Carolina Day magazine

SUMMER 2026

Think one kid can change the world?

We do.









Where Students Learn to Make a Difference

Carolina Day School students are curious, compassionate, and deeply engaged with the world around them. They pursue their passions with purpose, rise to academic challenges, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

At Carolina Day, every student is seen and genuinely cared for because we believe each one is capable of extraordinary things.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Every Carolina Day experience is built on a community that believes in the potential of its students. Gifts to the Annual Fund support our academics, arts, and extracurriculars that shape the student experience. Together, these opportunities help students learn, grow, and thrive.

Thank you for your support.

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Carolina Day
magazine

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WATCH THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES VIDEO

On the Cover

A Message Comes into Focus

Carolina Day School recently introduced a new expression of its story: *Think one kid can change the world? We do.*

What began with a behind-the-scenes glimpse of students in front of the camera now comes fully into view on our magazine cover. The images featured here celebrate the curiosity, character, and potential that define the Carolina Day experience—not just in a few remarkable students, but in *every* child entrusted to our community.

The message is simple, yet deeply held: young people are capable of extraordinary things when they are known, challenged, and supported by a community that believes in them.

As you turn these pages, you'll encounter stories that bring that belief to life. They are stories of discovery and growth, creativity and innovation, leadership and community. Together, they reflect the conviction at the heart of Carolina Day School: that every student has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the world.

And it all begins with believing in one kid.





Welcome Back

Every school year begins with possibility. Here's to new discoveries, meaningful friendships, and another year of learning, growing, and making a difference together.

Enjoying *the* Journey



Head of School Ben Farrell on What Truly Matters

When Ben Farrell talks about Carolina Day School, he doesn't begin with test scores, rankings, or college lists. Instead, he starts with relationships. "Every school says they're a close-knit community," Ben reflects. "What struck me here at CDS is that it's not a tagline. It's deeply felt."

During his first months on campus, Ben and colleague Michael Lomuscio hosted several lunches with the senior class. He asked them a simple question: *What makes CDS, CDS?* Without exception, the answers pointed in the same direction. Students spoke not first about facilities, programs, or future plans, but about the relationships they had formed with teachers and other adults on campus.

"That was unusual for me," he says. "At other excellent schools where I've worked, the conversation often moved quickly to the next step—college, careers, the future. Sometimes it felt like the school was just a way station. Here, our students understand that CDS is a meaningful part of their journey, not just a stepping stone."

The word *journey* has deep personal resonance for Ben. Before he left for college, his mother offered a simple piece of advice: *enjoy the journey*. Only later did he fully appreciate the wisdom behind it.

In his earlier roles as a dean of students and school leader, Ben encountered many young people weighed down by an intense fear of falling short. He remembers one student caught plagiarizing to rescue an imagined future. A poor quiz grade, the student believed, would derail advanced classes, college admission, career opportunities, relationships, and ultimately happiness.

"This was a 15-year-old kid," Ben says. "He had built an entire catastrophic life story from one quiz, and he made an unethical choice because he felt that everything depended on it."

That experience convinced Ben that schools must help students learn to be present where they are. "We have to remind them: this is a moment in time," he explains. "If we can enjoy the space that we're in, then we're getting the most out of it and feeling fulfilled. And then we can do our best work."

At CDS, he sees far fewer of those crisis conversations, and he credits the culture of genuine care and connection. “Our students feel known, believed in, and supported,” he says. “They experience CDS as part of a meaningful story they’re living right now.”

That philosophy extends naturally into how the school approaches college. Ben is proud of the “mind-boggling” list of institutions where CDS graduates matriculate. But for him, the names on the list are not the central point. “What matters most isn’t the so-called ‘right name’ college; it’s the right fit. It’s the place where a student will thrive as their full self.”

Underpinning all of this is Ben’s definition of a great school culture. At CDS, he wants students to be known, seen, loved, and challenged. That culture is grounded not only in policies and programs, but in the smallest human interactions. “It sounds minor, but it isn’t,” he says. “At that moment, you can look down at your phone, or you can look up, make eye contact, and say, ‘Hi.’ We underestimate how much a small gesture like that can mean. Culture is built in those everyday choices.”

And just as importantly, he wants to cultivate a culture where it is normal to try, to falter, to learn, and then to try again. “I want every student here to feel safe enough to make mistakes,” he says. “We need them to fail here and then learn how to get back up, knowing there will be a dozen hands reaching out to help them. That’s how real resilience is built.”

> We need students to fail here and then learn how to get back up, knowing there will be a dozen hands reaching out to help them. **That’s how real resilience is built.**

He contrasts that with what he has seen on college campuses: exceptionally high-achieving students who arrive having never truly stumbled. Their first B can feel, to them, like a full-scale crisis. “Their whole identity has been built around being perfect,” he explains. “When that cracks, they can feel completely unmoored.”

Ben’s belief in the value of resilience comes not only from his years in schools but also from work beyond campus. Earlier in his career, he pursued graduate study in cross-cultural conflict transformation and reconciliation, spending extended time in Rwanda roughly a dozen years after the genocide. Seeing communities rebuild their lives and relationships left an indelible mark. “It gave me perspective,” he reflects. “History isn’t abstract—it’s a guide to how we live together.”

The same philosophies that guide Ben’s leadership also guide his personal life: *don’t rush past the present in pursuit of what’s next*. Ask him about his ideal Saturday, and he’ll describe it as “boring” in the best possible way: at home with his family, brunch on the back porch. There is a quiet consistency in what he values: presence, connection, and gratitude for the chapter he is in.

For Ben Farrell, school is not merely preparation for life. It is life, here and now. At Carolina Day School, he is working to ensure that each student’s journey feels deeply seen, deeply supported, and deeply meaningful.

Learning + Critical Thinking

The Most Future-Ready Education is a Liberal Arts Education

As artificial intelligence and emerging technologies reshape the world, the most valuable skills remain deeply human.

BY DR. MICHAEL LOMUSCIO AND RYAN JAMES

Here is a thought experiment we invite you to try. Think about the world your child will inhabit at age thirty. Picture the tools they'll use at work. The ethical questions they'll face. The problems they'll be asked to solve.

Now consider this: most of the specific technologies they'll rely on haven't been invented yet. The job titles they'll hold may not currently exist. The moral dilemmas posed by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and other emerging fields are only beginning to take shape.

So how do you educate a young person for a future you cannot fully see?

At Carolina Day School, we believe the answer has been embedded in our approach all along. The same liberal arts education that teaches students to think critically, reason ethically, create boldly, and collaborate generously is precisely what prepares them to navigate a world defined by rapid technological change. Technology at CDS is not separate from our curriculum and teaching philosophy—it is shaped by it.





Dr. Michael Lomuscio
Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs

Ryan James
Director of Technology



Learning at Carolina Day isn't about memorizing answers.
It's about asking better questions, testing ideas, and learning through discussion.

Beyond the False Choice

There is a persistent myth in education that schools must choose between a traditional liberal arts foundation and a modern technology-focused curriculum. The assumption goes something like this: if you want students who can code, analyze data, and understand artificial intelligence, you need to trade away time spent reading literature, debating philosophy, or studying history.

