measurable improvements after every lesson. This transparent approach fosters a culture of continuous growth and accountability. A defining characteristic of CFCA is its culture of uncompromising safety. Every flight, briefing, and procedure reflect an ingrained respect for best practices and risk management. This emphasis on safety is not only taught—it is lived, creating an environment where sound judgment and professionalism become second nature. The instructional staff are highly knowledgeable and dedicated professionals who exemplify excellence in both their teaching and their own continued learning. Their commitment to lifelong professional development ensures that students benefit from instruction that is current, relevant, and aligned with industry standards. Operationally, the school is extremely well-organized. Scheduling, communication, and adjustments to training plans are handled efficiently and courteously, allowing students to focus fully on learning. Importantly, CFCA maintains strong, collaborative relationships with key aviation partners, including DPEs, Air Traffic Control, and trusted maintenance and service teams. These partnerships ensure a seamless, professional experience that prepares students to operate confidently within the National Airspace System and become productive members of the aviation community. In every respect, CFCA embodies the highest standards of flight training, combining structure, safety, and professionalism with genuine dedication to each student’s success. Whether you’re just beginning or advancing your aviation career, I wholeheartedly recommend CFCA—its flight training is truly exceptional in every respect.
79.00	Great crew and great aircraft
90.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is a fantastic organization with high quality instructors and high quality equipment! Here at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation there is a huge emphasis on safety, being flexible for students, and providing students with the best training possible.
89.00	Even with all the struggles of obtaining your pilots license, Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is patient and determined to help you push through till the end. All of the instructors are absolutely fantastic at what they do! They truly make you feel like you are apart of the aviation community from day one. Everyone is very responsive and they make it very clear that YOU ARE PRIORITY. I've heard horror stories about other flight schools running you around for you money, but at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation the main goal is your success!
81.00	The instructors at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation really care about helping you become a safe, confident pilot. Great planes, great people, great atmosphere. Highly recommend!
90.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation (CFCA) is a well-equipped flight school offering modern simulators and dedicated training offices for both instructors and students. My training at CFCA began in November 2023 with the Cirrus advanced transition VFR and IFR course. The school provided a new Cirrus SR20 G6 aircraft. Their fleet also consists of 5 Cessna aircraft equipped with modern avionics, all of which are maintained by CFCA's own maintenance shop. I have submitted a separate review for the Flight Training Award, recognizing my instructor, Kelli Canup for outstanding flight instruction. My training continues with maintaining currency and an additional transition course. I have met other CFCA flight instructors, including Michael Pirozzolo and Jesse Willenbring, both answered questions and showed interest in my progress. Ben Zucker, the owner, has also personally checked in to ensure that I have everything I need for my training. The entire team at CFCA provides professional and excellent service, maintaining a strong emphasis on safety. Their dedication to student success is evident in every interaction, making Cape Fear Coastal Aviation a deserving candidate for the Flight Training Experience Award.

