Celebrating 50 years of joyful learning in the Iowa City community.
Faculty & Staff

Head of School
Michelle Beninga
Finance; Strategic Planning; Development (Chair); 50th Anniversary; ISACS Steering Committees

Office Manager & Admissions Coordinator
Rachel Butler
ISACS Steering (Chair); Marketing & Enrollment (Co-Chair) Committees

Business Manager
Anne Ehlinger
Finance Committee

Director of Advancement
Dana Smith
Marketing & Enrollment (Co-Chair); Strategic Planning; Development, 50th Anniversary Committees

Programs Coordinator
Mary Iverson

Preschool Lead Teachers
Kaye Lindsley
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice; ISACS Steering; Nominating Committees

Mae Kandler

Preschool Assistant Teachers
Cassidy Daugherty
Hwida Awadalla
Ashley Smith

Kindergarten
Erin Traicoff
ISACS Steering Committee

First Grade
Alec Cassatt

Second & Third Grade
Lisa Kavanaugh

Third & Fourth Grade
Christine Sobocinski
ISACS Steering; Nominating; Strategic Planning Committees; Board Representative

Fifth & Sixth Grade
Ann Creasey
Nominating; Strategic Planning Committees

Integrated Art & Visual Art
Ryan Bentzinger

Music & Performing Art
Kalina Bland

Physical Education
Susan Toth & Suzie Seeheusen

Social Emotional Learning
Rachel Berger

THE PEACEFUL PRAIRIE
Detail of the Peaceful Prairie mural completed by third-sixth graders and supported by Ryan Bentzinger, Teaching Artist and Integrated Arts Coordinator and preschool-second grade students during the 2021-22 school year. This mural was inspired by the native Iowa prairie that once spanned our state and the many prairie animals that represent Willowwind classrooms, such as the red fox and prairie racerunner lizard shown at left. This project took several weeks to complete and now covers all four walls in the SEL room, floor to ceiling.
Our Mission

Willowwind School is a joyful learning community where children develop their unique potential through child-led inquiry.

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Land Acknowledgment

Willowwind School is located on the homelands of the Ojibwe/Anishinaabe (Chippewa), Báxoje (Iowa), Kikapú (Kickapoo), Omāeqnomenenewak (Menominee), Myaamiaki (Miami), Nutachi (Missouri), Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha), Wahzhazhe (Osage), Jiwere (Otoe), Odawa (Ottawa), Páⁿka (Ponca), Bodéwadmi/Neshnabé (Potawatomi), Meskwaki/Nemahahaki/Sakiwaki (Sac and Fox), Dakota/Lakota/Nakoda (Sioux), Sahnish/Nuxbaaga/Nuweta (Three Affiliated Tribes) and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nations. The following tribal nations, Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa), Páⁿka (Ponca Tribe of Nebraska), Meskwaki (Sac and Fox of the Mississippi in Iowa), and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska) Nations continue to thrive in the State of Iowa and we continue to acknowledge them. Willowwind School recognizes that it is our responsibility to acknowledge the sovereignty and the traditional territories of these tribal nations, and the treaties that were used to remove these tribal nations, and the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of Iowa City, Iowa State, and the United States.

(prepared by the University of Iowa Native American Council)

At left: Elise S. (3rd) working on her timeline collage project. Students spread out across the Gathering Space during their work time and had a blast sifting through materials for the just the right thing to help tell their story.
Dear Willowwind School Community,

What a year it has been. The 2021-2022 academic year brought optimism and hope as we felt ready to tackle another pandemic year. Our school community had another incredible year of achievements, celebrations, smiles, and successes. Collectively, we found ways to broaden perspectives and engage more passionately in the activities and causes most meaningful to us. I stand in awe of our school community’s strength and perseverance. In this year’s annual report, we are proud to share some incredible projects, stories, successes, and celebrations that have defined our year.

