



Horizons at Carolina Day School

A vision realized

BY: BILL HANSEN, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER OF HORIZONS

When Horizons at Carolina Day School (CDS) opened its doors in 2018, fifteen bright rising first graders embarked on an exciting educational journey. What began as a bold vision to create greater educational equity and opportunity has grown into a thriving program that now serves 120 students each summer—and will soon celebrate its first graduating class. In 2026, those same students who started as six-year-olds in Horizons’ first classroom will matriculate to high school, marking both their individual achievements and the full maturation of the program.

The creation of Horizons at CDS was the result of inspired leadership and deep community collaboration. The idea took root in 2015 when Swati Patel and Himanshu Karvir, longtime education advocates, learned about the national Horizons model. They recognized the need for innovative approaches to address the stark achievement and opportunity gaps that prevented many Asheville children from reaching their full potential. Determined to make a difference, they partnered with Carolina Day School to bring the Horizons program to life.

The leadership of founding Executive Director Monica Antonazzo, combined with the expertise of the first teaching

team, Bess Bryan and Christy Buchanan, was instrumental in developing a high-quality program aligned with Horizons National standards and best practices. Early on, as Horizons CDS began to build relationships with local schools, Ms. Elinor Earle, Executive Director of Youthful Hand, played a key role in identifying and referring students for the inaugural class. Her collaboration helped fill the first cohort and established a foundation of trusted partnerships that continues today.

To launch the program successfully, Patel and Karvir reached out to friends, family, and business connections, many of whom made multi-year funding commitments. Their generosity created the essential capacity to open the program’s doors in 2018 and build a sustainable funding base for the future.

Horizons at CDS is part of Horizons National, a network that began in 1964 at New Canaan Country School in Connecticut. The model was designed to harness the resources of independent schools to serve students through summer learning and enrichment. Over the decades, the program has expanded nationwide, helping thousands of students strengthen academic skills, build confidence, and develop a lifelong love of learning.

At Horizons at CDS, that mission takes shape through a multi-year, family-centered approach. Students join the six-week Summer Learning Academy after kindergarten and remain involved for nine years or more. The curriculum blends literacy, math, STEM, art, swimming, and enrichment—all led by professional educators. This long-term commitment, combined with strong family engagement, produces measurable results. Horizons students consistently demonstrate academic gains of 6–10 weeks in literacy and math each summer, along with improved social skills, swim proficiency, school attendance, and self-confidence.

Today, Horizons at CDS continues to grow. With each new kindergarten cohort, enrollment increases, and by 2026, the program will serve 135 students and families. As our inaugural class of eighth graders prepares for high school, Horizons will continue to support them through mentoring, volunteer internships, and post-secondary readiness initiatives—ensuring that the Horizons journey continues beyond the summer months.

This milestone year represents more than just the success of one group of students; it is a celebration of what is possible when a community comes together to invest in educational opportunity. With the continued support of our donors, partners, and volunteers, Horizons at Carolina Day School will continue expanding possibilities—helping every student learn, grow, and thrive.

HORIZONS GIVING DAYS ARE HERE

Make a year-end gift today!

Horizons is grateful for the generous support of a loving community, which is essential for daily operations and for continued program expansion. Horizons Giving Days will begin December 1st and run through December 31st.

Financial contributions during this time can be made through the Horizons at CDS website, horizonsatcarolinaday.org.

Questions about financial support and gifts of time and talent can be directed to Bill Hansen atbhansen@carolinaday.org.