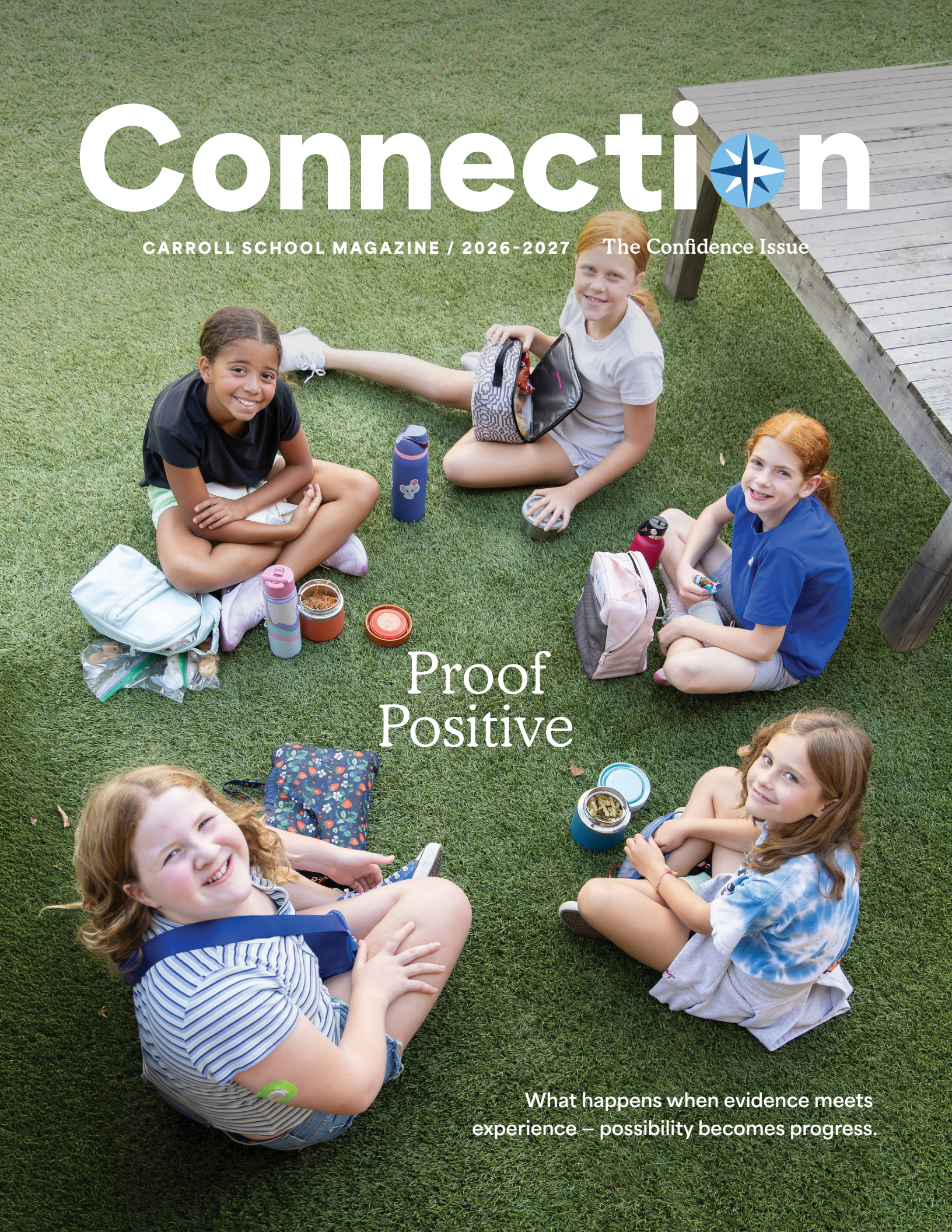
Connection

CARROLL SCHOOL MAGAZINE / 2026-2027

The Confidence Issue



Proof Positive

What happens when evidence meets experience – possibility becomes progress.

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OUR MISSION

Carroll School empowers children with language-based learning differences, such as dyslexia, to become academically skilled students who are strong self-advocates and confident lifelong learners. Carroll is an inclusive community committed to embracing diverse strengths, identities, and lived experiences in order to give each child what they most need to thrive.

A LETTER FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

This is where it begins.

Recently, 4th grade parents Adam and Laura Bruce shared, "We feel certain that the frustration our child once felt around school has been replaced with confidence, curiosity, and pride."



Their words echo a moment I witness often at Carroll. A parent, early in their journey, sits across from a teacher and begins to see, perhaps for the first time, a clear path forward for their child. What once felt uncertain starts to take shape as understanding. Questions give way to possibility. And, over time, possibility becomes progress.

This is the journey we design for every student.

The journey is built on the transparency of the Carroll approach: a steady, intentional process of knowing each child deeply, applying expertise with purpose, and creating an environment where students feel safe to take risks, discover their strengths, and grow into themselves.

In this issue of *Carroll Connection*, we invite you into that journey: from uncertainty to possibility to progress. You will see how this work comes to life across classrooms, relationships, and experiences, shaping not only *how* students learn, but *who* they become.

To our families, educators, alumni, and friends: thank you for the trust and partnership that make this work possible. For this, I am infinitely grateful.

In partnership,

DR. RENÉE GREENFIELD

At Carroll I feel certain that …



…my child is finally in an environment that honors his true self. Shifting his experience of compliance to one of belonging hasn't just transformed his life–it has redefined our entire family dynamic."

O'BRIEN FAMILY,
6TH GRADE



…my child will feel known and be challenged to be the best version of himself."

CARTY FAMILY,
5TH GRADE



…my son's dyslexia will not get in the way of him pursuing his dreams and living a deeply fulfilling life."

SARAH BETTENCOURT,
4TH GRADE PARENT

…my child is empowered, confident, proud."