This is a false choice, and an increasingly dangerous one. The most important thing we can teach students about technology is not how to use any particular tool—tools change constantly, and today's cutting-edge platform is tomorrow's footnote. What endures are the habits of mind that allow a person to encounter any new technology and ask the right questions: *What is this for? Who benefits? What are the risks? How does it connect to what I already know? What are my responsibilities in using it?*

These are not questions that belong exclusively to a computer science class. They are the questions of a humanistic education—the kind of education Carolina Day has always provided.

The Habits of Mind That Matter Most

When we talk about preparing students for a technological world, we are really talking about cultivating a set of intellectual and ethical dispositions. At CDS, these dispositions are woven into the fabric of daily learning from the earliest grades through graduation.

Critical thinking is the foundation. In a world saturated with information—much of it generated or mediated by algorithms—students need the capacity to evaluate sources, identify bias, distinguish correlation from causation, and resist the pull of easy answers. When a CDS student learns to analyze a primary historical document, construct a mathematical proof, or challenge the assumptions behind a scientific claim, they are building the same muscles they will need to evaluate the output of an AI system, assess the credibility of a data visualization, or question an algorithm's recommendation.

Creative expression is fundamental to what makes us human, and it is the wellspring of the innovation that technology itself depends on.

Ethical reasoning is equally essential. Technology is never neutral. Every app, algorithm, and platform embeds choices about what to prioritize and what to ignore. Students who have spent years in classrooms where they debate moral questions, examine competing values, and consider the consequences of their actions are far better equipped to navigate the ethical landscape of modern technology. When our students study the themes of justice and responsibility in literature, grapple with environmental ethics in science, or consider the obligations of citizenship in social studies, they are developing a moral compass that will guide them through questions no one has thought to ask yet.

Creativity and imagination are what separate the human from the machine. Artificial intelligence can generate text, compose music, and produce images—but it does so by recombining patterns from existing human work. What it cannot do is experience wonder, feel the need to express something that has never been expressed before, or bring the full weight of a lived life to a creative act. Our students paint, perform, write, compose, design, and build—not because these are quaint holdovers from an earlier era, but because creative expression is fundamental to what makes us human, and it is the wellspring of the innovation that technology itself depends on.



Close faculty mentorship gives students the confidence to think independently, wrestle with complex problems, and develop their own voice.

Collaboration rounds out the picture. The most important technological challenges of the coming decades—climate modeling, public health, ethical AI governance, equitable access to information—will not be solved by individuals working alone. They will be solved by diverse teams of people who can communicate across disciplines, listen to perspectives different from their own, and build consensus around complex problems.

At CDS, students learn to work together from their very first days, and that capacity for collaboration deepens with every group project, ensemble performance, team competition, and Harkness discussion.

Starting Early: Digital Citizenship as a Way of Being

One of the most important shifts in education over the past decade is the recognition that digital citizenship cannot be bolted on as an afterthought. It must begin early, be taught in age-appropriate ways, and be integrated into the culture of the school rather than confined to a single class or assembly.

At CDS, we approach digital citizenship the same way we approach character education more broadly—as something that is lived and practiced, not merely discussed. Our youngest students in Kindergarten learn about kindness and respect in online spaces alongside kindness and respect on the playground. As they grow, the conversations deepen through their Middle School and Upper School experiences: What does it mean to have a digital footprint? Why does privacy matter, and who is responsible for protecting it? How do you evaluate whether information you find online is trustworthy? What obligations do you have to others when you share, post, or comment in digital spaces?

These aren't abstract lessons. They are grounded in the real experiences students have every day as they use devices and platforms for learning, communication, and creative work. And they are reinforced by a school culture that models the values we hope to instill—transparency, integrity, empathy, and responsibility.

Engaging Thoughtfully with What's Emerging

The pace of technological change today is unlike anything in human history. Artificial intelligence systems that were science fiction five years ago are now embedded in consumer products used by billions of people. Large language models can draft legal briefs, write software, generate lesson plans, and produce artwork—capabilities that would have seemed fantastical a decade ago. Autonomous AI agents are beginning to take actions on behalf of their users, not just responding to queries but making decisions, managing schedules, and coordinating complex workflows.

For educators, this presents both an extraordinary opportunity and a profound responsibility. The opportunity is to help students understand these technologies while they are still emerging—to give them a seat at the table as thoughtful, informed participants rather than passive consumers. The responsibility is to do this well: to neither dismiss these tools out of fear nor embrace them uncritically out of enthusiasm.

At CDS, our approach is grounded in the conviction that technical fluency must always be accompanied by critical understanding. We want our students to understand not only *how* these technologies work, but *why* they work the way they do, and *what* the implications are for individuals and societies. When a student interacts with an AI system in one of our classrooms, they are not just learning to use a tool. They are learning to ask: Where did the training data come from? Whose voices are represented, and whose are missing? What does it mean when a machine produces something that *looks* like understanding but isn't? How should this change the way

we think about authorship, originality, and intellectual honesty?

These are not technical questions. They are deeply human ones—the kinds of questions a liberal arts education uniquely prepares students to grapple with.

How a School Keeps Pace

A reasonable question that parents and families ask is: how does a school keep up? If the technological landscape is evolving this quickly, how can any institution stay current?

The honest answer is that no school can keep pace if it defines "keeping pace" as chasing every new platform or application. That is a race with no finish line, and it's the wrong race to run. The better question is: how do we build the kind of learning environment where students are always prepared to learn the next thing, whatever that thing turns out to be?

This is where the CDS approach becomes its own kind of future-proofing. Because our curriculum emphasizes deep understanding over surface exposure, intellectual curiosity over rote mastery, and transferable reasoning over memorized procedures, our students develop a relationship with learning itself that transcends any particular subject or technology. A student who has learned how to learn—who is genuinely curious, intellectually resilient, and comfortable with ambiguity—is ready for whatever comes next.

At the institutional level, keeping pace means investing in our faculty. Our teachers are active learners themselves, engaging in ongoing professional development around emerging technologies, ethical implications of AI in education, and best practices for integrating new tools thoughtfully. It means being willing to experiment, to pilot new approaches, to learn from what works and what doesn't—and to do all of this within a framework of shared values rather than on the basis of what's trending.



The goal isn't simply finding the right answer. It's learning how to think, question, and lead with curiosity and integrity.

It also means maintaining the institutional courage to be deliberate. In a world that rewards speed and disruption, there is real wisdom in slowing down enough to get things right. CDS does not adopt new technologies because they are new. We adopt them when we are confident they serve our students' learning, align with our values, and can be implemented responsibly—with attention to privacy, equity, and the developmental needs of children at every age.

From Users to Leaders

Perhaps the most important distinction in how we think about technology and education is the difference between preparing students to use technology and preparing them to lead in a technological world.

Users follow instructions. They learn the interface, execute the commands, and produce the expected output. Leaders ask different questions: Is this the right tool for the job? What are we losing by automating this process? How do we ensure that efficiency doesn't come at the cost of equity? What does it mean to be responsible when the systems we deploy affect other people's lives?

The world needs more leaders and fewer users. It needs people who can sit in a boardroom, a laboratory, a courtroom, or a community meeting and bring together technical understanding with moral clarity, creative vision, and genuine care for the humans on the other end of every decision. It needs people who can communicate complex ideas across disciplines, who can translate between technologists and the communities their work affects, who can hold the tension between what is possible and what is wise.

This is the kind of person a CDS education produces. Not because we have abandoned the liberal arts in favor of a technical curriculum, but because we understand that the liberal arts are a technology education—the deepest and most durable one available.