In 2021, Willowwind introduced its new Integrated Arts program, which combines academic areas like social studies and literacy with the arts. Integrated Arts is a perfect companion to Willowwind’s focus on project-based learning, which provides students with opportunities to learn through various independent and group projects. Integrated Arts brings plays, puppet shows, habitat research projects, poetry, personal stories, and timelines to life with painting, collage, backdrops, puppets, public speaking confidence, and three-dimensional dioramas.

We kicked off 2022 and Willowwind’s 50th anniversary by welcoming founding community members Ruth Manna and Zoe Eskin to Group Discussion, still a Willowwind tradition after all these years. Together we explored how Willowwind has grown over the last 50 years and how many of the school’s founding principles are still practiced today. Our celebration of the school’s 50th year will culminate in a homecoming event on October 15, 2022. We invite anyone who has ever considered themselves a part of Willowwind’s extended community to attend. Please consider joining us for this milestone event.

Willowwind concluded its three-year-long quest for re-accreditation with ISACS (the Independent Schools Association of the Central States). Independent school accreditation is a peer-review process that fosters excellence in education and encourages school improvement through discovery, dialogue, compliance, and commitment. In June, Willowwind received confirmation that it complies with all ISACS’s Standards for Membership and remains in good standing with full accreditation. The next step begins now as Willowwind works to review recommendations and put them into action.

None of what we experience today in our Willowwind community would be possible without every Willowwind member that has played an essential role in our school’s 50 years of history. We proudly share stories and inspiration from our past and present voices. Thank you for your part in continuing to support Willowwind’s successes. Here’s to another 50 years of inspiration where children are at the center of their educational experience, growth, and development.

With gratitude and in celebration,

Michelle Beninga
Head of School
Core Values

SELF-DIRECTION:
We each develop our own unique potential by applying curiosity, goal-setting, and persistence to learning.

COMMUNITY:
Understanding that we are stronger together, we foster healthy connections among members of the Willowwind community as well as between Willowwind and the broader community.

FLEXIBILITY:
We respond with creativity to the needs of our people and educational programs and to opportunities that arise.

INCLUSIVENESS:
We welcome all with kindness and with appreciation for diverse perspectives, circumstances, experiences, abilities, and potential.

STEWARSHIP:
We practice and promote responsible planning and care for the resources of our community and for the natural world around us.

Willowwind School Community

K-6 FAMILY INCOME DIVERSITY
*based on reported tuition tiers

- 44% $200,000 +
- 18% $150,000 - 199,000
- 15% $100,000 - $149,999
- 7% $75,000 - $99,999
- 8% $50,000 - $74,999
- 8% <$49,999

116 STUDENTS IN PRESCHOOL-SIXTH GRADES

9 LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

- Middle Eastern (1%)
- Latino (5%)
- African American (2%)
- Asian (10%)
- Multi-racial (12%)
- Caucasian (70%)

These core values guide how we behave as we live out Willowwind’s mission and consider future opportunities and areas of potential growth.
Willowwind Celebrates 50 Years

Willowwind was founded in 1972 after the closing of the Laboratory Schools at the University of Iowa. A small group of educators and parents saw a gap in local school options and set out to fill it. They sought to create a different kind of learning environment for local children, one that valued self-awareness, cooperation, and emotional development in equal measure with academic and intellectual achievement. Willowwind School opened for the 1972-73 school year, guided by values like self-direction and community. The school’s unique education practices invited child-led exploration, curiosity, creativity, and relationship building, values that remain at the school’s core 50 years later.

The book, *Wind in the Willows* was a favorite of David Hall, Willowwind School’s first director, so when the school’s original property, a small white house at 416 E. Fairchild St., came complete with a willow tree in the front yard, the name Willowwind seemed a fortuitous fit. During its first school year, Willowwind employed one part-time and two full-time teachers and enrolled sixteen students between the ages of four and fourteen. The following year, Willowwind welcomed twenty-five students in first through eighth grades and employed two full-time and several part-time teachers and staff.

Willowwind’s small school community cultivated an enriching environment rooted in the idea that learning best takes place in a relaxed atmosphere of mutual trust and respect with consistent care for the whole child. A mixed grade model allowed children to develop at their own pace, supported mentorship and collaboration, and fostered a sense of community and care for others. During these early years Willowwind faculty grew alongside their students, developing a pedagogy that embraced learning as an exploration involving the whole person.