NOON FAMILY,
6TH GRADE



…my child's individual learning profile is taken into consideration in every class by every teacher. The result is that my child feels seen and completely understood."

BEACHAM/SODEN FAMILY,
8TH GRADE



…my daughters feel fully seen for all of who they are and supported to grow and learn at the just right pace for each of them."

DEMARCO FAMILY,
8TH GRADE AND
ALUMNI '25



…my child is exactly where he needs to be. His confidence has skyrocketed and we are all feeling the benefits at home. With certainty, I can say we made the perfect decision to send him to Carroll."

LAUREN FOLEY,
3RD GRADE PARENT



…my child is in the right learning environment for her and is being set on a strong path toward future academic success."

KRISTIN CASEY,
4TH GRADE PARENT



…my family will be engaged honestly, authentically, and with openness and kindness."

SHRADHA PATEL,
7TH GRADE PARENT





Learning Comes to Life

At Carroll's Lower School, learning rarely lives inside a single subject block. Instead, literacy, math, history, geography, science, and creative expression are intentionally woven together into hands-on projects that invite students to apply their skills in meaningful ways. In third and fourth grade classrooms, two milestone projects highlight this practice, inviting students to deeply explore grade-aligned topics while developing confidence as learners.

3RD GRADE

Building a Whaling Town

By spring, a bustling colonial village has taken up residence in each of Carroll's third grade classrooms. With ten period-specific shops, including a bakery, rope factory, blacksmith, and customs house, it's clear that the project known as Whaling Town is underway.

It begins with research. Students immerse themselves in colonial Massachusetts life: reading articles, listening to stories, and visiting the Plimoth Patuxet Museums to build a deep understanding of the whaling industry that shaped coastal communities. They then work in teams to design and construct a historically accurate whaling village, building on skills in the process.

"In art, they carve scrimshaw like sailors did at sea. In music, they learn whaling songs. In math, they build captain's boxes and manage budgets for their materials," explains Katelyn Murphy, Third Grade Teacher and Team Lead.

As the village takes shape, students also practice collaboration, planning, and public speaking. Each group presents its shop to visiting students, educators, families, and community members, often dozens of times throughout the day.

"By the end, they have such ownership," Katelyn says. "Students who were nervous at the beginning are standing proudly explaining their shop to adults they've never met. The coolest thing is watching our students come out of their shells."

Students use the executive function planning framework — "Get Ready, Do, Done" by Sarah Ward — to help them visualize, organize, and plan.



4TH GRADE

The State Fair Project

In fourth grade, students turn their attention to geography through the State Fair project, a multi-week exploration of the United States. Each student is assigned a state during the much-anticipated "state reveal" – launching a research journey into geography, culture, and regional differences across the country.

Students investigate their state's bird, flower, landmarks, and famous figures while learning how to gather and synthesize information from books and digital resources. Though it looks playful on the surface, the project blends multiple disciplines, reflecting core fourth grade skills.

"They're learning geography and vocabulary, exploring perspective-taking, practicing reading for information and writing complete sentences, and delving into research, organization, and planning skills," says Michele Hales, Fourth Grade Teacher and Team Lead.

Students create topographical maps, design presentation boards, and even produce short promotional videos encouraging others to visit their state before finally presenting their research to classmates, educators, and families. For many students, confidence is crystallized.

"[My students] realize they can research something, learn about it, and explain it to other people," says Michele. "It's a real opportunity to show off their skills, share what they know, and take pride in that."

Roots & Wings

Stories That Stay With You



There are some classroom assignments that take on a life of their own. Roots & Wings, a project for ninth graders in Terry Gregory's English Language Arts class, pairs students with older adults with dyslexia to share stories across generations.

The goal: To build empathy and compassion while applying academic skills in a real-life setting.

The outcome: Profound.

Over a series of weekly meetings, students (the Wings) listened closely to their Roots as they reflected on childhood, school, work, and the successes and challenges they faced along the way – many without the academic support systems students have today.

Every Thursday, it became something to look forward to as the students developed their narrative skills and grew more comfortable. Early interviews of prepared questions slowly gave way to easier dialogues as the connections deepened. As ninth grader Owen Ives described, "Going in, I was a little bit nervous. After the first session, conversation flowed and it felt more like friends talking."

That sense of ease opened the door to something deeper. "It was really nice to hear somebody else's perspective on life," ninth grader Alex Kunst said. "[My Root] shared a lot of special experiences, and we bonded over the times we met."

As trust builds, so does meaning. Students begin to notice not just what their Roots experienced, but how they lived – what they pursued, what they valued, and how they continued to grow. For Alex, it was the way his Root found purpose through service. "She had this spirit of just going for it," he said. "She did a lot, and it made me realize I can always do more. I can always give back more."

These stories also reshape how students understand their own learning journeys. Hearing about school experiences from a time when dyslexia was less understood brings both contrast and clarity. "It made me realize how fortunate I am to be at Carroll," Alex reflected.



Sue Newbury and Alex Kunst



Robert Gill and Owen Ives

For Owen, the connection was both personal and aspirational. His mentor, a lawyer, shared how he worked through challenges related to dyslexia. "He talked about how he had to work two times harder," Owen said. "Hearing his story showed me that if you work hard, you can get to a place where you're giving back to others."

In their final presentation, delivered to an audience of Roots and peers, the impact of the experience was unmistakable. Alex captured what he learned from his Root: be useful to others, be kind to yourself, appreciate detail, and maintain the world around you. "I think it's changed how I see what I can do," Alex said. "Before, I thought I was doing the most I could. But now I know I can keep pushing myself."

Curriculum Snapshot

Over multiple weeks, Wings & Roots meet to explore the arc of a life story.

1 **Connection & Curiosity**
Build trust and begin learning about one another.

