

Carolina Friends School

HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2017

CAROLINA FRIENDS SCHOOL

Durham, North Carolina

OVERVIEW AND MISSION

Carolina Friends is a true community where participation is inclusive, nurtured, and transformational. For 50 years, the school has had an extraordinary influence on its students and on those who work there. Permeated by Quaker values, CFS enrolls 502 students in grades PK – 12.

Carolina Friends was founded in 1962 by a small group of Quakers from the local meetings, Durham Friends Meeting and Chapel Hill Friends Meeting. Among the founders were Peter and Martha Klopfer, who had relocated to North Carolina from England. The Klopfers were dismayed to discover that there were no integrated school options for their children. Acting on their strong principles and faith, this small group incorporated the school, and opened with a kindergarten class on the property of Durham Friends Meeting in 1964. Later, the Klopfer family donated part of the farmland they owned, upon which the main campus has been built.

The school grew dramatically over the years but has remained true to its bold mission:

Carolina Friends School is a vibrant and inclusive learning community empowering students to think critically, creatively, and independently. We foster active exploration and quiet reflection, individual endeavor and collaborative engagement. Inspired by Quaker values -- pursuit of truth, respect for all, peaceful resolution of conflict, simplicity, the call to service -- we teach our children that it is possible to change the world.



The mission of CFS is lived through a comprehensive Statement of Philosophy that interprets the mission and which can be found on the school's website. However, the notion that CFS is "different by design" is a critical component in understanding the culture and practice. Learning at CFS is student-centered throughout the grades. It is dynamic, experiential, and interactive. The focus is on

the whole child – social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual – in the context of the larger community. Throughout the campus on a daily basis one can see this mission lived and valued.

QUAKER VALUES

The values of the Religious Society of Friends are lived at CFS. They make the school unique in the region and dramatically affect the lives of all who attend and work there. The values are informed by the respect for the Inner Light in each person that brings wisdom to the benefit of all. Meetings in classrooms and of adults are begun by “settling in”, i.e. moments of silence and reflection, and are concluded by “settling out”. Meeting for Worship is a regular event for all students. The values of simplicity, stewardship, non-violence, integrity, and service are part of every classroom and program at the school. Diversity and inclusion are important to the central tenets of the school. Friends Council on Education cites the school as one of the member schools that is “most true to the values of Quakerism”. The spirit of equity and inclusion are evident everywhere on the campus and, in that spirit, everyone at CFS is called by their first name, including the head of school.

Although not formally under the care of a meeting, CFS maintains by-laws that call for at least 8 members of the board of trustees to be nominated by the Durham or Chapel Hill Friends Meeting.

CAMPUS

CFS sits on 126 acres of prime woodland just west of the city of Durham and adjacent to Duke Forest. The beautiful and bucolic environment has influenced the feelings of serenity and peace that permeate the school and its programs. The outdoors and closeness to nature are integral parts of the CFS history and experience. From the small iconic creek that runs through the campus, to the woodland study and adventures that the students experience, CFS lives and thrives on the land. The Klopfers maintain a residence on one end of the campus and a horse farm on the other end.

The facilities have grown dramatically over the years with new buildings added as the needs arose. At present the number of buildings stands at 14. The architecture is attractive, eclectic, modest, and highly utilitarian. Students have been involved in building projects from the outset at CFS and are still involved in constructing some of the less complex structures on the campus. A “log cabin” building created for

[Continued](#)





the Upper School is supplemented by modern facilities with excellent laboratory, art, and library spaces. The Middle and Lower schools have their own unique spaces. There is a large gymnasium and a Quaker Dome, used as a gathering and multi-purpose space. The school has just completed plans to add a dedicated performing arts center in the coming year.

CFS maintains three separate Early Schools, one on the main campus, one in Durham, and one in Chapel Hill. The two remote facilities, each of which is near university campuses, share space with the respective Meetings in those cities. These units each feed the Lower School on the main campus. The school benefits greatly from its location in the “Research Triangle” comprised of Durham, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh and the surrounding area, and is enriched by the intellectual and cultural life that the universities in the Triangle afford.

COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

Students

The 500+ CFS students come from cities and towns throughout the Triangle and many families are connected with Duke, UNC, or NC State. Twenty-four percent of the students identify as students of color, and there is a clear commitment to socio-economic diversity within the school; twenty-six percent of enrollees receive financial aid. The students are taught to be strong self-advocates, especially by the time they reach the Upper School, and are given responsibility for their own learning and service to the community. As they speak of their roles in the school and larger communities, it is evident that the Quaker values have strongly influenced their attitudes toward service, towards one another, and towards the community at large. The school is a safe place for students to take risks exploring activities out of their comfort zones. The student experience at CFS is truly transformational,

[Continued](#)

with many alumni returning to the school – some to teach – a testament to the difference that the CFS experience has made in their lives.

In recent years Carolina Friends School has had approximately 300 applications for 100 openings with an impressive yield of over 70%. Attrition hovers around ten percent. More than 11% of the budget is devoted to financial aid, well within the norm of area independent schools, and there is a very strong commitment to this program on the part of the board.