In 1984, having reached its thirty-five student capacity at the Fairchild St. location, Willowwind leadership, with guidance and support from parents and community members, went in search of a building that would offer the school and its students more room and opportunities to grow. The historic 19th century Leonard-Kool House at 226 S. Johnson Street was purchased and Willowwinders began the 1985-86 school year in their new location with thirty-eight students and seventeen faculty and staff. With the school now located just on the edge of downtown Iowa City, student learning naturally extended well beyond the schoolhouse, into theaters, museums, parks, and even Ralston Creek as faculty utilized and built curriculum around the rich and dynamic culture, history, and natural resources of our local community.

In 2006, as interest in Willowwind’s distinctive program continued to spread, school leadership began to explore new opportunities for growth. The school commissioned local architecture firm, Neumann Monson, to transform the existing Moose Lodge at 950 Dover Street (formerly St. Mark’s United Methodist Church) into an eco-friendly and child-friendly learning space. Expectations for this new space were exceeded and Willowwinders began the 2007-08 school year in their spacious new LEED Gold certified building. This was an exciting time in Willowwind’s history; in addition to the move, the school added a preschool program based on the teachings of Maria Montessori and began the process for independent accreditation for its K-6 program through ISACS (Independent School Association of the Central States).

Today, Willowwind is home to over a hundred students in preschool through sixth grade where long held values like community building and teaching the whole child remain ever present alongside beloved traditions like class plays, partner families, and group discussion. Willowwind continues to foster connections across age groups through regular collaboration, partnerships, and mentoring between classes. Students still spend warm months wading through Ralston Creek observing the ecosystem and collecting samples for science projects. Teachers continue to incorporate the wealth of resources and opportunities our local area provides into everyday learning experiences for their students.

Willowwind looks forward to opening it’s doors and welcoming friends from across the decades at this year’s 50th anniversary homecoming and open house event on October 15th. Come see what we’ve been up to and and enjoy a day with old friends and new. Once a Willowwinder, always a Willowwinder.
WILLOWWIND
HOMECOMING

OCTOBER 15TH
10AM-4PM

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

10:00AM-1:00PM
GAMES & ACTIVITIES
TOURS

11:30AM-1:30PM
SNACKS & LUNCH SERVED

1:00-3:00PM
LIVE MUSIC
PLASTIC RELATIONS

3:00PM-4:00PM
FINAL TOURS

10:00AM-4:00PM
GAMES & ACTIVITIES
MERCH TABLE
VIDEOS & SLIDESHOWS

WILLOWWIND SCHOOL
950 DOVER ST, IOWA CITY
(319)338-6061 INFO@WILLOWWIND.ORG
Integrated Arts

At Willowwind, we believe that providing students with regular opportunities to interact with art is imperative for both personal and academic growth. During the 2021-22 school year, Willowwind piloted its Integrated Arts program. While creativity has frequently merged with academics throughout Willowwind’s history, the Integrated Arts aims to amplify academic experiences through the arts. This program provides exciting opportunities to learn and teach through engaging, multi-faceted projects that bring core curriculum to life. This kind of learning asks students to look at a topic through many different lenses, to collaborate with peers, and to share their knowledge in a variety of ways.

The Integrated Arts program also works with local creatives to bring even more art and learning to Willowwinders. Willowwind welcomed local performers Caleb Rainey and Chuy Renteria, and muralists Jan Duschen and Jon Sims to share their work and creative expertise with K-6 students. We are excited about the continued evolution and expansion of Willowwind’s Integrated Arts program.

PUPPET SHOWS

One of our favorite ways for students to demonstrate learning is through class plays and puppet shows. These projects span several months as students conduct research, collaborate with peers to write scripts, create sets, puppets, and props. This year the Owls (3rd/4th) presented a puppet show about immigration and kindergartners wrote skits on some of the values they learned this year like kindness, responsibility, and respect. Performances were shared across the grades allowing the students themselves to become the teachers.