The World They'll Build

We originally titled this piece "Preparing Students for a World That Doesn't Yet Exist," but that framing, while true, is only half the story. We are not only preparing students to navigate an uncertain future. We are preparing them to shape it.

The technologies that will define the next several decades—artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum computing, and others we can't yet name—will raise questions that are fundamentally human. Questions about fairness, about privacy, about the distribution of power, about what it means to live a good life in a world increasingly mediated by machines. These are not questions that will be answered by technical expertise alone. They will be answered by people whose education has given them the breadth of knowledge, the depth of character, and the strength of judgment to lead wisely.

Think one kid can change the world? *We do.*
And we believe the education that makes that possible is not one that chooses between the timeless and the cutting edge, but one that recognizes they have always been the same thing.

Dr. Michael Lomuscio *is Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs at Carolina Day School and leads curriculum innovation, faculty development and the thoughtful integration of emerging technologies.*

Ryan James *is Director of Technology at Carolina Day School and specializes in computer science, digital citizenship and educational technology.*





CLASS OF 2026

AAKASH KARVIR



CDS Brand Story Photoshoot
12/7/2025

A Hallelujah Senior, Aakash has grown up at Carolina Day, transforming curiosity into research that could make his community more accessible.

Carolina Day School has been part of Aakash Karvir's life for as long as he can remember. A Hallelujah Senior, he has spent every year here since pre-kindergarten. His mother graduated from CDS, his younger sister follows close behind, and some of the teachers who once taught his mom now teach him.

"Being able to joke with my teachers about my mom's time in the Upper School, and helping my sister with projects I did two years earlier are some of the biggest ways that family has impacted my time at CDS," he reflects.

Last summer, Aakash participated in a NASA program, working with students and scientists to design a satellite that could help predict wildfires using AI and regional data.

He also interned with the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Explore Asheville, studying accessibility in local tourism. The experience inspired his Independent Student Research Project.

"I hope I will be able to enact real change and help engineer Asheville into a more accessible location, for both locals and tourists," he says.

At Carolina Day, Aakash has found the freedom to pursue questions that matter and turn them into meaningful work that benefits others.

Looking ahead to college, he is excited to conduct research, meet new people, and continue making meaningful contributions through STEM.

"What excites me most about the future is all of the new opportunities I can take advantage of, and all of the new people I will meet."

Aakash's curiosity, compassion, and commitment to solving real-world problems will continue to shape whatever comes next.

CLASS OF 2026

ELLIE DUKOWICZ

From the classroom to the tennis court, Ellie Dukowicz has learned that growth comes from embracing challenges, trusting the process, and focusing on what she can control.



Ellie doesn't shy away from a challenge. It's a quality her teachers, teammates, and coaches have come to recognize, and one she has been quietly building over time.

In her senior Bell Talk speech, she reflected on a piece of advice her mom gave her during a third-set tiebreaker on the tennis court: control what you can control—your focus, your effort, your attitude. For Ellie, internalizing that lesson meant letting go of "the numbers" on paper and directing her energy toward the work itself. In doing so, she embraced a growth mindset, focusing on progress over perfection.

That mindset has shaped her experience in the classroom, on the court, and in her community. As a National Merit Scholar and Presidential Scholar Program Semifinalist, Ellie has earned recognition that reflects the effort and intentionality she brings to everything she does.

Encouraged by a freshman-year math teacher, Ellie pursued summer programs in research and mathematics that deepened her love of problem-solving. Her grandfather, a physicist, nurtured that interest from an early age. "He has helped me become the curious student I am today," she shares.

Balancing tennis with a demanding course load reinforced her focus on process over outcome and helped lead the girls' varsity tennis team to the 3A NCISAA state tournament finals for the first time in 21 years.

Ellie also helped lead Strive Together NC, supporting female athletes and encouraging girls to stay in sports. This fall, she heads to Dartmouth to study mathematics, where she hopes to pursue research and discover new academic interests.





CDS Brand Story Photoshoot
12/7/2025

CLASS OF 2026

ZOE HEWITT

A Cameron Impact Scholar Making Her Mark

> “I have seen so many people step up for me. I want to be that person for somebody else.

When Zoe walked through the doors of the Key School in fifth grade, she was nervous. Having just moved from Raleigh, she didn’t know what to expect. What she discovered changed everything.

“I got to kind of see myself blossom,” Zoe recalls. “It’s just been incredible to have CDS there to help me grow and become the person I am now.”

That growth inspired a desire to give back. As Yearbook Editor-in-Chief, Zoe made it her mission to ensure every student appeared in the yearbook at least three times. She also served as a Student Ambassador, volunteered with Horizons at Carolina Day, and was inducted into the Highlander Society for her extraordinary commitment to others.

“I have seen so many people step up for me,” she says. “I want to be that person for somebody else.”

While volunteering with Horizons, Zoe discovered another calling. She had always planned to become a veterinarian, but working with students changed her perspective.

“I realized I was not meant to be a vet,” she says. “I was actually meant to be a teacher.”

Her passion for serving others also inspired Kennel Kindness, a project providing treats, toys, blankets, and adoption kits for shelter animals. What began as a local effort quickly spread to 10 states and became the focus of her LEAD Capstone project.

In January 2026, Zoe was named a Cameron Impact Scholar, one of only 15 students nationwide to receive the prestigious four-year scholarship recognizing leadership, academic excellence, and community service.

This fall, she heads to UNC Wilmington to study elementary education, hoping one day to return to Carolina Day and give back to the community that helped shape her.





Sophomore College Trip 2026

"The sophomore college exploration trip was an incredibly valuable experience that helped me grow both as a prospective applicant and as a future student. After learning about each college, I was struck by how many possibilities lie ahead and realized that, **rather than being limited to a narrow set of options, I can shape my college experience around my own goals and interests.** I especially enjoyed learning about the different co-op programs and the many opportunities to develop valuable skills within my intended fields of finance and economics."

– Addie Smith '28









Learning + Critical Thinking

When the Plan Changes

Inside the growing focus on executive functioning and the skills that help students navigate complexity, setbacks, and change

A science experiment doesn't go as expected. A project runs into obstacles. A student realizes halfway through an assignment that the approach isn't working.

Then what?

In school and in life, success is often less about avoiding setbacks and more about responding to them. A growing body of research, and a recent CNBC report, points to a surprising predictor of long-term success: *executive functioning*. Not IQ. Not test scores. Not even socioeconomic status.

Executive functioning refers to the set of skills that help people organize, plan, prioritize, start and complete tasks, regulate emotions, and adapt when circumstances change. In other words, it is what allows someone to turn potential into performance.

At Carolina Day School, educators describe these skills as the infrastructure beneath learning—developed over time through daily practice, structured support, and increasingly complex student work.

Taken together, they can be understood through five core competencies: *Organize. Plan. Prioritize. Execute. Adapt.*

The first four move learning forward. The fifth determines what happens when the plan no longer holds.

01. ORGANIZE

Before students can manage complex work, they need systems that help them manage information.

By fourth grade, CDS students begin using structured binders and handwritten agendas to track assignments, organize materials, and build consistent routines. The system was adapted from a long-standing approach used in Key School, Carolina Day School's program serving students with dyslexia.

Originally designed to reduce cognitive load for students with language-based learning differences, the system reflects a broader truth: structure is not restriction—it is access. What supports some learners well often strengthens learning for all.