2 **Roots & Identity**
Explore childhood, early learning, and formative experiences.

3 **Challenge & Resilience**
Uncover struggles, especially around learning, and the strength it took to navigate them.

4 **Joy & Passion**
Discover what brings purpose, energy, and creativity.

5 **Family, Love & Legacy**
Understand relationships and the impact of others.

6 **Values & Wisdom**
Capture life lessons and enduring beliefs.

Final **Celebration of Stories**
Students present a written or multimedia tribute honoring their Root's journey.



BRAIN BEATS

Neuroscientific studies tell us that making music is one of the most complex activities the brain can perform.

"Red light!"

Around the room, sixth graders freeze mid-step, striking dramatic surprise-party poses as if the guest of honor has just walked through the door. This is how a Carroll sixth grade improvisation (improv) class gets warmed up. And while it may look like a playful moment, beneath the laughter and creativity students are exercising their brains in powerful ways.

At Carroll's Middle School, that's exactly how the performing arts program is designed to work. Music and improv engage multiple cognitive systems at once to strengthen auditory processing, working memory, pattern recognition, and executive functioning skills.

Playing an instrument, reading music, listening to rhythm, and coordinating movement all happen simultaneously, activating multiple regions of the brain at once. As performing arts educator Adam Brooks describes it, making music is "the brain's equivalent of a full-body workout."

Ben Shepard, Carroll's Targeted Cognitive Intervention Coordinator, notes that music and language share many of the same neural pathways. Both rely heavily on auditory processing: the brain's ability to hear, interpret, and organize sound. The same systems students use to distinguish rhythm and pitch are also involved in processing spoken language and reading.

At Carroll, this overlap becomes an opportunity. Students strengthen cognitive skills through musical exploration in ways that feel joyful and accessible. Rhythm activities, for example, help students coordinate movement to a steady beat with action sequences.



As Adam puts it, these opportunities "exercise those foundational skills before they dig into more complicated things like learning an instrument or singing."

Improv brings another layer of cognitive growth. Students must listen closely, react quickly, and build on one another's ideas in real time. Ben notes that improv can be especially helpful for students navigating social communication challenges by creating a space for safe risk-taking. Many Carroll students arrive with stories of academic struggle. On stage or in an improv circle, they discover a different experience: experimentation without judgment.

From the first day of class, students learn to expect playful warm-up games and collaborative exercises that reward them for being bold, expressive, and even a little silly. "We play with purpose," Adam explains, noting that each activity focuses on skills like being present, generating ideas, and listening and reacting to others in the moment.

At Carroll, performing arts classes are part of an intentionally designed learning environment where creativity and cognition grow together. Through music, rhythm, and improv, students strengthen the same skills that support academic learning while also discovering confidence in themselves as capable creators and performers.

As Adam often reminds his students, "A brain at play is a happy brain, and happy brains learn better." In that case, play on.

More Than Meets the Eye

Inspired by rule-breaker Robert Rauschenberg, students channel their creativity





Glued to a painted wooden board are an old earring, a feather, a book-shaped gift card holder, and a broken pencil in what looks like a simple collage. Looks can be deceiving.

Inspired by the artist Robert Rauschenberg, Orton-Gillingham practitioner Ann Bible designed a cross-curricular project for Carroll's fifth graders that invites students to lean into uncertainty and trust their creative instincts. The project, supported by the Maureen McGuire Myers Endowment Fund, brings together language instruction and visual art in a collaborative exploration of art and storytelling.

Established by Stewart Myers P'91, the Maureen McGuire Myers Endowment Fund for Faculty Professional Development supports professional learning at Carroll School.

Rauschenberg, an American painter and graphic artist of the 20th century, was known for breaking artistic rules. His works were characterized by unexpected combinations of everyday objects with traditional materials to create bold new forms of expression.

Rauschenberg was also dyslexic and described school as a "nightmare" before discovering his creative voice. His struggle paired with extraordinary achievement made his story particularly resonant for Carroll students.

"Rauschenberg dared to think differently," Ann explains. "He asked questions like, 'Why is paint more valuable than an old sock as an art material?' That spirit of curiosity and playfulness felt like a perfect match for our students."

QuadUp is a flexible block dedicated to community learning in the 5th grade.

The project comes to life during QuadUp in a series of four rotating sessions that combine vocabulary study, storytelling, and artmaking. In language sessions, educators Justine Hanretty and Valerie Nygren lead students in an exploration of words like captivating, peculiar, and random. In art sessions with Julie Siftar, they create Rauschenberg-inspired compositions using painted wooden boards and unexpected materials.

The project culminates in collaborative storytelling circles where students weave vocabulary into imaginative stories. Ann hopes the work will ultimately become a published children's book featuring student art and writing.

Throughout the process, students discover something powerful: creativity often begins with uncertainty. "I didn't know what I was going to do," one student reflected about their artwork. "I started with straw, then added a shell, then it became a beach."

For Ann, that moment captures the deeper purpose of the project. "If you just start with something, it leads you somewhere," she says. "That's the lesson I hope students take with them… even when the path isn't clear, curiosity and perseverance will carry you forward."

The Myers Fund provided the time, resources, and institutional support needed to bring the interdisciplinary project to life. And for the students who helped create it, the experience offers something lasting: the pride of seeing their ideas, voices, and creativity transformed into a work of art.

View the 5th grade Rauschenberg art gallery

PROJECT SEQUENCE

Session 1: Discovery

Students learn about Robert Rauschenberg's life and artistic approach. Language teachers introduce new vocabulary to deepen word knowledge.

Session 2: Creativity

Students begin their own Rauschenberg-inspired artwork. Using painted wooden boards as a base, they add found objects and materials to build layered visual art.

Session 3: Story Circles

Students collaborate to create imaginative oral stories using their new vocabulary words. Each student contributes a line, building a shared narrative.