LITERACY & ART

The Painted Turtles (2nd/3rd) did some very cool projects to build their research, writing, and art skills. Students created personal timelines which shared important milestones or events that have impacted their lives. They carefully outlined, wrote, and edited paragraphs for each event placed along a collaged timeline. Students also interviewed an elder member of their family about their history. They wrote summaries of what they learned and created paintings that represented a part of their family’s story.

THE GREAT IOWA CITY MURAL HUNT

During the fall of 2021, Willowwind’s 3rd-6th grade students embarked on a learning adventure that combined literacy, art and art advocacy, collaboration, and community engagement. The Great Iowa City Mural Hunt is the culmination of this 10-week long project. Students navigated downtown Iowa City to locate and map more than twenty of our city’s stunning murals. They combined this with a literacy unit and wrote clues in different forms of poetry to lead people on a creative hunt through town.

Photos at right: Students are shown at some of the murals located in downtown Iowa City and collaborating on writing clues for the selected murals.
INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Christine Sobocinski was selected for a 2022 Innovation in Education Inspire award!

Nomination excerpt by Michelle Beninga: “Stretch your wings and fly” would be the motto I would give to Christine Sobocinski’s classroom, fondly known as the Burrowing Owls. Christine encourages her students to stretch their wings - utilizing our vibrant local community as their personal classroom. Christine’s students enter her class as young 3rd graders ready to apply foundational skills to the next level of learning. They leave her class at the end of 4th grade, ready for what’s next and with memories that will last a lifetime. Her “Owls” may leave the nest, but will look back with fondness at their unforgettable experiences in Christine’s class.

Congratulations Christine!

ONE BOOK TWO BOOK

During the 21-22 school year, five Willowwinders were recognized for their outstanding writing at Iowa City’s UNESCO One Book Two Book festival.

Kalia C. (2nd) was recognized with “The Write Stuff” award for her poem titled “The Turtle Class Alliteration.” This award recognizes work for its language, clarity, structure, and emotional impact.

Gabby A. (3rd) was also recognized with the “From the Heart” award for her poem titled “Musical Notes.” This award recognizes work for its creativity, passion, and expressiveness.

Jasper H. (2nd), Evan O.H. (6th), and Ben S. (6th) received honorable mentions for their submissions.

Congratulations writers!

Student & Faculty Achievements

Pictured above: Christine Sobocinski, 3rd/4th grade teacher.

Pictured above: Jasper H., Kalia C., Gabby A., Ben S.

Pictured above: Christine Sobocinski, 3rd/4th grade teacher.
Warm greetings to our Willowwind community!

The board of trustees looks to the future and supporting the long term success of our school. The school’s strategic plan provides a guiding framework to focus our energy and activities as we support the Willowwind mission:

*Willowwind School is a joyful learning community where children develop their unique potential through child-led inquiry.*

The board furthered the strategic planning process over the past year through goal setting and transforming vision into actionable items for implementation over the next several years. Guided by our core values - self-direction, community, flexibility, inclusiveness, and stewardship – the board of trustees will implement the strategic plan focusing on a few key areas.

**LONG TERM FINANCIAL HEALTH** - The board worked closely with the school to leverage funding opportunities in order to restructure debt and set long term financial policies. The board also commissioned a feasibility study for a potential capital campaign with the goals of bolstering scholarship opportunities and providing a solid financial bedrock for our school to continue to grow and thrive as a vital asset to our community.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT** - Willowwind is an amazing environment that provides a unique opportunity for our students and families. We are excited to explore how we can continue to expand our offerings and become a fixture and asset to our broader community. We will focus on outreach, engagement and finding opportunities to actively participate and provide service to our broader community. The hard work of the last few years of getting our internal shop in order creates an opportunity to turn our focus outwards in the months and years to come.