"What we see across students is that structure creates clarity, and clarity creates confidence," says Sara Quesinberry, Associate Principal of the Key School. "When students are not expending energy trying to manage disorganization, they are able to focus more fully on thinking and learning."

In grades 4–8, these binders and agendas are required and reinforced consistently until mastery is demonstrated. The structure is intentional. It ensures that all students build core habits for tracking assignments, managing materials, and planning ahead.

Only once those foundational skills are in place do students begin to transition toward greater autonomy. When students progress to the Upper School, they have the freedom to develop and adapt organizational systems that work best for them as learners.

"The binders are not the destination," says Jessica Roberts, Lower and Middle Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning. "They are a starting point. The deeper goal is independence—the ability to build systems that evolve as responsibilities and environments change."

The progression is deliberate: start with shared structure, build competence, then expand toward independence. In that sense, early organizational tools function less like permanent rules and more like scaffolding for autonomy.

02. PLAN

As students develop stronger organizational systems, their work expands into longer-term projects that require them to think ahead.

Planning becomes the ability to break complex tasks into steps, anticipate challenges, and manage time across days or weeks.

This work is introduced early and intentionally across multiple entry points.

In fourth and fifth grade, students receive a dedicated, six-session executive functioning course that introduces and helps build foundational habits for tracking assignments, managing materials, and developing early planning routines.

Upon entering middle school, all sixth graders (as well as all middle schoolers new to CDS) participate in a dedicated executive functioning mini-course using the SMARTS curriculum, where planning and prioritization are explicitly taught and practiced in real time.

Across divisions, these skills take shape in projects, performances, labs, and collaborative work that demand sustained attention over time.

"In the early and middle grades, planning is really about helping students see work

before it becomes overwhelming," says Roberts. "We're helping them break things into steps, think ahead, and understand that large tasks become manageable when approached intentionally."

At this stage, planning is less about predicting outcomes than learning how to approach complexity with structure and confidence.

In Upper School, that work begins to shift.

"By the time students reach Upper School, planning takes on a deeper meaning," says Jessica Browning, College Counselor. "In addition to keeping up with their work, students begin gaining a better understanding of their direction—how daily choices, interests, and commitments begin to shape long-term pathways and possibilities."

In that sense, planning becomes a bridge between present responsibilities and future possibilities.

03. PRIORITIZE

For today's students, the challenge is not scarcity of information but abundance.

Academics, athletics, arts, friendships, family obligations, and digital distractions all compete for attention. In that environment, deciding what matters most becomes essential.

Structured reflection routines help students step back from daily demands to evaluate workload, goals, and well-being. Advisors and teachers support them in making intentional choices about time and energy.

Over time, a key distinction emerges: being busy is not the same as being effective. Prioritization is learning how to focus on what matters most.

04. EXECUTE

Even with strong organization and planning, one barrier remains constant: getting started.

Large projects can feel overwhelming. Long-term assignments are easy to postpone. Even highly capable students can struggle to move from intention to action.

Students are supported through coaching, guided study environments, and academic structures that help them break complex work into manageable steps. They learn how to begin, sustain effort, and complete work.

These habits become visible in signature experiences across the school. In athletics, students practice daily, adjust strategy in response to competition, and learn to perform under pressure in real time. In performing arts, students rehearse, refine, and revise their work repeatedly as productions evolve from first read-through to final performance. In Odyssey of the Mind, teams spend months developing, testing, and rebuilding solutions when early ideas fail.

Across each experience, execution is not a single moment of effort but a sustained process of adjustment, repetition, and follow-through. Execution is where ideas become outcomes, and persistence is put into practice.

05. ADAPT

Then comes the skill that often determines whether learning continues or stalls: adaptability.

Even the best plans change once they meet real conditions. A strategy fails. New information emerges. A timeline shifts. A

> The goal is not to produce students who never encounter setbacks. **It is to develop learners who understand that change is part of the work, and that they have the capacity to respond to it.**
>
> **– Jessica Roberts**
> Lower & Middle Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning

solution stops working. At that point, success depends not on whether things went as planned, but on what happens next.

Researchers increasingly distinguish between resilience and adaptability. Resilience is recovering from setbacks. Adaptability is adjusting in real time to the ongoing disruptions that define meaningful work.

Students encounter this constantly. A second grader revises a project after feedback. A team rethinks an approach mid-process. A senior researcher shifts direction when evidence leads elsewhere. Progress, they learn, is rarely linear.

"The goal is not to produce students who never encounter setbacks," says Roberts. "It is to develop learners who understand that change is part of the work, and that they have the capacity to respond to it."

Each adjustment builds flexibility. Each revision builds confidence. Each unexpected turn becomes practice in navigating uncertainty.

DURABLE OUTCOMES IN A CHANGING WORLD

The future students are entering will not reward memorization alone. Information is abundant, accessible, and constantly evolving. Increasingly, success belongs to those who can manage complexity, collaborate effectively, solve unfamiliar problems, and adapt when circumstances change.

Carolina Day School is not preparing students for a particular planner, system, or method. It is preparing them to navigate complexity. Through project-based learning, athletics, the arts, and everyday classroom experiences, students repeatedly practice the same underlying skills: *Organize. Plan. Prioritize. Execute. Adapt.*

The tools will change. The habits will remain. And in a world defined by change, those habits may be among the most durable outcomes of a CDS education.

BEYO

The Independent Student Research Project gives seniors the opportunity to explore complex questions with the depth, independence, and rigor of collegiate study.

What happens when students are given the freedom to spend an entire year exploring a question they genuinely care about?

At Carolina Day School, the answer can be found in the Independent Student Research Project (ISRP), a yearlong senior experience designed to provide students with a platform to develop their intellectual curiosity through independent, student-driven inquiry.



Meet the Class of 2026 ISRP cohort.
A year of questions.
A lifetime of curiosity.

(L-R): ISRP instructor Sandy Pyeatt with Class of 2026 students Alex Heye, Aakash Karvir, Campbell Haas, Amelia Lopez de la Cruz, Ellie Dukowicz, Maia Kiiss, and Wendy Howell.

Not pictured: Noah Bialik, Dannan Garner

THE High School Research Paper

Designed as a two-semester capstone experience, ISRP invites seniors to pursue an area of deep personal interest through independent research, mentorship, reflection, and the creation of a final product. Along the way, students conduct literature reviews, interview experts, maintain research journals, and present their findings to the community.

This year's projects demonstrated the remarkable range of ideas that emerge when students are trusted to pursue independent inquiry.

While the subjects varied widely, the underlying goal remained the same: cultivating thoughtful, curious young people who are prepared to engage with complex issues and help shape a better future.

For many seniors, ISRP became one of the most authentic academic experiences of their upper school careers.

"ISRP has taught me so much, and genuinely is the number one thing that has prepared me for college," said senior Noah Bialik, whose project explored Asheville's housing crisis and potential solutions. "The research, the reaching out to local people, and the large assignments all helped me hone my academic skills in a way unlike any other class."

2026 ISRP TOPICS

- Artificial Intelligence & Creativity
- Asheville's Housing Crisis
- Accessible Tourism
- Disaster Capitalism & Adaptive Reuse
- Gender Equality in High Schools
- Game Theory & Geopolitical Affairs
- History of American Anti-Foraging Laws
- Reinforcement Learning
- Sustainable Urban Housing & Civil Engineering

Unlike a traditional assignment with clearly defined steps and deadlines, ISRP asks students to take ownership of their learning and direct their own research process.