Session 4: Reflections

Students revisit their artwork, adding final elements inspired by the storytelling session. They also reflect on their creative process.





Beyond the Headlines

Media Literacy at Carroll

In a world where headlines move quickly and opinions form even faster, teaching students how to engage thoughtfully with current events has never been more important. At Carroll, the goal isn't to tell students *what* to think, but to help them learn *how*.

For Sean Wright, Middle School History Department Head, bringing current events into the classroom is a natural extension of social studies. The purpose of history education, he explains, is to prepare students to participate thoughtfully in a complex democratic society – and that requires understanding the world around them today.

Middle school is an ideal time to begin that work. At this age, students are naturally curious about the world, eager to share their perspectives, and driven by a strong sense of fairness that provides a natural entry point for discussing complex global issues. Carroll educators follow a thoughtful process to bring these discussions into the classroom.

"When a current event happens, teachers first take time to understand it themselves," Sean explains.

From there, educators help students build context: examining the geography, historical background, and key questions surrounding an event.

Students learn to examine the credibility of their sources as a historian would. Then, through journaling and structured discussion, students have opportunities to reflect and share.

In today's information environment – shaped by social media, algorithm-driven content, and rapidly evolving technologies – developing media literacy is critical. Ultimately, these conversations are about more than understanding the news. They are about developing the habits of mind that help young people engage thoughtfully with the world.





The goal is to dialogue with curiosity.

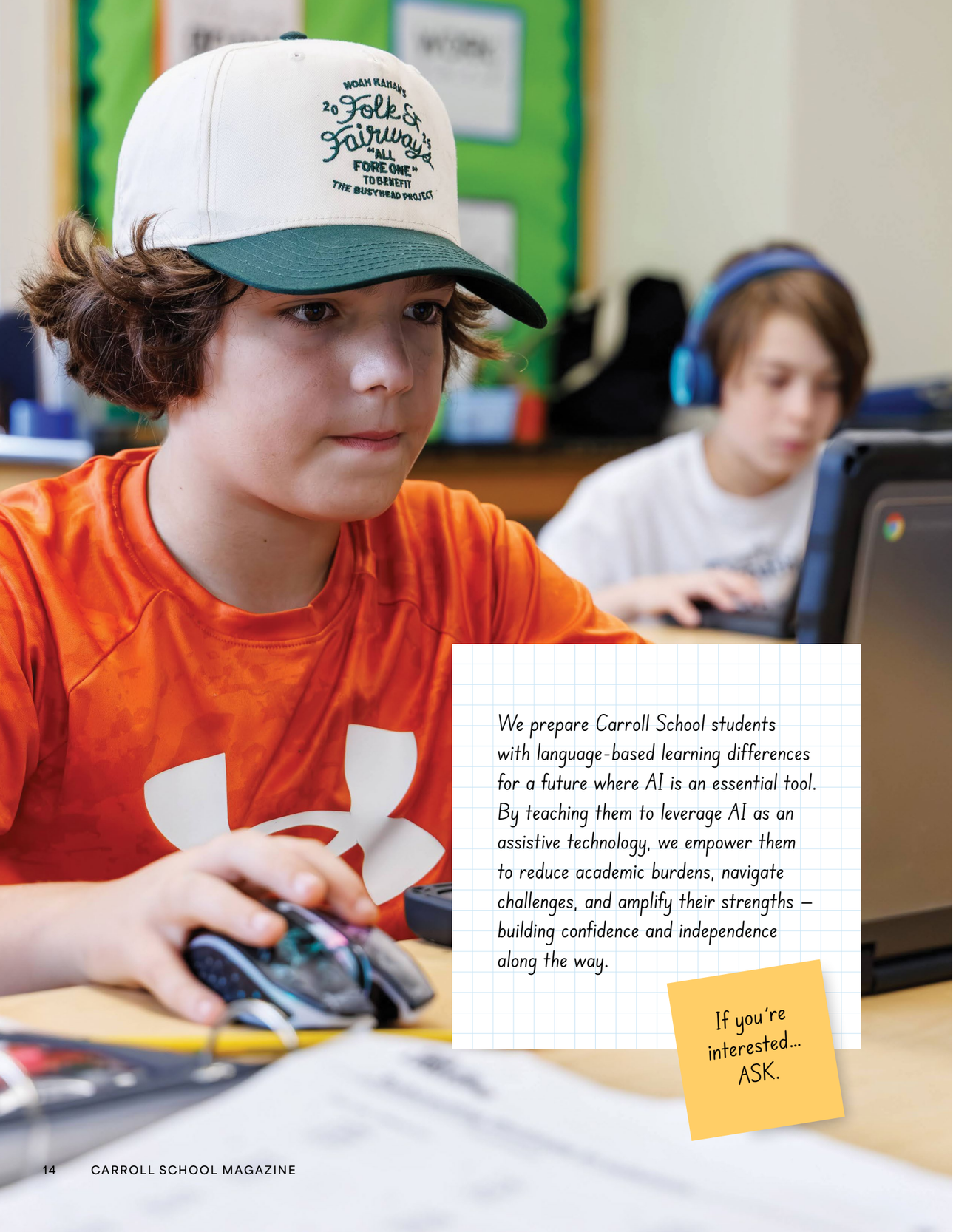
Students learn that it's possible, and valuable, to disagree respectfully. In fact, Sean says some of the most encouraging moments happen when students express strong perspectives, then move on to the next class still enjoying each other's company.

Sean hopes Carroll graduates leave middle school as empathetic listeners, thoughtful question-askers, and confident communicators – people who approach complex issues not with fixed opinions, but with curiosity.

"These students will be voters and leaders sooner than they think," he says. "Our hope is that they learn to seek reliable information, ask good questions, and engage thoughtfully with others."

"Every one of us has opinions that are different from the person next to us, and that helps when we disagree."