**WILLOWWIND TURNS 50!** - The school’s 50th birthday is an opportunity for a little introspection and also to reach out to our alumni community and families. Our Willowwind homecoming event on October 15th will bring a celebration of the school and forum to gather and celebrate the success and endurance of our institution. We look forward to an opportunity to reconnect with old friends and learn from the breadth and depth of experience our community has to offer as we look to the next 50 years!

The board of trustees could not do what we do without the support and collaboration we enjoy with the unparalleled faculty, staff, and community of Willowwind School. We continue to foster a spirit of teamwork and mutual respect as we collectively work to fulfill our school’s potential. We invite you to join us as we look to the future:

*Imagine that by 2025, Willowwind School shines brightly in the larger community for providing valued opportunities not available elsewhere in the educational ecosystem to a diverse group of students.*

*What does this look like?*

Thanks to all for your support and engagement this past year – we are excited for the coming year and all it has to offer!

Sincerely,
The Board of Trustees of Willowwind School

*Right:* Ian B. (5th) and Max B. (3rd) work together on partner biographies where students in different classes interview one another and write a brief bio about their partner. *Far right:* Nora S. (K) practices reading her Authors’ Cocoa poem with her mentor Molly N. (5th). Multi-age collaborations are an important part of the learning environment at Willowwind.
56% of Willowwind families benefit from our sliding scale tuition model and 11% receive additional scholarship funds.
Dear Willowwind Community,

I am so excited to be joining Willowwind during such a monumental year as the Director of Development. I am a recent graduate of the University of Iowa where I studied English and Creative Writing with a minor in Spanish. In my undergrad I was involved in multiple nonprofits and organizations geared at community advocacy and youth. I am now looking forward to bringing this experience and passion to Willowwind.

In the short amount of time I have been here it has been amazing to see the dedication each teacher, staff member, board member, family, and community member has in providing students with the best educational experience possible. It is clear that a kind and collaborative culture is at the heart of the school.

In my role, I will be working closely with Dana Smith, Director of Communications and Engagement to advance development initiatives. I will also work with the strategic planning committee and the board of trustees. I look forward to fostering relationships internally and externally as well as working with development campaigns to ensure a Willowwind education continues to be possible. I am especially excited for our 50th Anniversary and the opportunities it will bring in connecting the community. There are a number of things I am eager to work towards in this position. I hope to expand scholarship funds to advance accessibility and DEIJ practices. I also look forward to working on advancing professional development funds so staff can continue to grow along with our students.

Overall, I am eager to learn more about Willowwind, to form relationships, and make sure the community and mission of the school remain at the center of our development efforts.

Gratefully,

Yassie Buchanan

Ways to Give

**ONLINE**
Give through Venmo
@Willowwind-School
Give through PayPal at willowwind.org/giving

**BY CHECK**
We love getting mail, so if you would like to give by check please send it to:
Willowwind School
950 Dover St.
Iowa City, IA 52245

**CALL US!**
Want to chat before you make a gift?
Want to give by credit card?
Give us a call at (319) 338-6061.

Email Yassie with your development questions and learn more about giving at Willowwind.
yassieb@willowwind.org

We thank you for embodying Willowwind’s goal of creating a compassionate community of Willowwind supporters.
Your Giving Fuels Their Learning

Aside from tuition, donations are Willowwind’s biggest source of income. Without the generosity of our donor community we would not be able to provide students with the unique and enriching education they deserve or enhance their experience through a creative and engaging learning environment. There are a variety of ways you can support Willowwind and help fuel our passion for education and our students’ passion for learning.

ANNUAL FUND

Our annual fund covers a wide range of costs from programming to facility needs making it one of the most fruitful ways to give to the school. The flexibility of the annual fund allows us to make the best decisions for our students year-round. As we consistently strive to provide a top tier education in a joyful learning environment, we look to our annual fund and community of donors for support with everything from day to day needs to larger scale projects and initiatives. Thanks to our 2021-22 annual fund, Willowwind was able to complete a number of concrete repairs including replacing a stretch of sidewalk, re coat and re stripe the asphalt in the parking lot, and improvements to Willowwind’s entryway.