90.00	Coastal Cape Fear Aviation care about all of the students. All of the instructors are friendly, highly skilled and do their best to make sure the students get the most out of every lesson. They go above and beyond to keep their planes well maintained so they are available as much as possible for students use. As the student base has grown over the past years they purchased more planes in order to keep up with student demand. They we above and beyond to purchase high quality planes, not just something that was basically airworthy that met the minimum specs. Every time I went for a flight lesson my instructor (Jesse Willenbring) was always on time and well prepared. He briefed me before and after every flight with encouragement and constructive criticism. Once I mastered the basic's he was always challenging to perform to a higher standard while letting me safely make mistakes while I was learning. Whenever I needed help studying for ground, my instructor was always only a txt away from answering a question, even on his days off. One of the best thing about this school is the "other" instructors. Every time I came in contact with them they were always super helpful and willing to assist in any way they could. You can tell from being around the school that there was a sense of comradery between the entire staff from admin, support staff and CFI's. That is what really makes this school special, its really a team effort to achieve success. This school also encouraged students to participate in events that happened in the aviation community, such as General Aviation day at the local airport, or fly in / car show experiences at local fields. They also did events for the school to celebrate milestones with catered food and demo aircraft (like a sweet Cirrus Vision jet). I started my training at another school that is on the same airfield as Cape Fear Coastal Aviation, I was stuck in my training and ready to quit because of lack of planes and instructor revolving doors. I decided before I quit to just go talk to someone at the "new" school. I met Jesse and he showed me around the school and how their processes worked. I was immediately encouraged to start my training with them. Everything he told me proved true and it was a night and day difference from the other school. My only complaint was with myself that I didn't switch to Cape Fear Coastal Aviation sooner.
90.00	The school offers only the absolute best in terms of people who are truly passionate about aviation. Not only do they maintain, in my opinion, the best fleet of planes compared to any other nearby flight school, but also some of the most kind and genuine people. The entire team working at CFCA has always made me feel welcome and has invested in helping me reach my aviation goals.
89.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is an amazing Flight School with great instructors that really care for their student safety and success. The training syllabus is very well done and easy for their students to follow along with and keep track of their progress along the way. Implementing an approach that includes ground, simulator and flight training helps their students move quickly and efficiently through the program and help to create safe and educated pilots for the future. Time is taken to mold each lesson to a student's specific needs and individual learning styles. Every instructor at CFCA encourages and celebrates each student within the school and helps to create a fun atmosphere around the airport. This flight school is the best I have ever been a part of and I hope that we can bring more people into the amazing world of aviation.
90.00	I believe CFCA should win a flight training experience award for many reasons. I began working on my private pilot certificate back in March of this year and just passed my checkride a few weeks ago. I am continuing my training at CFCA for my instrument rating. I can honestly say that my experience has been nothing but amazing. The instructors, staff, aircraft, and facilities have both met and exceeded my expectations. CFCA cares so much about both their students and instructors and it shows. CFCA is truly a family and has created a great environment for everyone to learn and grow. CFCA does an amazing job of going beyond the required training to make great pilots and implements proactive and safe habits within their students. I am grateful that I have the mentorship and community that I do from CFCA and know the impact of this school will stick with me throughout my aviation career.
86.00	Kelli Canup is the best instructor I have ever had. She is chief pilot and the force that drives the CFA to excellence. Her vast experience from commercial carrier flight deck to a SR20 makes her a complete instruction package.
88.00	I believe Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should win this award because of their amazing instructors and the quality/professionalism of their training. My lead instructor, Jesse, went above and beyond in helping me get my PPL. No matter the time of the day, if I texted or called Jesse with a question, he would always get back to me with a very detailed answer. If the weather was bad during the week, Jesse would fly with me on his days off to help me stay on track. I really appreciated this, and it helped me to finish my PPL in a very short amount of time compared to other 61 flight schools. All of the airplanes that I flew in were extremely nice and well-maintained, with little or no downtime for maintenance that would delay your progression. As a student pilot, using a G1000 and becoming familiar with it made my transition to instrument training a breeze. Overall, I am thankful to have come across Cape Fear Coastal Aviation and would recommend them to anyone looking for high-quality flight training!
90.00	When you walk into CFCA everyone is always so friendly and welcoming. From the front desk to the instructors, The owner and mechanics. Everyone greets you with above and beyond customer service. I would recommend CFCA to anyone without a single hesitation.