RILEY TURSI, 8TH GRADE STUDENT



We prepare Carroll School students with language-based learning differences for a future where AI is an essential tool. By teaching them to leverage AI as an assistive technology, we empower them to reduce academic burdens, navigate challenges, and amplify their strengths – building confidence and independence along the way.

If you're interested... ASK.

AI at Carroll

Innovation with Intention

Posted outside Director of IT Bishop Levesque's office is this handwritten vision statement with a sticky note that reads, "If you're interested... ASK." Naturally, we asked.

At Carroll, conversations about artificial intelligence begin where every major decision does: with the school's mission. "We are here to help students build their literacy skills and confidence in reading and writing," Bishop explains. "That will never be ignored or replaced."

But as AI rapidly reshapes the world that students will enter after Carroll, the school has made a purposeful choice to engage thoughtfully. Says Bishop, "Our responsibility is to help students understand how to use these tools thoughtfully. It's here, whether we like it or not."

For dyslexic learners, AI presents both risks and opportunities. Because many tools are powered by language, they could easily become shortcuts that replace skill development. Carroll's approach is to ensure that structured literacy remains the foundation, while strategically using AI to expand access to learning.

In classrooms, teachers are already exploring how AI can support students while preserving rigorous thinking. Tommy Cunningham – Middle School history educator and a member of the New England AI Collaborative – has experimented with using AI to rapidly design classroom materials that better meet students' needs.

"AI can help level texts, generate visual supports, or create study tools from students' own notes," Tommy explains. "But the goal is never to replace thinking – it's to support it."



Carroll educators at a New England AI Collaborative Workshop

Recognizing that AI is here to stay, Carroll is developing clear policies, prioritizing data privacy, and guiding educators toward vetted tools that align with Carroll's instructional goals. Carroll is also reimagining its digital literacy curriculum – led by Director of Academic Technology Erin Jacobsen – to help students become thoughtful, ethical users of emerging technologies.

At Carroll, readiness doesn't mean standing still. It means having the expertise and intention to prepare students for what comes next. As Bishop emphasizes, "It's about occasionally building a bridge so students can connect to the content and ideas that excite them."

The New England AI Collaborative is a partnership between local independent schools exploring together the role of artificial intelligence in education.





The Carroll Glue

How a Culture of Belonging Unlocks Student Potential

At Carroll, a culture of belonging is foundational to how students learn and grow. When students feel seen, valued, and connected, they are better able to take risks, engage deeply, and grow.

We spoke with Human Resources Manager Tinashe Ntar and Director of Culture, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Osamagbe Osagie about how this intentional culture shapes the student experience and strengthens the work of educators.

What Does Belonging Mean?

At Carroll, belonging means bringing people together and accepting them as they are.

"Belonging is the intentional intersection of structured systems – like identity-centered policies, affinity groups, and curricula designed for students with language-based learning differences," explains Tinashe. "And, it's organic moments rooted in joy... shared meals, all-community events like Fall Festival, and Spirit Weeks."

Carroll is intentionally building a culture that is always evolving and responsive to the lived experiences and identities of every community member. "The magic," Tinashe says, "is in blending this organic evolution with thoughtful, intentional planning."

Why Culture Matters

For many Carroll students, school has not always felt like a place where they belonged. A strong culture has the power to flip that script.

"Our goal is to create a cultural tether that helps ground students in their community," shares Osamagbe. "When students feel belonging, they can take risks, face challenges, and develop the fortitude to persevere."

This sense of belonging also supports adults at Carroll. When educators feel supported in their identities and professional growth, they serve as stable "anchors" for students. By modeling curiosity, openness, and empathy, educators show students that learning is a continuous, lifelong journey.

Shifting Culture Out Loud

At Carroll, we approach culture the same way we do teaching: we make it visible, intentional, and something students can actively learn.

"We often start by connecting this work to students' own experiences of being misunderstood because of how they learn," says Osamagbe. "That shared lived experience becomes a bridge, helping them build empathy for others while gaining a deeper understanding of themselves. By drawing those parallels, students are then able to engage in brave conversations about stereotyping and microaggressions."

From there, students begin to put language to their experiences and practice seeing the world from different perspectives. These conversations happen in ways that are developmentally appropriate and accessible to every learner. Over time, students gain the language, confidence, and perspective needed to engage thoughtfully with the world around them.

Shifting culture is often an invisible process, but when it all comes together, the impact is unmistakable.

BELONGING IN ACTION

The impact of Carroll's culture-building efforts can be seen across the school.

The Power of Agency

Students are increasingly leading initiatives that reflect their interests and identities, from launching a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) to exploring issues such as microaggression and food equality.

Curious Disagreement

Families report that students are more comfortable engaging in respectful disagreement and discussing complex ideas with peers who hold different perspectives.

Visible Representation

Through ongoing curriculum review and intentional hiring practices, Carroll ensures students see themselves reflected in what they learn and in the adults who teach them, fueling curiosity and deeper academic engagement.





1

6th Grade
Small Creatures, Big Responsibility



2

5th Grade
Into the Outdoors



3

7th Grade
Sweet Engineering



4

Lower School
A Number Worth Celebrating



5

8th Grade
Stories that Shape Up



6

8th Grade
Values in Action



7

Upper School
Creativity in Print



8

Upper School
Learning Through Service



9

4th Grade
Activity Day



10

Middle School
Belonging Together



11

4th Grade
I'm a Survivor



12

8th Grade
Heart of the Matter



13

Middle School
A Night to Remember



14

Lower School
Walking Together



15

All Schools
Books Worth Celebrating



16

6th Grade
Powered by Teamwork



17

Upper School
Connecting Across Ages

What it looks like in action.