GIVE & GROW

The Give & Grow campaign is held annually in April in partnership with GreenState Credit Union. This campaign gives donors, who are GreenState Credit Union members, the opportunity to have their donations matched with the potential to raise $15,000 for Willowwind. Unlike our annual fund, the Give & Grow campaign is restricted and allocated for specific needs that have been identified at the school. 2021-22 Give & Grow funds will support the continued growth of the Integrated Arts program.

GIFTS IN KIND

Gifts in-kind are another way to support Willowwind’s mission. In kind donations refer to donors donating their services or goods to the school. From telescopes to iPad’s and pottery wheels, our families have continuously advanced our students’ learning environments by providing essential resources and opportunities to expand our curriculum. If you are interested in making an in-kind donation, please contact Yassie Buchanan and she can work with you to bring your gift idea to life.

Email Yassie at yassieb@willowwind.org.

VOLUNTEER

Willowwind is grateful to have such an incredible community of parents and friends. We lean into our volunteers to support Willowwind’s events, outreach initiatives, committee work, and so much more. If you’re interested in volunteering at Willowwind, please sign up through weekly news communications or contact Willowwind’s office manager, Rachel Butler.

Email Rachel at rachelb@willowwind.org.

EMPLOYER MATCH

A great way to enhance the impact of your donation is by turning to your employer for a match. Many employers will match both monetary donations and volunteer hours for current and retired employees. Talk with your employer about doubling the impact of your gift and involving more of the community in Willowwind’s mission.

HILLS BANK CLASSROOM CASH

Hills Bank Classroom Cash is a way for you to donate to the school without deviating from your regular spending. You can select a public or private school district of your choice and Hills Bank will make a small donation with every Hills Bank debit or credit card purchase. You can visit hillsbank.com/classroom-cash to learn more.

AMAZON SMILE

Amazon Smile program allows you to donate to Willowwind with no extra cost to you. If you shop through Amazon Smile, a portion of your purchase cost will be donated to a charitable organization of your choice. You can visit smile.amazon.com to learn more about how your everyday purchases can support Willowwind.

THANK YOU!
For 50 years Willowwind has encouraged the development of well rounded students through the arts, social justice, community involvement, social emotional learning, and more as vital parts of their education. Support from donors like you over the last 50 years has been a driving force in providing Iowa City with a Willowwind education. We cannot overstate how meaningful your investment in our mission is. Donations go beyond fulfilling the necessities for our students’ learning. They ensure our staff are able to continue advancing in their roles, that we have a facility equipped with materials that will enrich students’ experience, and that we are able to strive for more accessibility through scholarships. We thank you for being a part of our Willowwind community and taking this vital role in bringing our mission to life.
Thank you Volunteers (listed by family name)

Allen-Platt
Armstrong
Barr
Cavanaugh
Cespedes Finnerty/Jack
Chen
Dennhardt
Eastman
Erbe-Scheer
Estapa
Gosse
Guernsey
Harding
Hemingway
Jackson
Kuperman
Lee
Lewis/Southard
Longfellow/Mucoglla
Lyons
Markfort
Niemeijer/Dumitrescu
Nizar
Nolan
Papworth
Piper
Ross Ernst
Salisbury
Shriver
Solt Espinosa
Sweeney
Vaughan/Cole
Watson/Lane
Yamada
Yockey

WILLOWWIND VOLUNTEERS DO IT ALL!

• coordinate & support food drives
• set up and work at the Scholastic book fair
• bring in snacks for teachers
• serve on the board of trustees & committees
• bring in supplies for classroom projects
• drive on field trips
• landscape work around campus
• support school events like Thanksgiving feast, Author’s Cocoa, and end of year fun
• support planning and preparations for the 50th anniversary celebration
• carpentry projects for the school
• interior painting
• library shelf organization
• much more!

“\textit{I truly believe young lives are immensely benefited at this school. The sense of strong community stretches to all who are involved.}”

-Parent, Staff & Donor

486!
VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGGED
Reconnect with YOUR Willowwind Community!

willowwind.org/50th

@WillowwindSchool and @WillowwindSchool/alumni   @WillowwindSchool