Staff

CFS refers to all working members of the community as staff, both teaching and non-teaching. There are many long-term teachers at the school whose commitment and skill are revered and deeply respected. The transformational character of the community has influenced them, while they have simultaneously helped to create its character. Many teachers hold advanced degrees and many have further bonded to the community by sending their children through the school. The school encourages this by offering a generous tuition remission benefit to staff.

The staff is not nearly as racially diverse as the student body, something at which the school continues to work. Considerable efforts are under way to make the staff more diverse and CFS is taking this effort very seriously, indeed. The next head will be expected to lead these efforts.

Relationships between staff and students define the CFS experience. “Teachers



want students to be their best,” stated one parent. Faculty support student interests and work hard to identify and cultivate their strengths. As a result, students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and confronting problems. Indeed, student voice is highly valued at CFS. One student reflected, “I feel seen; teachers are willing to listen to me.”

Staff autonomy is strong and teachers have been given the freedom to teach to their passions, especially in the Upper School. At the same time, the faculty is highly collaborative and connected and there is considerable evidence of cooperation and coordination in program. Curricular matters are overseen by the Assistant Head for Teaching and Learning, a position that was created in 2013 and filled by a long-term staff member. There is generous support for professional development and staff engage in a wide range of workshops, conferences, and action research projects. Each year, CFS offers grants to staff, which allow them to undertake study abroad and in depth research. CFS staff present at local, regional, and national conferences regularly.

The school highly values teaching as a profession and seeks to foster a vigorous adult learning community.

The administration consists of the head, an assistant head for teaching and learning, an assistant head for facilities and campus safety, six head teachers (the equivalent of division heads) one for each of the Early Schools and one for each unit – Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools. There are full business, development, and admissions offices, each with a director, and tech staff. Administrative staff, including the head of school, often assume classroom-teaching roles.

Staff participate in more than a dozen standing and ad hoc committees that provide guidance and advice to the school. These include a committee on diversity and inclusivity, a school life committee, a staff benefits committee, a staff retreat committee, and many others. All committee work is guided by Quaker business procedures, with deep listening to find unity, rather than any system of voting.

Under the leadership of Mike Hanas, the current head, Carolina Friends School has flourished. Mike’s integrity, his communication skills, and his gentle but firm touch resonate with all constituencies.



Continued

Parents

The CFS parents come from a wide variety of communities and backgrounds, but are mostly professionals who work in the Triangle and hold the values that are lived each day by the CFS community. A number of them are folks who have moved their children to CFS after experiencing a less-than-ideal environment elsewhere.

The university communities are very well represented on the CFS campus.

Parents are encouraged to be partners with the school and are welcomed on the campus in a variety of roles, including “settling in” with Early and Lower School units. Volunteerism is high and there is an active Parents Staff Association. CFS goes to great lengths to keep parents informed of all aspects of student life on the campus, and this creates both high frequency and high quality interaction between families and the school. CFS is very welcoming of non-traditional families and has students from a wide variety of family structures.



The CFS parents are active beyond the traditional welcoming and fund-raising roles in the community. For example they initiated the Afghan Sister School project, a significant relationship that fits beautifully with the overall mission of CFS.

Board

The CFS Board of Trustees can have 12-23 members. Currently, 22 men and women serve and bring a wide variety of backgrounds. Eight of the trustees are nominated by local meetings (four each from Chapel Hill and Durham). Many trustees are current parents, grandparents, or parents of alumni, and currently two trustees are alumni. Their backgrounds and expertise vary, from education to business to healthcare, science, and other professions. The board functions using Quaker decision making processes (rather than voting) and has been ably led by effective clerks who are adept at listening and moving the board to important decisions. The board has a healthy sense of its appropriate role in school decisions, advising the head when asked but sticking to the larger questions of policy, finance, liability and governance. All trustees serve on one or more committees, some of which include staff as standing members of the committee. The board

QUICK FACTS ABOUT CAROLINA FRIENDS

- 502 students in grades PK – 12
- 11 million dollar annual budget
- 13 million dollar endowment
- 24% students of color
- 26 % of students received financial aid
- 126-acre campus
- 100 total employees

meets monthly. Peter and Martha Klopfer, founders and emeriti trustees, are still active with the board.

Program

The program at CFS can be viewed in detail on the school's website, www.cfsnc.org. However there are some notable areas that deserve mention.

Quaker values

These permeate the program at the school. Opportunities exist for individual voice and expression in virtually every classroom, studio, and playing field. These attitudes are fostered in the Early School and continue right up to graduation, a Meeting for Worship, in which graduates face the gathered community and everyone is invited to speak their truth about their experience at the school. Parents and staff described the CFS graduation as one of the most moving ceremonies they have witnessed.

Whole-child approach

CFS embraces every aspect of a student's life and holds all students in high regard. While the school certainly trains the mind to think critically, independently, and with rigor, it also nurtures and supports the social and emotional lives of students and their development as contributing citizens of the school, local, and world communities. Building on the Early and Lower Schools' social-emotional curriculum, the Middle School program unapologetically embraces a developmentally appropriate program that fosters a community of mutual support and inclusion, including an anti-bullying curriculum that has been shared with local public middle schools. Students work collaboratively and often spill out into open common space to work in small groups. Students in the upper levels in the three divisions participate in leadership training. A committee consisting of both students and staff handles discipline issues in the Upper School. Senior Seminar creates a culmination of the CFS experience for

many students and is cited by alumni as a distinctive and powerful program at the school.