1 Sixth graders care for endangered wood turtles, connecting science with real-world impact.

2 Fifth graders build connection and confidence through shared challenges in nature during Fall Adventure Day.

3 Where creativity meets design, seventh graders build candy machines in their makers class.

4 Lower School marks Carroll's founding year "196-7" with a joyful, schoolwide celebration.

5 Eighth graders explore immigration through research and create connected cultural art and artifacts.

6 The medallion passes peer to peer, recognizing eighth grade students who live the HAWKS values every day.

7 Upper School teams transform newsprint into wearable designs – collaborating, problem-solving, and having fun together.

8 Upper School students step into their communities, putting empathy and action side by side.

9 Fourth graders turn math into sidewalk art – making concepts visible, tactile, and fun.

10 Students and educators engage in meaningful dialogue at the AISNE Middle School DEI Conference.

11 Fourth graders explore what it takes to live in different environments and design items they need to "survive."

12 Eighth graders dive into the science of the heart – investigating structure, function, and life itself.

13 Middle School students celebrate together at a Student Council-organized dance filled with music and joy.

14 Lower School students honor Ruby Bridges Day with a shared walk of reflection and unity.

15 A daily book giveaway during National Children's Book Week sparks excitement and reinforces a love of reading.

16 Sixth graders bring energy and collaboration to a fun "World Cup" human-powered dog sled race.

17 Upper School mentors build meaningful connections with Lower School students through time spent together.

Discover more stories on Instagram @carrollschool

Breaking Down Words

Building Up Learning

"What does this word, o-m-n-i-v-o-r-e, mean?" asks a fifth grader.

"Do you recognize any parts of the word?" replies their teacher, Lower School science educator and Orton-Gillingham (OG) tutor Thanaydi Sandoval.

The student begins to break it down, identifying prefixes and roots they've already learned in tutoring. Slowly and methodically, the meaning emerges.

Moments like this superbly illustrate one aspect of Carroll's teaching model: the many educators who are both classroom teachers and Orton-Gillingham tutors. That dual expertise means structured literacy is embedded across subjects, instead of being confined to an OG focus area (tutoring) or English Language Arts (ELA) class.





"Having OG training means we can bring those strategies from tutoring into the classroom."

JULIA SCHLEPPI, TEACHER AND TUTOR



Tutoring Skills In Action

A similar approach is at play in a Middle School history classroom. During a lesson on Reconstruction after the Civil War, teacher and tutor Julia Schleppi asks students to analyze the word itself, examining the prefix re- and its Latin roots. "That helped students understand what the country was actually trying to do," she says. "We're building something again together."

Julia also structures history lessons with careful scaffolding, such as chunking complex texts and offering multiple ways for students to access information – through discussion, visuals, or leveled historical texts.

These approaches reflect Carroll's mission: equipping students with strategies they can transfer across disciplines. "In real life, everything is interdisciplinary," Julia says. "You need to understand how to read different kinds of texts to engage with history, science, or anything else."

Connecting Literacy and Science Content Learning

For Thanaydi, literacy and content learning are undeniably intertwined. "In addition to the content lessons I'm planning for science, I'm also planning an individualized OG lesson every single day," Thanaydi says. Because she understands the language structures students are learning in tutoring, Thanaydi can organically reinforce those skills in science. When students encounter unfamiliar terminology, she encourages them to analyze word parts they already know.

She also designs lessons so that literacy challenges never limit access to content. For example, Thanaydi previews key vocabulary and provides multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding – from leveled reading resources to oral presentations.

"By the time they come to science, they're so curious and they want to learn so much," she says. "Tutoring helps ease the effort of decoding so they can read to understand the science content."

Math + Literacy

What does this crossover look like in a Math Focus Area class?

"Memorizing math facts is a language task," Julia says. "And making sense of word problems is often more about critical thinking and understanding quantity than just understanding the words." By building those language bridges, students can access the math concepts they already understand and focus their energy on solving problems.

The Past Is Prologue

A Living Lineage

By Dr. Renée Greenfield

There is something uniquely humbling about archival work. It asks you to slow down – to sit with delicate paper, fading ink, and the unmistakable cadence of another era. In the archive, history becomes tactile. Letters and margin notes reveal not only what people thought, but what they believed was possible.

While attending the Klingenstein Center's *Heads of Schools* Program at Columbia University, I spent time in the Orton archives, hoping to better understand the intellectual roots of dyslexia education. What I found was more than history. I found a living lineage: the story of Carroll School and the people who built it with persistence, care, and conviction.

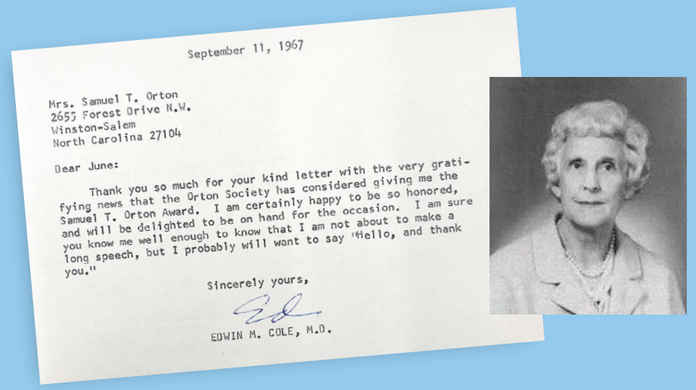
That story begins with Dr. Samuel Orton, whose early research on "strephosymbolia" (literally, "twisted symbols") helped shape a scientific understanding of dyslexia. Alongside Anna Gillingham, a skilled practitioner, he developed the structured, multisensory approach (Orton-Gillingham) still at the core of our teaching at Carroll today.

This work did not end with Dr. Orton. After his death in 1948, his wife, June Orton, carried the field forward, founding the Orton Society (now the International Dyslexia Association) and stewarding a growing body of research and practice around language-based learning differences. Through her leadership, the field did not simply endure; it evolved.