"There's a skeletal structure in place that allows for a great deal of student independence, but enough oversight for me to step in if needed," said Sandy Pyeatt, who oversees the ISRP. "Under a watchful eye, students are challenged to take ownership of their work while still receiving guidance and support when they need it most."

While that independence can be challenging at first, many students discovered that navigating uncertainty became one of

the most valuable lessons of the experience. Ellie Dukowicz, who researched reinforcement learning, said the project taught her how to manage a complex undertaking from beginning to end.

Own the Process

"This was the only class in which I felt as if I underwent the entire process of learning, synthesizing, and analyzing information on my own," she said. "Initially I struggled with not having any direction, but I learned that it was a lot easier to work on my project when I had a list of smaller tangible goals."

Wendy Howell, whose project focused on sustainability in urban homes and civil engineering, echoed that sentiment.

"The process of researching completely independently with no real structure allowed me to learn how to identify what I didn't know about my topic and use that information to lead my research," she said. "ISRP allows students to find their own processes for researching by way of throwing them in the deep end from the beginning."



Passion becomes purpose when students have the freedom to pursue it. Senior Campbell Haas presents his ISRP exploring artificial intelligence, creativity, and consciousness through an original short film.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

For many students, the most rewarding moments came when their research moved beyond books and articles and into conversations with real people.

Maia Kiiss, whose project examined disaster capitalism and adaptive reuse, found particular energy in engaging with members of the Asheville community.

"I felt most 'in it' when I was actively engaging and communicating with members of my community," she said. "Getting the opportunity to interview members of the greater Asheville community helped motivate me and put my questions into perspective, especially after [Hurricane] Helene."

Those connections helped transform abstract academic questions into investigations grounded in real-world experiences and local relevance.

The process also gave students opportunities to see themselves as emerging experts.

For Aakash Karvir, who researched accessible tourism, that realization came as he prepared for his final presentation.

"It was super gratifying to see all the work I had put in over the course of the year culminate in a slideshow about a topic that I was very knowledgeable about," he said. "Being able to use everything I had learned and tell other people about it with confidence was a very rewarding experience."

Sharing What You've Learned

The culminating presentations are often among the highlights of the ISRP experience. Throughout April and May, students share their findings with teachers, peers, family members, and mentors, offering windows into an extraordinary range of topics—from housing policy and machine learning to gender equity, urban planning, and artificial intelligence.

> This class has been worth it because of the joy it's brought me as I followed my interests wherever they took me and *will* take me.
>
> **– Dannan Garner**



Independent research is about more than finding answers. It's about discovering your voice. Senior Dannan Garner presents her ISRP on gender equality in high schools.

More importantly, audience members witness students speaking with genuine ownership over their learning.

Dannan Garner, whose project explored gender equality in high schools, believes those presentations capture what makes ISRP unique.

"The ISRP students carried themselves with curiosity and joy as they presented to an audience of teachers, friends, and family about a topic they've spent a year delving into," she said. "This class has been worth it because of the joy it's brought me as I followed my interests wherever they took me and *will* take me."

That sense of ownership can also help students clarify future aspirations.

Campbell Haas, who examined artificial intelligence, creativity, and consciousness, created a short film as part of his ISRP. As an aspiring filmmaker, he found that ISRP provided dedicated time to pursue work closely aligned with his interests.

"After seeing the positive reaction from peers and teachers during my screening...it made the whole experience feel worthwhile," said Haas. "It helped to reinforce the idea that the time I spent in this class was worth it, and also that I should continue with this in college."

In many ways, ISRP reflects a central belief of a Carolina Day education: that students are capable of tackling complex questions and contributing meaningful ideas. Through independent inquiry, seniors hone skills of conducting original research, connecting their work to issues that matter personally. And perhaps that is the greatest outcome of all: a generation of students who understand that asking thoughtful questions is only the beginning, and that real impact comes from the courage and confidence to pursue the answers.

Sparking *Imagination*

in the Lower School Art Studio



In Jessica Baldwin's Lower School art classes, creativity is not just encouraged—it's joyfully unleashed. Students have been exploring new materials, experimenting with techniques, and discovering how art can be both deeply personal and wonderfully collaborative.

They opened the year by reading *The Crayons Go Back to School*, illustrated by Oliver Jeffers, then, inspired by the theme, designed creative name tags that expressed their individuality. Soon after, a second inspiration arrived: *Never Let a Unicorn Scribble* by author-illustrator Diane Alber. As part of their learning, students also studied contemporary artist Julie Mehretu, known for her layered, abstracted landscapes. Her work helped students think differently about scale, mark-making, and how art can communicate emotion and complexity without relying on literal imagery.

With the styles of Jeffers, Albers, and Mehretu as springboards, students across grades PK–4 worked together to create an installation titled "Scribble Joy." Displayed in our gallery hall, the final exhibition burst with energy—an explosion of line, color, and movement. The gallery brimmed with student-created sketches, paintings, mobiles, and paper sculptures in all sizes.

At Carolina Day School, visual art is essential to how students learn to observe, interpret, and express the world around them. In the studio, young artists practice focus, persistence, problem-solving, and creative risk-taking—skills that extend far beyond the canvas. Art invites students to explore their identities, collaborate with classmates, and celebrate diverse perspectives.

We intentionally introduce students to contemporary illustrators and artists because their work helps children see that art is a living, evolving form of storytelling. By studying creators like Diane Alber and Julie Mehretu, students learn that artists are thinkers, innovators, and change-makers—and that they, too, can use their own ideas and imagination to shape their world.

The result? A school where creativity is visible everywhere you turn—and where joyful, colorful collaboration is part of everyday learning.







The Wildcat Experience

SLAMM

A Community of Creative Voices

Creativity is meant to be shared. Students perform during *Salon Rouge*, one of several SLAMM events that gives writers, musicians, and artists a supportive audience for their original work.

BY MIA DALTON '28 AND DANNAN GARNER '26

Susan White, or as we know her in the upper school—Swhite—established The Society of Literature, Art, Music, and Media (SLAMM) shortly after she first arrived in 2001. Then it was called the Literary Society and its literary magazine sat around 50 pages at most. At Swhite's encouragement, students joined in her mission to cultivate a writing community that engaged with literature through both creating and reading it. Determined for it to be student-led, Swhite stepped back and pushed students to grow into leaders. In her words, these student voices "sought, encouraged, and celebrated artistry," cultivating a community not just in the club, but throughout the upper school. That community has transformed and prospered for over twenty years.

Part of that evolution was recognizing and making room for artistry beyond writing, including visual, performing, and mixed media. Mary Manning Holmes ('20) renamed the club SLAMM, and since then it has sought new ways each year to celebrate the artistic diversity of upper school students. Swhite and current club leader Dannan Garner ('26) believe the literary magazine is "a love letter" to the "community of individuals" that make Carolina Day.

In Stephens Hall, Carolina Day's middle school, students can take a literary magazine elective. They review magazines, including the high school's, and learn the skills to create one themselves. This year, SLAMM students presented lessons on production, design, and concept creation, uniting middle and upper school through shared creative pursuits.