73.00	This flight school should certainly win a flight training experience award. From their aircraft, their instructors, their location, to their maintenance personnel, this flight school is all around an amazing choice to anyone who is interested in flight training.
85.00	My flight school deserves consideration because of its strong commitment to creating a supportive and effective learning environment. From the start, everyone from instructors to leadership (my own instructor Jeremy but also Kelli, our Chief Pilot, Rich our COO, and Jesse, the Chief Instructor) made a welcoming first impression through open communication and a spirit of teamwork. These positive relationships have continued throughout flight training and have been both educational and inspirational for me as a student. Everyone consistently promotes this atmosphere by answering questions, offering guidance, and recognizing student progress. CFCA's structured syllabus sets clear expectations and high standards for learning, supported by dedicated instruction that helps students achieve strong results. Having access to this syllabus is helpful for students to follow along, keep up with lessons, logbooks and upcoming flights. Scheduling has been smooth throughout as CFCA has systems in place which help everyone share time in briefing rooms, aircraft, etc. Safety has been paramount throughout training as well with a focus on checklist usage, preflight and maintenance inspections, good radio communication procedures as well as situational awareness in our busy airspace. The school has done a wonderful job supporting the importance of these tasks, while supporting students with this challenge as they grow as pilots. Together, these qualities demonstrate the school's commitment to quality aviation education. As a former educator, I have appreciated the professionalism, positivity and commitment to safety and education... all while keeping things fun. Thank you CFCA, I look forward to many enjoyable years to come!
88.00	As a student of this flight school and an employee at the FBO the school is based out of, I am seen first hand how dedicated and determined to provide the best training for their students. I have a relationship with every instructor and chief instructor here and whole heartedly believe that they want what is best for their students. I have taken a few months away from flying to save up more money and the school has done nothing but support and offer guidance in trying to continue my training. My instructor even got me a job at the FBO to help put myself in the aviation environment and allow me the best opportunity to grow.
90.00	This flight school should absolutely win this award. It has a commitment to safety, instructor development, and student success. The leadership style at Cape Fear Coastal is one in which is proactive. This school does not wait for an instructor to receive a violation or deviation to do proficiency/remedial training. They incentivize and promote this training within their group of instructors so the violations and deviations never happen in the first place. This in itself promotes safety. However, it also gives its customers the best instruction possible that is of great quality and safety that ensures student success while developing its instructors. Working at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation has been the biggest blessing of my life and is deserving of this award and honor.
76.00	They value safety above all else, and provide a tailored learning experience for all students to learn at there own pace.
88.00	My flight school deserves an award for its exceptional training, dedicated instructors, and strong focus on safety and professionalism. It creates skilled, confident pilots and fosters a true passion for aviation in every student
90.00	I am proud to recommend Cape Fear Coastal Aviation for the Flight Training Experience Award. Since joining CFCA in March of last year, I've seen firsthand what makes this school truly stand out from the rest. Having been both a student and now an instructor who has experienced training under both Part 141 and Part 61, I can confidently say there is no other flight school like it. What sets CFCA apart is the quality of instruction and the strength of its training program. Unlike many Part 61 schools, CFCA places a strong emphasis on ground instruction and aeronautical knowledge, ensuring that every student builds a solid foundation before taking to the skies. The school's structured syllabus, professional environment, and commitment to safety create an atmosphere where both learning and mentorship thrive. But beyond the quality of training, CFCA feels like family. The instructors, staff, and students all support each other, creating an environment that encourages teamwork, professionalism, and genuine passion for aviation. Every day, I see students growing not just as pilots, but as aviators who understand the responsibilities that come with flying. Cape Fear Coastal Aviation represents the very best in flight training, a school that combines excellence, community, and integrity. It would be an honor to see CFCA recognized for the exceptional experience it provides to every student who walks through its doors.
89.00	CFCA is the best flight school I have attended. The pre-training materials were excellent and organized in a very complete binder. Instructor and staff for my Multi-Engine training was excellent, and tailored the course to my needs. I see the team at Cape Fear whenever I am in Wilmington and they are always interested in my flying progress and future goals. I could not be happier with my experience with Cape Fear Coastal Aviation.