From left to right: Angie Wilkins, Louise Freese, Renée Greenfield, and Isabel Wesley at the Garside Institute of Teacher Training (GIFTT) reunion at Carroll School



Her work intersected with Dr. Edwin Cole, a Boston-based neurologist who had studied with Orton and Gillingham and later brought that knowledge into his work at the Language Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital. In 1967, at the suggestion of F. Gorham Brigham, Cole conceived the idea of a school intentionally designed for children with dyslexia, built on the site of the closing Miss Carroll School in Newton.



September 11, 1967

Mrs. Samuel T. Orton
2655 Forest Drive N.W.
Winston-Salem
North Carolina 27104

Dear June:

Thank you so much for your kind letter with the very gratifying news that the Orton Society has considered giving me the Samuel T. Orton Award. I am certainly happy to be so honored, and will be delighted to be on hand for the occasion. I am sure you know me well enough to know that I am not about to make a long speech, but I probably will want to say Hello, and thank you."

Sincerely yours,

EDWIN M. COLE, M.D.

From that moment, Carroll's founding vision began to take shape.

By 1971, Carroll had moved to its Lincoln campus and was growing quickly. Cole's vision extended beyond a single school. Alongside building Carroll, he was working to expand impact by training teachers and partnering with public schools so that more students could benefit from this approach.

That fall, the school hosted the annual Orton Society meeting. In a letter inviting June Orton to speak, Cole described Carroll with unmistakable pride: "It is booming." The school was serving 125 students in grades 1-9 and turning many more away. The need was clear, and so was the promise.

When Orton addressed the gathering, she offered a phrase that has stayed with me: *"The past is prologue."* She spoke of the long-held dream of schools, like Carroll, created to serve children with dyslexia and language-based learning differences in their own communities and beyond.

In Carroll, she saw that dream realized. And in Cole's work beyond its walls, she saw the path forward.

As I moved through the archives, I came to realize that this lineage is not only about instructional practice. It is about mentorship, inquiry, advocacy, and care. It is about people – the Ortons, Cole, Alice Garside, Angie Wilkins, Isabel Wesley, Louise Freese, and countless Carroll educators – who studied carefully, taught courageously, and believed deeply in children too often misunderstood.

If the past is indeed a prologue, then the question before us is clear: *How will we extend the story?*

At Carroll and beyond, we extend it by continuing to do what has always defined this work: grounding our teaching in research, refining our practice through data and experience, investing deeply in the training of educators, and sharing what we learn so that more students can benefit. In doing so, we honor this lineage.

LESSONS I'LL CARRY FROM THE ARCHIVES

Practice and research are inseparable.

The Orton-Gillingham approach endures because educators continue to refine it in response to students.

Community drives progress.

The relationship between June Orton and Dr. Edwin Cole reflects a broader truth: this work grows through collaboration, mentorship, and shared purpose.

The work is about possibility.

Across the archives, one belief endures: students are not problems to fix, but individuals with strengths to develop. This remains as urgent today as ever.



A Script for Self-Discovery

On opening night of *Shrek: The Musical*, a buzzing audience saw bright lights and heard students land one punchline after another. What they may not have picked up? The quiet risks happening behind the scenes.



On stage, Riley Tursi stepped into the lead role of Shrek. Emma Petkov performed alongside classmates from multiple grades. And in the tech booth, Owen Dempster ran sound. For all three of these eighth graders, the moment represented something bigger than the culmination of weeks of rehearsals. As the curtain opened, the cast would have to embody the culture at Carroll: feeling safe enough to take risks, and confident enough to discover who they are becoming. And these skills don't stop when Shrek delivers the final line.

For Emma, a deep sense of belonging has made it possible to stretch herself in new ways. "In elementary school it was hard for me and I was excluded a lot," she explained. "At Carroll, I'm included and I've made so many friends." That supportive environment makes it easier for Carroll students to push themselves, whether in performing arts, athletics, leadership, or academics.

Riley discovered her love of performing through the Carroll play. "In a bigger school I wouldn't have gone on stage," she said. "I think there are a lot more people to be judged by." Once she tried it, the experience opened many doors. "If I wasn't in the play, I would have never met some of my friends that are in different grades," she said. "It's also helped me stand up for myself more and be more vocal about what I need."



Emma's stage time emboldened her to take on a fresh challenge: running for Student Council. "Running for student council was a big risk for me," she said. "After my speech, I was like, 'Oh, I'm not going to get it.' But I did and I'm proud of that."

For Owen, Carroll was a launchpad to a wide range of interests, including Ultimate Frisbee, Flag Football, Makers, and Bounders. "I found out that I like to 3D design things... and I love to work with my hands, like chopping wood or starting a fire. [At Carroll] ... there's so many opportunities for you to find out new things about yourself."

That eagerness to branch out follows students into the classroom, too. "I think the confidence you gain by trying new things helps you try different techniques [in the classroom]," Owen explained. "For example, we are working on poems in ELA and I am trying new ways to sort through the poem to find keywords and the foundation of the poem."

"Over the years at Carroll, we've watched our daughter blossom from a child who struggled with self-awareness and understanding into a thoughtful young woman who believes in herself, stands by her values, and has already begun to shape a meaningful path for her life."

KRASIMIRA PETKOV, EMMA'S PARENT



Riley's experience on the stage has helped her find greater ease making mistakes when learning. "If you get a question wrong or you need help, people will help you figure it out without being mean," she says. As for Emma, her perspective is powering growth in her reading, saying "Sometimes I make mistakes, but no one judges."

As these students prepare for high school, they are taking more than memories with them. They are leaving Carroll with something deeper: the confidence to step forward, try something new, and trust that taking risks is simply part of learning.

