

A Legacy Of Learning

The future of Carolina Day School with Head of School Brett Fuhrman

BY JESSICA AYALA

PHOTOS BY RACHAEL MCINTOSH PHOTOGRAPHY

Carolina Day School (CDS) has been a beacon of educational excellence since its beginning in 1936 as Asheville Country Day School. The school was renamed Carolina Day School following the merger in 1987 of Asheville Country Day School with another prestigious institution, St. Genevieve-Gibbons Hall, adding to the strong foundation of tradition, innovation and academic rigor that exists to this day. Today, CDS offers a premier PreK-12 education, deeply committed to a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum.

At the heart of CDS is its mission: “To inspire students to become innovative thinkers who communicate with intelligence and clarity, create with vision and purpose, and act with courage and compassion to confidently make a meaningful difference in the world.” The school’s core beliefs — emphasizing intellectual engagement, strong character, exceptional faculty and a caring community — guide CDS in creating a nurturing and student-centered environment that prioritizes both academic rigor and personal development.

Brett Fuhrman, the new head of school, shared his journey, motivation and vision for the future of CDS.

Brett’s journey to Asheville and CDS began seven years ago when he moved from Boston with his wife, Karen, and their three children: Hannah, Will and Andrew. Raised in Fargo, N.D., he attended Drake University in Des Moines. After graduation, he moved to Atlanta, where he began his career as a CPA at Arthur Andersen. It was in Atlanta that he met Karen. The couple



eventually moved to Denver, where Brett transitioned from the corporate sector to education, working for Denver Public Schools and eventually becoming CFO.

In 2010, the Fuhrman family moved to the Boston area, where Brett worked at Brooks School and later at Buckingham Brown & Nichols School. In 2017, the opportunity to join CDS as CFO drew him to Asheville. Brett was particularly attracted to CDS due to its long history, its mission and the chance to help the school thrive in an increasingly complex educational market. He saw CDS as a place where he could make a significant impact.

Brett’s transition to head of school was not initially part of his plan. He was focused on expanding his private education consulting practice when the Board of Trustees approached him about the interim head of school position. After thoughtful discussions with Karen, Brett saw this as an opportunity to give back to the school community. “Within months of taking this new role, I realized my prior experience, what I am most passionate about, and everything I continue to see and hope possible for Carolina Day, led me to serving as head of school.” Within a few months, he was honored when the Board offered him the permanent position. “More than

20 years of experience, beliefs and progress culminated for me within a few short months, and I also realized that I love this work and this role.”

One of Brett’s greatest joys at CDS is witnessing the growth and success of students as they develop into well-rounded individuals. Being able to shape the vision for Carolina Day School and implement lasting improvements provides a sense of accomplishment he never imagined. Through strategic planning, Brett and his team have restored financial health and sustainability to the school, positioning CDS to continue offering the exceptional education it has delivered for nearly 90 years. This is wonderful news for all those who appreciate the legacy of Carolina Day School that continues to provide a rich educational experience by integrating leadership development, social-emotional support, academic achievement and compassionate educators who engage students throughout the learning process.

Brett says, “What truly sets Carolina Day apart from other schools is the relationship between teachers and students paired with the engaging, adaptive and responsive learning environment.” Teachers are trained in Responsive Classroom and Orton-Gillingham techniques

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

to meet students' individual needs with kindness and creativity. The Key School at Carolina Day offers a unique educational approach for children in grades 2-8 with dyslexia, addressing their learning challenges and restoring their confidence. This approach empowers all students to understand themselves better, pinpoint their values, act on those values, and rise into their unique and best selves.

The impact of this education has been profound for students, preparing them for higher education and future careers. The success of CDS's approach is evident in its impressive matriculation list, with graduates attending top colleges and universities. Graduates of CDS continually attest that they feel more prepared for college than many of their peers and continually benefit from skills and values instilled at CDS that help them make meaningful contributions and find personal satisfaction and success in professional careers.

Overall, Carolina Day School stands out for its exceptional faculty, engaging curriculum and strong community ties. As Brett highlights, the relationships between teachers and students, coupled with a joyful and responsive learning environment, set CDS apart. Teachers understand

each student's strengths and areas for growth, both academically and socially-emotionally, creating an unparalleled classroom experience. This commitment to excellence ensures that CDS will continue to thrive and provide outstanding education for years to come.



Jessica Ayala is the publisher of Stroll Biltmore Forest & The Ramble.



Brett and his wife Karen with their kids Hannah, Will and Andrew.



They'll be a part of our school for many years.

But our school will be a part of them *forever*.

While many schools "teach to the test," we prepare students for a life beyond school, equipping them with the ability to learn, adapt and make good decisions. Carolina Day School students learn by inquiry and exploration, but most of all, they learn to embrace challenges and persevere. At Carolina Day School, our students are learning for life.

Asheville's independent day school of excellence for grades PK-12.
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