Beyond the magazine, the club hosts writing and music nights called Salon Rouge, monthly themed SLAMMers that invite students to submit artwork for judging, and traditions like the Halloween Costume Show, where advisories dress their advisors for a red-carpet runway. Behind every event is a group of dedicated students who meet each week to plan, create, and encourage one another. As members change, SLAMM continues to thrive with new ideas while fostering deep appreciation for both community and self.

Sophomores Charlotte Liebman and Janaki Karvir love that SLAMM "encourages and protects creative spaces" at school. Engaging with the work of their peers not only inspires their own ambitions, but also builds empathy and respect for classmates. They carry those lessons back into the club, developing communication skills, leading projects and building confidence that extends "into every aspect" of their lives.

Elizabeth Rose ('26) especially values the inter-grade community, where "everyone's voices are heard and equal." SLAMM is a place where all art is celebrated, all student artists are valued and students transform into leaders.

Performing *Arts*



From the first rehearsal to the final curtain, Carolina Day students take the stage, support one another, and bring stories to life.





THE LION KING

Lower & Key Lower School







THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Middle & Key Middle School

THE PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

Upper School









THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE

VIDEO

When students know their voices matter, they grow into confident communicators, thoughtful listeners, and compassionate leaders. At Carolina Day, we believe those skills are just as important as academic achievement.

Watch ***The Power of Student Voice*** to hear directly from the students whose ideas, experiences, and perspectives shape our community every day.



Visual *Arts*

Creativity begins with curiosity, grows through exploration, and gives students the confidence to express their unique perspectives.









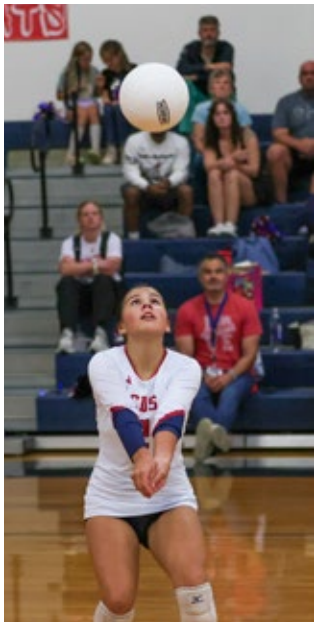


Athletics

Discipline on the field.
Teamwork in every game.
Confidence through
every challenge.
At Carolina Day, athletics
builds resilience, leadership,
and character that extend
far beyond the final whistle.













FALL SPORTS

Cross Country,
Boys Soccer,
Girls Field Hockey,
Girls Golf,
Girls Tennis,
Girls Volleyball

WINTER SPORTS

Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Swimming







SPRING SPORTS

Girls Soccer, Coed Track & Field, Boys Golf, Boys Baseball, Boys Tennis, Boys Volleyball











WILDCATS TRAIN WITH THE BEST

U.S. NATIONAL TEAM ATHLETES VISIT CDS

This Spring, Caroline Ramsey and Emma Deberdine of the U.S. Women's National Team from USA Field Hockey joined our varsity players for an incredible skills & drills session. Our Wildcats were challenged and inspired—and had a blast doing it.

Learning from the best? Yes, please!

Thank you to these elite athletes for pouring into our team and fueling the fire for the 2026-2027 season.

Go 'Cats!





Reading is a habit worth cultivating. Teacher Jan Brabham helps students become thoughtful readers through Carolina Day's Wildcat Reading Challenge.

Learning + Critical Thinking

Book Buzz: The Culture of Reading

BY JAN BRABHAM, MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

In 2022, educators at Carolina Day reviewed the library circulation statistics and noticed a steep drop in the number of books being checked out by the middle school students at CDS compared to pre-COVID data. Our students spent less time reading for fun as they moved into upper elementary and middle school.

Yet, research shows that independent reading plays a vital role in fostering students' academic development and social and emotional well-being. Reading diverse books across various genres serves as 'windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors'. It can build a sense of belonging because students feel seen and valued and are exposed to others' lived experiences.

What strategies can educators employ to foster a school-wide culture of reading, increase comprehension scores, and build writing skills? Research shows that offering student choice, promoting social reading, and supporting accountability and goal-setting motivate young people to read more. So, we built a reading challenge to do just that.

Third graders read 10 Caldecott Award-winning books, fourth graders read 10 Newbery author books and fifth graders read 10 Newbery Award-winning books. Students submit either a written or oral report to the librarian.

In Middle School, students must read nine books outside of class. They read books from six different genres plus three additional books. For each book, students submit a written review and post their reviews on Bookopolis—a social network and book discovery tool that's similar to Goodreads but specifically for kids.

Our librarian conducts genre studies, while English teachers instruct how to write effective summaries and book reviews.

The Carolina Day School reading challenges succeed due to the collaboration between our English teachers and librarians. With a shared goal, both groups work together to plan and implement the challenge, providing writing instruction and quiet reading time in both the classroom and library. For book reports and reviews, teachers use common expectations and develop age-appropriate lessons, department-created rubrics, and the online platform Bookopolis to publish students' writing, allowing for an authentic audience of their peers.

Research shows that independent reading plays a vital role in fostering students' academic development and social and emotional well-being.

The Wildcat Reading Challenges are introduced to all students at the beginning of the year, both in their grade-level classrooms and library classes. Students receive a schedule of "due dates" divided evenly among trimesters. We also maintain a school-wide assessment calendar that includes these due dates, further emphasizing the priorities we value. At our beginning of the year Back to School night, parents are informed of the reading challenge expectations and requirements.



Dustin Benedict '00

Our New Alumni Association President

Born and raised in Swannanoa, Dustin Benedict attended Carolina Day School beginning in third grade and graduated in 2000. He followed in the footsteps of his sister Brooks Benedict '93, who also attended CDS and now works in the Lower School. After graduating, he went on to earn his undergraduate degree at Queens University in Charlotte before heading to Florida State University for graduate school.

He spent nearly 12 years as a US government contractor working overseas in international development, taking on complex civil and infrastructure projects in places like Afghanistan and West Africa on behalf of USAID. He and his wife welcomed a daughter in 2021, and the family eventually made their way back home to Asheville, where he now serves as a Project Manager with the Land of Sky Regional Council, focusing on Hurricane Helene recovery efforts in the region.

Dustin has been a valued member of the Alumni Advisory Board for the past two years. In that time he has lent his time and expertise to student mentoring initiatives, including work with the 8th grade project and a Maymester project with the freshman class. He comes highly recommended by fellow board members and alumni alike. A longtime Asheville native with deep roots in this community, he has a genuine passion for giving back to the school that helped shape him and is eager to bring that energy to his new role as President.

As he steps in, Dustin shared what CDS means to him: "CDS is such a special place on so many levels and I'm grateful to be part of its long and rich history. I'm excited about carrying forward momentum generated by the Alumni Board over the past couple of years and ushering in a new level of alumni engagement through the Wildcat Connection initiative. I can't wait to connect with the CDS community."

His advice to fellow alumni: "Don't forget to update your contact information!"

Alumna Spotlight

Q&A with Parent Association President

Melanie Clayton ’01



Melanie Clayton knows firsthand the importance of finding your community. A Carolina Day School graduate (Class of 2001), as is her husband James, she grew up in Western North Carolina and became involved at CDS as a room parent for her son’s Class of 2033. That involvement quickly grew, and now, as the incoming Parent Association president, she is channeling her energy into building a welcoming and inclusive community for all CDS families.

You attended Carolina Day. Can you share a little about your time here as students and how it helped shape who you are today?