Ready for What's Next

By the time Carroll students reach their final year, something important has shifted. No longer defined by what was once difficult, they now approach challenges with confidence, independence, and a deep understanding of how they learn. The next step reflects not just where they are going, but who they have become.



"At Carroll, I feel that my child is challenged to reach his academic potential, not just lectured at, and holistically supported for his future, not just taught for teaching sake."

DACIA THOMPSON, 8TH GRADE PARENT

Class of 2026 High School Matriculation

Our graduates continue their journeys at schools including:

Acton-Boxborough High School
Arlington High School
Bancroft School
Beaver Country Day School
Boston Arts Academy
Brewster Academy
Brimmer and May School
Brookline High School
Cambridge Rindge & Latin
Cambridge School of Weston
Carroll Upper School
Catholic Memorial School
Chapel-Hill Chauncy Hall
Chelmsford High School
Concord-Carlisle High School
Dana Hall School
Deerfield Academy
Dublin School
Eagle Hill School
Gann Academy
Holderness School
Landmark School
Lawrence Academy
Lexington High School
Lincoln-Sudbury High School
Malden Catholic High School
Maynard High School
Minuteman Career & Technical High School
Needham High School
New Hampton School
Proctor Academy
Somerville High School
St. John's Preparatory School
Tabor Academy
Thayer Academy
Waltham High School
Wayland High School
Wellesley High School
Wheeler School
Williston Northampton School
Winchendon School
Winchester High School



The Lower School comes alive during a production of Bayou Ballyhoo. Among the performers is a young student: finding her voice, taking the stage, and discovering the joy of performance.



Nearly a decade later, the Lower School lights up again – this time with 4th and 5th graders watching *Luna Goes to Mars*, performed by the University of New Hampshire's Theatre for Young Audiences. Center stage is that same student, now a college performer, Christi McGaffigan. Returning to Carroll, Christi brought science, imagination, and confidence to a new generation of learners, students sitting in the very place she once did.

After the performance, she reconnected with former teachers and flipped through the 2015 yearbook, the year she began her Carroll journey as a 4th grader. The pages capture where it started. Her return shows how far it can go. Moments like this remind us that growth is built over time – through intentional opportunities, expert guidance, and the courage to step forward. What begins as a first performance can become something much more: confidence, voice, and a path that continues to unfold long after students leave Carroll.

"Carroll was the first place that I ever felt like I belonged, and the first place where I felt proud of the way I learn. The teachers and staff encouraged me to do what I love. I started performing in Carroll's talent shows during Today's Hoorays and now 10 years later I am living my dream as a musical theater major."

CHRISTI MCGAFFIGAN

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Amelia Estrada '09

DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, AND PHD CANDIDATE

Interview conducted by eighth-grade student, Tabitha Feller, for the Hero's Journey Language Focus Area class.

Q. How did your path lead you to Carroll?

A. School was really challenging for me early on. In second grade, my public school told my parents I would likely never read at grade level or go to college. That moment pushed my family to seek something different, and ultimately led me to Carroll. It changed everything.

Q. What stands out most about your experience at Carroll?

A. I remember, for the first time, feeling like my teachers truly believed in me. Reading became more accessible, and I felt accepted in a way I hadn't before. The small classes and sense of community made it feel like a place where I belonged.

Q. What are you doing now?

A. I'm a director and choreographer and finishing my PhD in theater, dance, and performance studies. I also teach and collaborate with a variety of arts organizations. My career is deeply rooted in the confidence and creativity I developed at Carroll; I found my voice there.

A teacher, Shea Schatell, became an incredible mentor and encouraged me to pursue my passion. She still comes to my shows.

Q. How has dyslexia shaped your work and perspective?

A. Dyslexia has made me more creative and resilient. It shapes how I see movement, space, and storytelling. It's also taught me to advocate for myself – something that has been essential throughout my education and career.

Q. What advice would you share with current Carroll students?

A. Follow your passions. They'll take you places you don't expect. And don't be afraid of doing hard things. That's where you learn the most about yourself.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Chris McGinn '94

IT SUPPORT SPECIALIST



Q. How did your path lead you back to Carroll?

A. My history with Carroll began in 1989, when I was a student here from fourth through eighth grade. Personal computers were just starting to emerge, and I remember my teacher, John Palmer, exploring how to use this new technology in the classroom. That was my very first spark for information technology (IT).

After years working in software business solutions and IT in a public school, I felt drawn back to a mission-driven environment – a place where I could combine my passion for technology with a community that shaped my own life. Carroll helped ignite my motivation and drive, and returning has reignited that spark in a true full-circle moment.

Q. What do you love about your work?

A. There's a stereotype that IT professionals work alone in the basement, but my role at Carroll is wonderfully forward-facing. At its core, IT at Carroll is about people; the technology is simply the tool we use to support them.

What I find most rewarding is the dedication of the employees. Everyone here is fully committed to the mission. Being back on campus reminds me every day of the opportunities we're providing for students.

Q. How is your work informed by your own experience with dyslexia?

A. I vividly remember what it felt like to struggle before I found Carroll. I have a deep sensitivity to our students' journeys. I see a lot of myself in them.

In my technical work, I actually view my dyslexia as a "sixth sense." While IT can be very linear, I tend to intuitively feel my way through complex, abstract problems. It also helps me translate highly technical concepts into language that's accessible to everyone.

Q. What motivates you to come to work every day?

A. It's the sense of purpose. Carroll's emphasis on self-advocacy is powerful. We're not just teaching academics, we're teaching students how to stand up for what they need to succeed.



"I am an avid creative writer. When I first learned to read at Carroll, I started seeing vivid "movies" in my head, which led to a lifelong love of sci-fi and adventure storytelling. I've even started a writers' group here for my colleagues."

CHRIS MCGINN '94

CARROLL SCHOOL

45 Waltham Road
Wayland, MA 01778

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