90.00	CFCA should win the Flight Training Experience Award because we are dedicated to developing skilled, safe, aware, and inspired aviators. We provide simulator based training to help fully prepare our students for taking the controls. Our instructors are hand selected by our Chief Pilot to build a top of the line training team for our students.
89.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation deserves recognition for its exceptional dedication to student success and safety. The school's staff and instructors embody a genuine culture of care — every student is treated as part of a close-knit aviation family. From the first discovery flight to the final checkride, students receive individualized attention, encouragement, and guidance that go far beyond the syllabus. The instructor team combines extensive real-world experience with professional teaching skills, ensuring that each lesson is both educational and practical. They emphasize not only flying proficiency but also sound decision-making, confidence, and professionalism — the qualities that define outstanding pilots. Cape Fear Coastal Aviation maintains a modern, meticulously cared-for fleet, ensuring reliability and safety while allowing students to train with up-to-date technology. The structured training program is well-organized, efficient, and adaptable to each student's pace and goals, helping learners succeed without unnecessary delays or expenses. In short, Cape Fear Coastal Aviation stands out for its caring culture, professionalism, and operational excellence — a model of what modern flight training should be.
90.00	Ever since the start of CFCA, it has been THE best flight school that our area has to offer. From some if not the best qualified instructors, to insanely well maintained aircraft, this flight school is just so open to not only already experienced pilots, but also to any new aviator starting their journey. Hands down this flight school tops just about any flight school that I've ever experienced, with zero issues over the course of the 2 years it's been running.
88.00	I began my flight training at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation when I was 17 and had an amazing experience with my instructor and their staff. I am currently a student at Embry Riddle Aeronautical university working on my commercial rating, and all I can say is that I am very grateful to have began my flight training with them. I made multiple connections through the Chief pilot instructor, and everyone who works there is very friendly and knowledgeable, and always willing to do their best to accommodate you. All of their aircraft are very well maintained, and they definitely take pride in their school.
90.00	I am a current student at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University ,which possesses the Best and newest equipment in regards to aviation and aeronautical success. This flight school prepared me so well for ERAU and my aviation career, not only with the top-of-the-line service, but with their top-of-the-line equipment.
79.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation made my flight training an amazing experience.
88.00	I've had an amazing experience training at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation. The planes are new and well maintained. Every instructor I've flown with has been professional, patient, and genuinely passionate about helping me become a better pilot. Couldn't ask for a better flight school!
89.00	The highest quality of training I have ever experienced in my aviation career. From instructors to airplanes, Cape Fear Coastal Aviation is top notch.
90.00	As a student at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation, I can honestly say this school has changed the way I see flying. From day one, the instructors made me feel welcome—they've gone out of their way to help me, even when it wasn't technically their job. They've supported me through every step, making sure I understood not just how to fly, but why things work the way they do. Training in the Cessna 172s gave me the perfect balance of reliability and challenge, and with their guidance, I reached my student pilot solo. The moment I lifted off alone for the first time was absolutely electric—pure adrenaline, pride, and gratitude all at once. Cape Fear Coastal Aviation isn't just a flight school to me; it's a place where people genuinely care about your success and make your goals feel within reach.
90.00	The facility itself is extremely well kept and well equipped with flight training tools and study space. The aircraft are top of the line and well maintained. The staff is very personable and professional. Overall the nicest flight school I have been to.