I started at Carolina Day in seventh grade, and for me it was the first time I genuinely got excited about learning. Before that, school felt like something to get through. At CDS, it suddenly felt okay to be curious and smart, and there was space for everyone to be themselves.

Middle school can be such an awkward time, and CDS helped me find my people quickly, even during those awkward stages. Those friendships have lasted into adulthood. Many of my closest friends today are CDS alumni. They’re the people I call first during big (and small) life moments and our wedding honestly felt like a CDS reunion. And speaking of weddings, I married another CDS alumni—James Clayton—CDS shaped both of our entire life paths starting at a very young age. So when I think about what shaped me most, it really comes back to the sense of community and belonging that CDS created so early on.

What inspired you to become involved with the Parent Association?

I started as a room parent, and it naturally grew from there. The biggest motivator was the people. The parent community is incredibly welcoming and engaged, and being involved felt like a meaningful way to give back to a place that has meant so much to my family. Once you experience that sense of connection, it’s hard to say no.

What impact do you see CDS having on students today, and how does that inspire your involvement?

Watching my son and his classmates grow each year is incredibly rewarding. You can really see how CDS focuses on developing the whole child, not just academically, but socially and emotionally as well. When I visit the Upper School and see how confident, thoughtful, and grounded those students are, it gives me so much hope for the future. Knowing that CDS helps each student discover who they are and find their own path is a big reason I feel inspired to stay involved.

What has been the most rewarding part of giving back to CDS through your involvement?

One of the most rewarding parts has been getting to know families across all grades. As a parent of one child, it would be easy to stay siloed within a single grade, but PA involvement has given me a much broader view of the school. I've loved building relationships with families in the Key School, Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School, and gaining a deeper appreciation for the CDS experience as a whole.

Can you share a memorable experience or initiative from your involvement that stands out to you?

One that really stands out is Family Night with the movie-themed event. I was on that committee, and we had to pivot at the last minute because of the weather and move everything indoors. Seeing the gym packed, kids happy, and parents pulling together to make it work was such a great example of the CDS community in action.

Another favorite memory is helping with the book fair. It was amazing to see how a group of parents transformed the library in a single day, turning it into a warm, inviting mini bookstore. It really showed what can happen when people collaborate around a shared goal.

As the incoming PA president, what excites you most about this role?

I feel incredibly honored to follow in the footsteps of such strong and thoughtful leaders who have had this role before me. What excites me most is creating opportunities for more families to feel connected and included. I want parents to know there's a place for them in the PA, whatever their availability level looks like.

Parent Associations can sometimes feel intimidating, like you have to give everything to be involved. I really want to shift that mindset so families feel welcome contributing in whatever way works for them. At the same time, I'm excited to continue supporting and uplifting the amazing parents who are already so deeply involved. Ultimately, my goal is for everyone to feel that same sense of community that has meant so much to me.

What advice would you give to other parents who are considering getting involved at CDS?

Start small and follow what feels right to you. There's always room to grow your involvement once you find something that really connects with your interests. At the beginning of the year, CDS does a great job of sharing opportunities through questionnaires and emails, which makes it easier to explore different committees and roles.

Even volunteering for just an hour, like helping at the book fair or spirit store or a teacher staff appreciation event, is a wonderful way to get your foot in the door. Getting involved is great for the school, but it's equally great for the parents who volunteer as it helps build deeper connections and a stronger sense of belonging within our wonderful CDS community.

Caitlin Stout ’21

A Carolina Day connection led to Costa Rica, sea turtle conservation, and a career path beginning to take shape.

Conservation in action. Through the CDS alumni network, Caitlin Stout '21 joined Dave Johnson '86 in Costa Rica, gaining hands-on experience in wildlife conservation while exploring her future in the field.

On the beaches of Tortuguero, Costa Rica, CDS alumna Caitlin Stout ’21 carried a bucket of olive ridley sea turtle hatchlings to the shoreline, where dozens began making their way toward the ocean.

At 23, recent Eckerd College graduate Caitlin Stout was searching for her next step. She found it through a fellow alumnus who shared her passion for the natural world.

“I was really shocked to know that we had someone working in wildlife conservation that I could connect to from CDS,” Caitlin says.

Through CDS’s alumni network, Caitlin was connected by Director of Alumni Relations Becky Vlachoyannis to ACDS graduate Dave Johnson ’86, a longtime conservationist and former Denver Zoo zookeeper who now leads global conservation programs focused on wildlife protection. Their shared love of animals and similar academic paths sparked an immediate connection. Both had recently returned to campus to speak with students.

When they first spoke, Dave was preparing to leave for India the next morning. He mentioned an opening on an upcoming ten-day field opportunity in Tortuguero, Costa Rica, partnering with sea turtle and primate conservation teams at the Sea Turtle Conservation Center. Caitlin didn’t hesitate.

From the moment she arrived, there was work to be done. She learned how researchers track nesting populations, assisted with hatchling releases, watched baby sea turtles make their way to the ocean, and received mentorship from zoo professionals.

One of Caitlin’s most memorable moments came on the last day in Tapir Valley, when the group set out off-trail to see two resident tapirs, a mother named Mamita and her eighteen-month-old daughter, Gaia. They found mother and daughter resting quietly together.

“It was one of my favorite moments,” Caitlin said.

“We all had a fun time,” she said. “We got to learn, take care of one another, and connect as a group.”

Throughout the trip, Caitlin found herself growing more confident each day.

“I got to watch her really mature as a person, going from shy to asking questions, laughing, and even playing soccer with local kids,” Dave says. “Seeing that growth was pretty spectacular.”

Experiences like this, he says, often help young professionals find clarity.

“Sometimes you take that leap and check something off your list. Maybe it’s not the right fit, but it helps you figure out where you’ll be happy.”





For Dave, creating opportunities like this is a way of paying it forward.

Caitlin returned home with hands-on research experience and a clearer sense of direction. She is now exploring whale conservation programs in Iceland and considering leading student trips alongside Dave.

For Caitlin, the path is still unfolding. But like the olive ridley hatchlings on the beach at Tortuguero, she has a sense of what comes next.



Finding her voice. Riley Oswald '23 discovered her passion for performance at Carolina Day and is now pursuing a BFA in Acting at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Alumna Profile

Riley Oswald '23

The actress, comedian, and writer discovered her creative voice at Carolina Day—and she's been finding new stages ever since.

Making people laugh is why she does what she does, and she loves doing it in any way she can. For CDS alumna Riley Oswald '23, it's not a career pitch. It's just the truth.

She has always had a big imagination and a passion for performance. While other kids were at sports practice, Riley spent nearly every afternoon at Asheville Community Theatre, exploring characters and sharpening her timing. Often cast as the funny side character, she thrived, and people began to take notice. "I remember getting told that I have really great comedic timing," she says.

At Carolina Day, that instinct found a broader stage. She connected with teachers and classmates through quick jokes and witty observations, discovering that her humor was more than a personality trait. It was a direction.

The summer before her junior year, she tried stand-up for the first time. "It wasn't until my junior year of high school that I realized comedy is what I wanted to do," she says.

She participated in school plays and joined speech and debate, where performing felt like a natural fit. By the spring of her junior year, Riley chose a modern, character-driven interpretation inspired by a humor piece in The New Yorker. That performance qualified her for the NCFL Grand National Tournament in Washington, DC.

