

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

CAROLINA DAY SCHOOL

Asheville, North Carolina

carolinday.org

Start Date: July 2027



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement and Core Beliefs

To inspire students to become innovative thinkers who communicate with intelligence and clarity, create with vision and purpose, and act with courage and compassion to confidently make a meaningful difference in the world.

The school’s nine core beliefs center on:

- Sparking curiosity and igniting intellectual pursuit
- Nurturing responsible students of sound character through honor, integrity, and empathy
- Understanding that each student is a unique learner with strengths, weaknesses, and unlimited potential
- Building meaningful relationships between faculty and students
- Fostering courageous learners who embrace obstacles and design creative solutions
- Valuing and celebrating school traditions that shape community
- Promoting cognitive, social, and emotional development through carefully designed programs

At a Glance



Established
1936



Total enrollment
607



Total faculty
94



Student/teacher ratio
7:1



Students of color
18%



Financial aid awarded
\$3.65M



Faculty with advanced degrees
65%



Campus size
46 acres

Faculty of color: 9.5%
Students receiving aid: 28%

Endowment: \$6.2M
Annual operating budget: \$18M



Overview

Carolina Day School is a vibrant Junior Kindergarten-12 independent school serving approximately 600 students in Asheville, North Carolina. As Asheville's only co-educational, independent, secular day school, CDS holds a distinctive position in the regional educational landscape. With its recent recognition as the 2025 Best of Asheville Winner in Education, the school is one of Asheville's prized assets, poised for even greater impact under its next leader.

With a student-teacher ratio of 7:1 and dedicated and caring teachers as committed to academic excellence as they are to "meeting students where they are," Carolina Day provides an exceptional, personalized educational experience. The rigorous, comprehensive curriculum includes robust programs in STEM, humanities, world languages, and the arts while also emphasizing real-world problem solving and both project-based and service learning. Perhaps most impressive, the nationally recognized "school within a school" - the Key School - transforms students with language-based learning differences into high achievers and confident learners who thrive in the Upper School and after graduation. Guided by an outstanding college counseling program, Carolina Day graduates attend and excel at the finest colleges and universities.

Alongside its commitment to academic excellence, singularly deep and meaningful relationships between students and faculty characterize the Carolina Day experience. Indeed, the school community's culture of belonging and respect fosters extraordinary family engagement with the school while also undergirding the school's commitment to social/emotional learning and character development. Given its mission to encourage students to "act with courage and compassion," it's no surprise that the Honor Code, overseen by a student-led Honor Council, fosters both student agency and school-wide understanding of Carolina Day's deepest values. At Carolina Day, character, well-being, and leadership complement scholarship and academic achievement.

Carolina Day's 46-acre campus features a recently renovated Lower School with a new library, solar panels, and updated learning spaces; updated Upper School common spaces and expanded parking; and athletic facilities that include the Nash Athletic Center, the Alumni Gym and Lasher Weight Room, Marberger Field, and the Sgro Athletic Complex (off-site). The school also partners with local organizations to provide access to additional facilities including tennis centers, UNC Asheville's track and swimming facilities, and local golf courses.



The opportunity to lead Carolina Day School is enhanced significantly by the extraordinary quality of life that Asheville offers. Often called “the Paris of the South,” Asheville is consistently ranked among the best places to live in the United States, offering a rare combination of natural beauty, cultural vibrancy, and progressive community values. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina at approximately 2,200 feet elevation, Asheville (population 97,000) offers spectacular mountain scenery in every direction. The city enjoys a temperate four-season climate with mild winters (averaging 10-12 inches of snow annually), warm summers, and brilliant spring and fall seasons. The region’s natural beauty provides year-round access to outdoor recreation and a lifestyle centered on connection to nature.

For an independent school head, Asheville offers:

- An active independent school community with opportunities for collaboration
- Engaged, education-minded families
- A strong pipeline of qualified faculty attracted to the region
- Access to cultural resources that enrich school programming
- Quality of life that supports work-life balance and personal renewal
- The opportunity to make a significant impact in a thriving mountain community

Opportunities and Challenges

Carolina Day School stands on a strong foundation while recognizing that standing still is not an option. The community seeks a Head of School who will celebrate what is working, address what is not, and lead with both courage and compassion while serving as the chief storyteller, external representative, and advocate for Carolina Day School. The most important opportunities and challenges ahead center on unifying identity, setting a clear strategic vision, strengthening culture and trust, and advancing programmatic growth.

Strategic Vision, Governance, and Financial Sustainability

The school is ready for a clear and lasting strategic vision to guide its future. Having not completed a comprehensive strategic plan in many years, the CDS community is eager for a collaborative process that will clarify long-term priorities and decision-making. The next Head of School will be expected to:

- Lead an inclusive strategic planning process that defines priorities in program, people, finance, facilities, and community.