82.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should receive the AOPA Eastern Flight Training Experience Award for its modern style, dedicated personnel, and exceptional professionalism. Their aircraft fleet features updated avionics that reflect those used in modern professional aviation, providing students with real-world experience that prepares them for future careers. From the CFIs and Chief Pilot to the Administrative Assistants and Chief Operating Officer, every member of the team demonstrates strong leadership and a devotion to each student's success. Their professionalism is reflected in every aspect of the school, from organized branding and an efficient flight scheduling system to clear communication and a personable staff, to safety precautions, ensuring the well-being of both students and CFIs. As a Part 61 flight school, they uphold the structured training and detailed syllabus often found in top-tier Part 141 programs while maintaining the flexibility to accommodate each student's individual schedule. Cape Fear Coastal Aviation truly sets the standard for what exceptional flight training should be, which is why they are deserving of the AOPA Eastern Flight Training Experience Award!
86.00	CFCA helped me advance in my aviation career. The quality of their cfi's are top notch and they have a passion for aviation and are not just trying to revive the paycheck. I learned not just the minimum to be an ok pilot. They taught me how to be safe, proficient, and professional. I can't say enough good things about Cfca.
90.00	This Flight School is truly deserving of a Flight Training Experience Award because of its unwavering dedication to excellence in aviation education and student success. The school goes above and beyond to create a supportive, safe, and motivating environment where every student feels valued and encouraged to achieve their dreams of flying. Instructors are not only highly skilled but also genuinely passionate about teaching, taking the time to tailor lessons to each student's learning style and goals. The school's commitment to safety, professionalism, and customer service sets a high standard in the industry, and the consistent positive feedback from students reflects the quality and care put into every aspect of their training program.
75.00	This school has a wonderful community, and a good atmosphere. They teach throughly, in depth, and they are a school that values understanding how and why things work!
89.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation has provided me with an incredible flight training experience. Every instructor I've worked with thus far has been remarkably professional and disciplined in their duty to prioritize my training and safety.
83.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should win this award because of their ability to make flight training fun, and their ability to create a welcoming, and professional atmosphere. Everyone there is awesome to work with and you can tell they love what they do. I love how they follow a strong syllabus that makes training very easy to follow along with and understand.
82.00	Cape Fear exhibits nothing short of exceptional flight training. They work towards training pilots far beyond the standard. They do this through investing a lot in their instructors who then invest back into their students.
88.00	The environment is very welcoming, and clean. The aircraft are in great condition and are always cared for, cleaned, and repaired when necessary. Safety precautions are taken to the max, ensuring safety for both the instructor, and passengers.
88.00	This is the best flight school I've ever trained with. Their planes are top notch quality with state of the art avionics and are meticulously maintained. They have 6 planes for primary training that are all the same type (C172) so when one goes into 100hr or annual, you can seamlessly switch without having an interruption in your training. Their instructors are extremely knowledgeable, masters of their craft, and all around great people. I'm convinced they find the best possible people for their CFI's in the area. It's evident that the school does not cut corners in aircraft quality, instructor quality, and overall customer experience by any means. Each employee from the owner to the admin, are very friendly and truly want to help in any way they can. After switching schools a couple times, it would be very hard to beat the quality found at CFCA.
90.00	This school exemplifies what excellent flight training should be—professional, supportive, and truly student-focused. The instructors go beyond simply teaching aviation skills; they mentor, motivate, and inspire confidence in every student. The staff foster a culture of learning that balances professionalism with a genuine passion for aviation. Their dedication to quality education, student success, and an outstanding training environment reflects the very best of what flight training should be.