Now completing her BFA in Acting at the University of Colorado Boulder, Riley is pursuing acting, comedy, and writing while continuing to develop her creative voice.



Welcome Wildcats
August 19, 2015

Her advice to aspiring creatives is simple: connect with teachers who can become mentors, trust your unique voice and keep going.your unique voice and keep going. After graduation, Riley hopes to continue writing, performing and making people laugh—just like she always has.



Class of 2026

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST ALUMNI CLASS

Eliza Michelle Bacot
Noah David Love Bialik
Marissa Leann Cody
Alyssa Lauren Conroy
Nicholas Thomas D'Angelo
Rowan Robbins Davis
Ellie Addison Dukowicz
Virginia Grace Evans
Selah Claire Frisbee
Dannan Renae Garner
Ezekiel Lane Garris
Cooper Jackson Green
Lillian Marie Groome
Campbell Kieran Haas
Wyatt Sparkes Henry
Margarita Imelda Herrera-Ortiz
Zoe Patricia Hewitt
Alexander Lucian Heye
Gwendolyn Rose Howell
Aakash Himanshu Karvir
Oliver Jack Kerr
Maia Hendrix Kiiss
Maddox Tuthill Linen
Jovi Wells Locascio
Amelia Hope Lopez de la Cruz
Aiden Isaiah McAfee
Alexandria Faith McKay-Gilbert
Celia Sky Noble
Elizabeth Sarah Pomeroy
Max Shavak Posnock
Sarah Elizabeth Pruitt
Isaac Elledge Ransdell
Madeline Kate Roberts
Elizabeth Lauren
Scott Rose
Samuel Justus Rose
Brayden William Ross
Coleman Silas Teague
Joaquin Tordoya-Urdiales
Elijah Thomas Wharton
Micah Gabriel Ye

Honors & Reflections



TRUSTEE PRIZE

Zoe Hewitt



CANIE B. SMITH SCHOLAR-ATHLETE AWARD

Ellie Dukowicz



FACULTY PRIZE

Dannan Garner



"CDS was my home away from home. I always felt loved here, and it was this love and support that allowed me to explore and experiment.

– **Joaquin Tordoya-Urdiales**
Class of 2026

"I believe that the world's deepest hunger is for belonging, for being accepted and valued, and known within a group. A community. Your community flourishes because you have given yourself to it. And it has strengthened steadily as a result of these countless, many times invisible, and sometimes undervalued interactions.

– **Joanne Bartsch**
US Faculty, Science & Technology Department Chair





Community

Sustainable Design for Connection & Learning

McGregor Hall's redesign brings together sustainable architecture, outdoor learning, and welcoming spaces that strengthen connection across the Upper School campus.







Solar-powered gathering space. The expanded front porch welcomes students with shade, seating, and renewable energy.

A reimagined campus. McGregor Hall connects indoor and outdoor learning through thoughtful landscape design.

Learning under the canopy. Solar panels provide clean energy while creating comfortable outdoor spaces for everyday campus life.

The Upper School campus has been reimagined through design choices centered on stewardship and community.

The redesign brings together renewable energy and landscape design, continuing a campus-wide commitment to sustainability. It reflects Carolina Day School's approach to sustainable design as part of everyday campus life.

At the entrance to the newly named McGregor Hall, the most visible change is the "front porch," an expanded canopied patio that opens the building to campus. A pergola-style structure with Lumos glass solar panels brings energy production into this shared space while also creating shade and shelter for daily use. Students and faculty move through it constantly, gathering between classes, meeting with friends, or pausing before heading inside. Legerton Architecture's Wendy Legerton explains that the goal was to "elevate the entrance experience upon first arrival at McGregor Hall," while also creating "an uplifting and protected community space where the whole school can gather, connect, and be inspired to learn."

Just beyond the entrance, a rain garden planted with native landscaping extends the system of the solar canopy, capturing and filtering runoff before gradually returning it to the surrounding ecosystem.

West of McGregor Hall, underused land has been transformed into the Rose Bowl amphitheater. Built into the natural slope, it uses low concrete seating walls and wood benches oriented toward the central field. The amphitheater holds 244 people and is used throughout the day for assemblies, outdoor classes, and informal gatherings. Drawing inspiration from ancient Greek amphitheaters and stoas, Legerton Architecture designed the space to encourage learning and strengthen community connections.

The Upper School project extends Carolina Day School's approach to campus design, informed by the Lower School Love Hall. In 2016, the school was designated a North Carolina Green School of Excellence for integrating environmental education and sustainability into its curriculum and campus life.



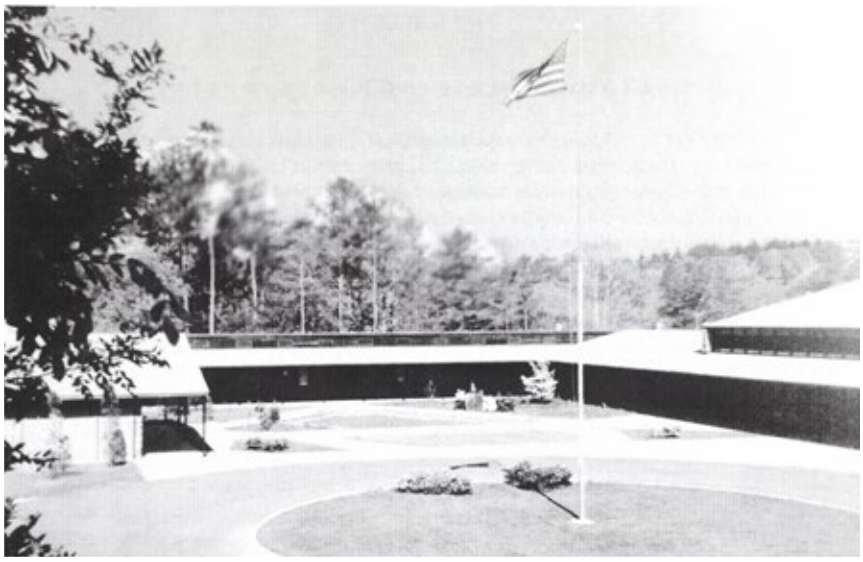
Bioretention Basins

Bioretention basins are integrated into the landscape near McGregor Hall to manage stormwater as part of the campus's broader site design. During rainfall, runoff is directed into shallow, planted areas where native vegetation helps slow, filter, and absorb water before it gradually returns to the surrounding ecosystem.

Celebrating 90 Years

Carolina Day School began as Asheville Country Day School in 1936, and the campus on Hendersonville Road was established in the early 1950s. In 2026, we celebrate 90 years of shared history between Asheville Country Day School and Carolina Day.

THEN



1956

Asheville Country Day School

NOW



2026

Carolina Day School's Love Hall

SAVE THE DATE

HOMECOMING

October 2-3, 2026

Welcome home! Reconnect with classmates, teachers, and friends during an unforgettable weekend on campus.



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

- Alumni Awards
- Varsity Volleyball Game
- Fall Family Festival
- Breakfast at the Grotto

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

- Class Reunions
- Pint Night
- ACDS 90th Celebration





HOMECOMING 2026 CAROLINA DAY SCHOOL





Mark your calendar. Details coming soon.

carolinaday.org/homecoming

Carolina Day School
1345 Hendersonville Road
Asheville, NC 28803
carolinaday.org | 828-274-0757

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Think one kid can change the world?

We do.