

# HORIZONS AT CDS:

## EQUITY-CENTERED ENRICHMENT FOR CHILDREN

making a difference

By Sandra Bilbray



**A** little boy was removed from his home with his parents. He went to live with his grandmother. He was angry. If it wasn't for Horizons at Carolina Day, a program that aims to close the opportunity and achievement gap for students facing inequity in Asheville, he'd likely be written off. "We saw a light in him," says Monica Antonazzo, the executive director of Horizons. "He's wonderful, smart, and quirky."

Monica was intentional and met this little boy where he was emotionally. Horizons connected him with a counselor and kept in close contact with his grandmother. By his second summer with Horizons, this little boy was showing signs of healing and leadership. He was helpful, engaged, and creative. Once

guarded, now he even asked for a hug. Thinking about this little boy's story makes Monica tear up.

This is what Horizons does — empowering underserved students with education, skills to succeed, and experiences to build confidence.

Horizons serves each of its 45 students year-round with:

- Tutoring
- Holiday parties
- Family check-ins
- Food, clothing, and book drives
- Agency referrals
- School visits

"We believe in the promise of opportunity for all children," Monica says.

Horizons summer educational and tutoring programs help under-served students in Asheville avoid learning loss, and make summers fun and productive. Horizons also offers one-on-one tutoring to help students stay on top of school work during this challenging time of remote learning.

Privately funded and in its fourth year, Horizons at Carolina Day was started locally by two Biltmore Park residents, Swati Patel and Himanshu Karvir.

Horizons currently serves kindergarten–fourth-grade children from two feeder schools, Avery's Creek Elementary and Ira B. Jones Elementary, and adds 15 students each new school year. Horizons' goal is to serve grades kindergarten–ninth-grade students by the summer of 2026. When students start at Horizons, they commit to staying with it through ninth grade with the hopes of continuing in the program through graduation.

Teachers at both feeder schools recommend students to Horizons. Each student qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Two-thirds of students come to Horizons performing below grade level.

"We want to have a deep relationship with our partner schools, so along with teachers and principals, we work as a team to support our students," Monica says. "We go and visit students during the school year and have social events to keep kids engaged and families involved. If they move schools, they stick with our program."

Families and caregivers are central in communication and planning. "We care about what families want for their children and we provide opportunities for their children that they wish they could provide."

Students get lots of individual attention to make gains in reading and math, go on field trips, learn how to swim, participate in fun activities and spend time around older role models from teenage volunteers through the organization Open Doors, to adult volunteers.

Gretchen Brown, a volunteer at CDS and Horizons, helped deliver food to Horizons families last summer. "My daughters and I loved meeting all of the kids and their parents each day, and the best part was hearing their smiling faces behind the masks with a huge, "Thank You."

Horizons tailors what volunteers do according to interests. Volunteers can host concerts, bring in therapy dogs for children to read to them, be a reading buddy or tutor, help with administrative details, or with events. "The opportunities are endless," Monica says.

With Horizons at Carolina Day helping more children each year, its budget grows each year. Interested individuals and businesses can make contributions directly to Horizons.

"Carolina Day School provides us with space, back-office support, and

use of buses for swimming and field trips, but for program costs we fundraise," Monica says.

Horizons is making a difference with its students' higher attendance rates at school, gains in reading and math proficiency, higher grades and test scores, fewer disciplinary referrals, and development of leadership skills.

"We give so much individual attention, seeing the academic growth and watching them grow-up is incredible."

**For more information on Horizons, visit online:**  
 Website: <https://www.horizonsatcarolinaday.org/>  
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/horizonscds/>  
 Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/horizonsatcds/>