87.00	CFCA is the best flight school I have attended. The instructors are knowledgable and encouraging. The instructors truly want to see you succeed and achieve your career goals. A few of the instructors easily could have moved on to the airlines or corporate by now, but they choose to stay and teach and build a strong foundation in the school. The school itself is very organized and follows a syllabus that includes ground, sim, and flight time, along with stage checkouts with other instructors. Students have access to the syllabus allowing us to prepare for our next lesson ahead of time. We are also able to see feedback from the instructor post-lesson the see what we need to improve on. The syllabus helps form the perfect learning guide to catching any area of weakness and student may present. The instructors themselves have a variety of experience allowing them to help advise students on various routes they can take following obtaining their certificates and ratings. I plan to finish all of my training with CFCA. The flight school also participates in activities outside of the classroom, whether it be GA Day, charitable events, or even a slow pitch league. The school advocates for the general aviation community and makes students feel welcome outside of the classroom. The school also has a social media account that posts all passing checkrides and interesting facts about aviation.
83.00	Their planes are all very new and kept very clean. They have G1000s that made my experience learning IFR much easier. All their instructors are knowledgable and friendly to the point where I passed my IFR checkride on the first try. When I wanted to switch instructors, they were extremely understanding rather than taking offense and wanted me to find the instructor that suited my learning style best. Every instructor I've had at CFCA has been friendly and seemed like the kind of pilot who genuinely wanted to help others learn, not just build time.
90.00	I am writing to express my strong support for Cape Fear Coastal Aviation (CFCA) to win. CFCA truly embodies all of their core 'ASPIRE' principles: Adaptability, Safety, Professionalism, Impact, Reliability, and Excellence. As a parent of a teenager who had his Discovery Flight at 14, these principles were paramount in making me feel comfortable and confident in their services. I have seen these principles in action through their flexibility in working with my son's busy school schedule, their thorough safety checks, and the professional and courteous nature of their instructors. Instructor Griffin Watkins has made the learning fun, engaging, and easy to understand, all while maintaining his professionalism and a strong focus on safety.
90.00	I came from a flight school that I did not believe was serving my interests very well. when I started training with Cape fear coastal aviation all of my questions I had were answered and I understood what I was doing much better. the other school I went to would not swap me around instructors so I could get a better understanding. I felt much more confident my first day flying with Cape fear coastal aviation then I did in the six months flying with the other school.
90.00	I believe CFCA deserves a Flight Training Experience Award because of their exceptional ability to understand each student’s individual learning style and needs. After just two lessons with my initial instructor, the CFCA team—without me saying a word—recognized that a different instructor might be a better fit for me. They thoughtfully paired me with Jesse, and from that moment, everything clicked. I went on to become a proficient and confident pilot, and I truly don’t know if I would have continued without their insight and care. When I began training, I was fascinated by modern avionics and automation. By the time I finished, CFCA had taught me to feel the airplane—its sounds, its responses, its relationship with the horizon. I learned to sense the yaw when adding power, to hear the drag increase with flaps, and to estimate RPMs simply from the engine’s tone. This approach—emphasizing real, tactile understanding of flight—is incredibly valuable in today’s era of increasing automation. CFCA and Jesse didn’t just teach me how to operate an aircraft; they taught me how to truly fly one. I can’t recommend them highly enough.
87.00	This is a great flight school with knowledgeable instructors and a great learning environment right next to ILM getting real experience that will be used everyday. I enjoy coming to modern aviation and working on getting my PPL. The team has always been able to answer my questions and continue to make me feel more and more comfortable flying in the sky.
90.00	Cape Fear Coastal Aviation should win a flight training experience award because they are the best in the business. Everything about my experience flying and training with them was superb from the top notch instruction to the facilities, the aircraft, the professionalism and the incredible staff that are so welcoming and helpful. I couldn't imagine a better all around experience and group of people who deliver it. A+++
88.00	My son has attended two different flight training programs, and Cape Fear Coastal Aviation stands out as the clear favorite. The administration runs the program with professionalism and genuine care, the available resources are exceptional, and the quality of instruction is unmatched. While this training represents a significant investment for our family, we feel confident that the experience and rigor he receives here are preparing him well for his future in aviation. Most importantly, this program has built his confidence and deepened his passion for pursuing an aviation career. We travel all the way from Pennsylvania to attend because we know the education, mentorship, and environment he receives at Cape Fear Coastal Aviation are truly worth it.