- Work with the Board to strengthen governance by broadening representation beyond current parents, deepening communication between school leadership and faculty, and building structures that ensure transparency and accountability.
- Address financial realities by building endowment, funding deferred maintenance, and advancing a capital campaign for a new Key School building.
- Balance the school's program aspirations and tuition with a strong commitment to access, diversity, and support for families from a range of economic circumstances.

Strengthening Community Cohesion Across Divisions

Carolina Day School is a single Junior Kindergarten–12 community made up of four distinct divisions, each contributing meaningfully to the school's overall mission. The next Head of School will have the opportunity to deepen the sense of connection across these divisions so that students, families, and employees experience CDS as one community with shared values, relationships, and purpose.

A key part of this work is deepening the Key School's connection to the wider CDS community. The Key program is nationally respected and draws families to both Asheville and CDS. Under new leadership, Key is already building stronger relationships across divisions. While Key's instructional approach will remain distinct, there is real opportunity to foster greater cohesion, collaboration, and understanding throughout the school. The next Head of School will be expected to:

- Affirm Key as an essential and mission-aligned part of CDS, while respecting its intentional instructional structure.
- Encourage the sharing of expertise, practices, and professional learning across all four divisions to enrich teaching and learning schoolwide.
- Support planning for the long-envisioned Key School facility and use the project to promote collaboration, visibility, and shared identity.
- Help the community articulate a unified CDS story—one that honors its diversity, highlights its commitment to access, and celebrates the school's academic excellence and student-centered mission.

This approach values community and academic cohesion, as CDS's strength lies in the unique contributions of each division, all working together as one inclusive school community.



Culture, Trust, and Community Engagement

After a period of significant transition, the CDS community is ready for steady, consistent leadership that strengthens trust and communication. There is a strong desire to refine processes and improve alignment across the school. The next Head of School will have the opportunity to:

- Rebuild and sustain trust through visibility, consistency, and clear communication.
- Build on the renewed sense of connection by creating opportunities for open dialogue, fostering a welcoming environment for all voices, and approaching decisions with clarity, care, and empathy.
- Clarify the role of the Head and leadership team so that expectations are realistic and shared.
- Represent CDS actively in the Asheville community, helping to strengthen positive perceptions and positioning the school as a civic and educational leader.

Programmatic Growth in Academics, Support, and Athletics

CDS is well-positioned in the market, but recognizes that programmatic growth is essential to fulfill its promise. Priorities include:

- Strengthening systems of student support by expanding learning services and counseling capacity, and by ensuring all faculty have ongoing professional development in serving neurodiverse learners.
- Clarify the philosophy of athletics, whether participatory, competitive, or a thoughtful blend, and build the structures, staffing, and communication needed to support a stable, mission-driven program.

In all of these areas, the community seeks a Head of School who will provide continuity, support and retain excellent teachers, build systems that preserve the school's warmth and flexibility, and lead with humility, curiosity, and resolve.



Qualifications and Personal Attributes

The most competitive candidates will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

Professional Qualifications

- Proven track record of successful leadership in an independent school setting
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate orally and in writing with inspiration and clarity to both internal and external audiences
- Deep understanding of current trends and challenges in PK-12 education
- Experience with recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and leading talented and mission-aligned faculty and senior leadership: a team-builder
- Demonstrated ability to lead academic programs and support faculty development
- Understanding of and experience with programs for neurodivergent learners
- Experience with strategic planning and implementation
- Ability to articulate a compelling vision for the school's future that will inspire the school community, compel philanthropic support, and engage community partners
- Strong financial acumen and experience with budget management

Leadership Style and Personal Qualities

- Authentic, approachable, and visible presence within the school community
- A highly relatable and collaborative interpersonal style combined with the ability to make tough decisions
- Personal humility that complements both a drive for excellence and great ambition for the school
- Warmth, humor, and genuine enjoyment of young people
- A storyteller who is comfortable with public speaking and broad community engagement
- A spirit of curiosity and willingness to learn from and with one's colleagues that fuels a commitment to continuous learning
- The ability to navigate complexity, in part through effective prioritization, delegation, and management of systems
- Excellent communication skills—written, verbal, and interpersonal
- High emotional intelligence and ability to build relationships across diverse constituencies
- Integrity, transparency, and ethical leadership
- Resilience and grace under pressure

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Carolina Day School.

[School Website](#)

[School History](#)

[Portrait of a Graduate](#)

[Virtual Tour](#)

[College Matriculation](#)

[About Asheville, North Carolina](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

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