Multi-age Groupings

Within the units, students regularly mix with children younger and older than themselves. In the Early School and Lower School, multi-age classrooms facilitate this. In the Middle and



Continued

Upper Schools, in addition to mixed-aged classes, each student is also assigned to a staff-led "advisee group" that includes approximately 10 students representing all grades in the unit. Students usually remain in the same advisee group for four years, and it serves not only as an academic home, but a place of social support. Regular "Advisee Days" help bond these groups.



Assessment

CFS believes in thorough, detailed, and comprehensive narrative student assessment. This is true throughout the school and these assessments are conveyed to students and parents in writing and in parent-staff conferences, in which students participate. To this end, CFS has avoided the shorthand of grades. Notably, Upper School students consistently perform above national norms. However, CFS does not administer school-wide standardized tests. Academic rigor is high and students regularly matriculate to highly competitive colleges.

Arts and Athletics

The arts are a very important part of the life of the school and there are outstanding programs in dance, studio art, music, and theatre. In keeping with the whole-child practice and philosophy, self-expression is central to the CFS experience.

The school does not ignore nor minimize the importance of the body in total student development and awareness. Athletics are

broadly presented at CFS with dance and yoga held in important positions along with team sports. Participation is more important than championships, although soccer, basketball, tennis and ultimate Frisbee have all fielded teams strong enough to challenge for championships. (So far, Ultimate Frisbee is the only sport to have won the state championship).

Service

Service has always been central to a CFS education and all students are involved. From landscaping work on the campus or tending the raised-bed gardens by Lower School, to service days and the Exploratorium Sessions in the Middle School, to internships with social service agencies in the Upper School, service is integral at the school. The work takes many forms but culminates in the Upper School in a three-week program at the end of the school year that includes internships and community service projects in a local farm community. Students have worked in the American Southwest and as far away as Trinidad and Costa Rica.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Diversity

Although CFS has a reasonably diverse student body, based on national independent school standards, there is broad consensus that the school needs to be doing more to attract a more diverse student population. Moreover, the school has been frustrated in its attempt to hire staff of color. To its credit, the entire school community is wrestling with this challenge and the conversations have prompted deep and honest self-reflection. The next head will need to continue this conversation and help the community identify strategies to diversify and implement these strategies.

Resources

CFS has a strong enrollment with waiting lists in several grades. However, despite running balanced budgets, the margins are thin, but not atypically so for independent schools. The balance among tuition, financial aid, salaries, staff loads and program demands is a delicate one and CFS is working hard to maintain that balance while increasing the overall resources available to sustain an excellent school. The next head will be

deeply involved in marshaling and increasing those resources. (The school has engaged a marketing and pricing consultant in 2016 that will study many of these issues.)

In 2015 the Board agreed to take on external debt for the first time in its history. This money will help complete the renovation and construction of buildings noted in the \$7.5M "Building Friends" capital campaign.

The school has an endowment of \$13M, but hopes to increase this to reduce the pressure on tuition as the major source of operating funds.

Quaker Life

While CFS has done an outstanding job of maintaining the values it professes and "walking the talk," there is an on-going need and opportunity to define and practice Quaker values so as not to lose that which makes the school special and unique. The pressures on resources, fund raising, salaries, plant maintenance and more can pull the school towards compromises that, at times, challenge its values. Addressing these challenges without losing the school's essential character will be a daily sensitivity for the new head of school.

Staff

There will be a significant number of staff retirements in the next five years and there is an important opportunity to shape the quality and character of staff moving forward. Among the likely retirees are some of the school's most effective and legendary teachers.



THE CANDIDATE

CFS hopes to find someone who:

- Has experience in Friends schools or schools closely akin in spirit and practice
- Embraces a student-centered, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning
- Is a great listener
- Is a proven administrator, able to handle the details of a complex job
- Is inspiring to staff, parents, and students
- Possesses excellent communication skills, both written and oral
- Will personify in his/her personal life the values of the school and community
- Has the warmth, compassion, and sense of humor to be a true leader at CFS
- Is highly intelligent, intuitive, and possesses excellent judgment
- Has a track record of working with and attracting staff of color
- Is eager to help raise the funds needed to increase resources at CFS
- Is passionate about students and demonstrates it in his/her relationships with them
- Is eager to take on challenges
- Is prepared to be a servant leader, empowering others while guiding the school
- Possesses discretion, balance, and wisdom
- Has the ability to take the long view in order to distinguish between matters that are important and those that are urgent
- Above all, has a passion for learning, an appreciation of teachers, and a delight in students

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should communicate with and send a CV, cover letter, and personal statement to both:

Clay Stites
clay.stites@comcast.net
RG175 Consultant

AND

Tom Olverson
tomolverson@gmail.com
RG175 Consultant