86.00	The Staff is extremely professional! They will push you to achieve your goal. They care about your progress. They do not give up on you even when you are doubting yourself.
82.00	The should win the award! Great flight instructors
88.00	1. Great instructors (Annika Thomason) 2. Safe and reliable aircraft 3. Easy scheduling and billing 4. All staff are helpful and ready to serve the needs of students
90.00	I have been to 4 total flight schools, and they by day; have been the most productive and helpful.
88.00	Cape Fear Aviation provides an extremely professional and helpful training experience. The instructors are world class, the organisation is well run, and safety is always the highest priority. I have been training over the past year, and working with Cape Fear Aviation keeps me excited and motivated to fly. I would highly recommend them to anyone interested in learning to fly. It's definitely a five-star organisation.
86.00	I believe this is the right flight school to be rewarded. When the flight school opened a few years ago, I was one of the first instructors that came onboard. The amount of work that the owner, Ben Zucker, the COO, Richard Williams and the chief flight instructor, Kelli Canup, have put towards making this school great are unbelievable. I've seen on a daily basis how much work and effort everyone one made to make this flight school a school that provides the best training one can offer, emphasizing on safety and reliability.
90.00	I've had an amazing experience at this flight school! The staff is incredibly supportive, always willing to help, and their friendly, encouraging attitude makes learning to fly both fun and motivating. I always feel completely safe in their planes, everything is well-maintained, and the instructors make sure I'm confident and comfortable before every flight. Their focus on safety really shows, and it gives me total peace of mind while learning. Overall I've had a great experience at this flight school and would definitely recommend it to anyone starting their journey into flight training!
83.00	CFCA is dedicated to handpicking the perfect instructors and supporting staff that are passionate and knowledgeable. They have great equipment and aircraft and hold their staff and students to a high standard.
87.00	They've really made an effort to learn my name, greet me when I see them, and genuinely create a welcoming atmosphere. This includes everyone from the top position and down. This inclusiveness extends to the learning aspect as well. They create an open environment to talk about and explore ideas to become a better pilot. As student pilot, I expected a more intense culture. CFCA had found a way to keep a high level of professionalism while also enjoying the culture they've created. Overall, extremely friendly place and everyone here is happy to share their knowledge.

4. Aggregate Overall Score (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the overall score you received from your customers in the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period:

Your Score: 87

4.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 86
Your national percentile ranking: 63%

Regional Average: 86
Your regional percentile ranking: 45%

4.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 86
Your national percentile ranking: 65%

Regional Average: 87
Your regional percentile ranking: 40%

5. SubScore Summary for Cape Fear Coastal Aviation at KILM

Region: Eastern

The remaining sections summarize your individual subscores (range: 0 to 100) as they apply to each of the four areas from our Flight Training Experience Research: Educational Quality, Customer Focus, Community, and Information Sharing. You will also find national and regional averages, for benchmarking.

Subscore Summary:

	Your Score	National Avg
Educational Quality	98	97
Customer Focus	97	96
Community	98	96
Information Sharing	92	91
NetPromoter Score	99	92
Overall Total	97	94

6. Educational Quality Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Educational Quality; offering effective training from professional instructors who are dedicated to students' success

Your Score: 98

6.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 97
Your national percentile ranking: 55%

Regional Average: 98
Your regional percentile ranking: 45%

6.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 98
Your national percentile ranking: 57%

Regional Average: 98
Your regional percentile ranking: 44%

6.3 Responses per Question

My school consistently used a training syllabus that I could consult.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	76	89.41%
Somewhat Agree	7	8.24%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.18%
Somewhat Disagree	1	1.18%

My school helped me find an instructor who considered my personal strengths and weaknesses when creating lesson plans.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	79	92.94%
Somewhat Agree	4	4.71%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.18%

My school promotes a culture of safety.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	85	100%

My instructor at my school regularly suggested what I should study before arriving at the airport for a lesson.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	78	91.76%
Somewhat Agree	7	8.24%

7. Customer Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Customer Focus; adding value by demonstrating professionalism and engagement with students

Your Score: 97

7.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 96
Your national percentile ranking: 61%

Regional Average: 97
Your regional percentile ranking: 52%

7.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 96
Your national percentile ranking: 69%

Regional Average: 97
Your regional percentile ranking: 56%

7.3 Responses per Question

Instructors at my school were never available to answer questions outside of formal lessons.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	2	2.35%
Somewhat Disagree	3	3.53%

Strongly Disagree	80	94.12%

I found it easy to reschedule lessons at my school when there were issues, like maintenance or weather.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	72	84.71%
Somewhat Agree	10	11.76%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3.53%

Staff at my school always treated me with respect.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	84	98.82%
Somewhat Agree	1	1.18%

Sometimes I wish I had chosen a different flight school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	1	1.18%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3.53%
Somewhat Disagree	6	7.06%
Strongly Disagree	75	88.24%

8. Community Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Community; emphasizing social connections and accomplishments.

