

# Dan Ceaser

## Educator



Since his arrival in Sarasota last July, Dan Ceaser, 39, head of Sarasota's Hershorn Schiff Community Day School, has already made a huge impact on the school's identity. He's implemented technological advancements, spearheaded new fundraising initiatives and created exciting additions to the school's curriculum. A graduate of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and a Fisher Leadership Fellow at the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, Ceaser is a nationally recognized leader in education. He moved to Sarasota with his wife, Katherine, and their three daughters from Louisville, where he had served as director of an independent, project-based learning pre-K-12 school. For information about the Hershorn School, visit [communityday.org](http://communityday.org).

### **What inspired you to accept your new position?**

I come from a culturally and religiously diverse family and was fortunate to attend a small, dynamic school where I always felt safe and learning was fun. I understand the transformative difference a great school can make. Community Day gave me the opportunity to lead and grow such a school.

### **How do you describe Community Day?**

We're a small community school that fosters close relationships with every family to create an environment where each child is known, loved and feels supported. Our truly unique program is built around diversity and real-world, project-based learning. We welcome diverse families of all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds to engage in rigorous, inquiry-based learning that's hands-on, relevant and fun. The foundation of our school is the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* — improving the world.

### **Tell us a little about the curriculum.**

It's really more than a curriculum; it's an educational approach that emphasizes empathy, mindfulness and critical thinking. Our students meet daily in a small advisory group to focus on teamwork, problem-solving, mindfulness and empathy-building activities. We believe our students will grow up to be the next generation of global leaders. For that to happen, they'll need the social skills to partner with peers of all faiths and cultural backgrounds, and have the emotional capacity to overcome challenges and frustration.

### **How does that differ from mainstream education?**

The biggest difference isn't what the students learn, but how they learn it. For example, our students learn how to write an expository essay by spending a day at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. They learn about civic engagement by visiting a legislative session in Tallahassee.

### **How do you define success?**

Watching our students change our world for the better! Each Community Day semester concludes with Learning On Display, where our students present a project that aims to solve a real-world problem. Success is a third-grader presenting an articulate and well-researched oration on the virtues of composting, and spearheading a plan to start a composting club at school. Success is a Jewish seventh-grader partnering with a Christian seventh-grader to write and present a play to combat anti-Semitism, xenophobia and bullying.