Your Score: 98

8.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 96
Your national percentile ranking: 67%

Regional Average: 96
Your regional percentile ranking: 55%

8.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 96
Your national percentile ranking: 70%

Regional Average: 97

Your regional percentile ranking: 56%

8.3 Responses per Question

After training at my school, I feel like a member of the general aviation community.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	78	91.76%
Somewhat Agree	7	8.24%

Sometimes I felt as if I didn't belong at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	1	1.18%
Neither agree nor disagree	2	2.35%
Somewhat Disagree	4	4.71%
Strongly Disagree	78	91.76%

My school provided adequate opportunities to meet students, new pilots, and members of the local aviation community

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	72	84.71%
Somewhat Agree	8	9.41%
Neither agree nor disagree	5	5.88%

I received regular positive encouragement that made me want to come back for my next lesson at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	81	95.29%
Somewhat Agree	3	3.53%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.18%

9. Information Sharing Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Information Sharing; educating and empowering students to make informed decisions about flight training investments.

Your Score: 92

9.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 91
Your national percentile ranking: 50%

Regional Average: 92
Your regional percentile ranking: 45%

9.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 92
Your national percentile ranking: 48%

Regional Average: 93
Your regional percentile ranking: 31%

9.3 Responses per Question

I always understood the steps required to reach my flight training goals at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	77	90.59%
Somewhat Agree	8	9.41%

My flight training at my school has required more time and/or money than I expected.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	2	2.35%
Somewhat Agree	11	12.94%
Neither agree nor disagree	22	25.88%
Somewhat Disagree	14	16.47%
Strongly Disagree	36	42.35%

My school readily shares information about student success rates (e.g. passing FAA checkride).

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	64	75.29%
Somewhat Agree	11	12.94%
Neither agree nor disagree	10	11.76%

I was shown where I could find additional resources, like study guides or practice exams, to supplement my studies in anticipation of written or practical exams.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	81	95.29%
Somewhat Agree	3	3.53%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.18%

10.Net Promoter Score

10.1 Questionaire Responses

The Net Promoter Score is generated by asking customers how likely they would be to recommend a given product or service - in this case, your services as a flight instructor to another potential customer, on an 11 point scale.

How likely are you to recommend your CFI to someone interested in flight training?

Response Choice	Frequency	%
10	80	94.12%
9	4	4.71%
8	1	1.18%

10.2 NPS Grouping

Responses to this question are then used to sort customers into one of three groups:

Detractor: Less likely to use your services again and may not speak highly of your services to others.

Passive: Generally somewhat satisfied, passive respondents likely won't help or hurt your business in talking to other people.

Promoters: Ideally, all of your customers would be promoters. Promoters would fly with you again in the future and would tell others how great they think you are.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Promoter	84	98.82%
Passive	1	1.18%

10.3 Standardized Score Calculation

The overall Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of your customers who are 'detractors' from the percentage of your customers you are 'promoters.' Thus, the overall Net Promoter Score can range from - 100 to 100.

For more information on the Net Promoter Score and how to interpret it, check out: https://www.medallia.com/net-promoter-score

Your Score: 99

10.3.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 92
Your national percentile ranking: 46%

Regional Average: 93
Your regional percentile ranking: 45%

10.3.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 95

Your national percentile ranking: 52%

Regional Average: 97

Your regional percentile ranking: 48%