

## Welcome to a new school year in the Willow Classroom!

Dear Parents,

Our new school year in the Willow classroom is much like a willow tree—strong at the roots, yet graceful and flexible as it grows. Just as the willow's branches reach outward and sway with the changing winds, we, too, are learning to adapt, stretch, and explore new directions together. Its deep roots remind us of the solid foundation of respect, kindness, and curiosity that supports all our learning. The willow provides both shelter and beauty, and in the same way, our classroom is a safe and welcoming space where each child can grow, flourish, and shine.



In the Willow classroom, we don't begin lessons right away—instead, we take time to lay down our roots. The first weeks of school are devoted to learning routines, building connections, and creating a strong sense of community. Just as a willow tree grows stronger and more graceful when well-rooted, we know that by investing in this foundation, the joy of learning will flow more naturally and deeply throughout the year.

### Schedule

We start our morning work time promptly at 8:20 each day. Students arriving prior to 8:30 are marked as arriving on time.

### Extra Events

- Leelanau Outdoor Center: 9/12 and 5/27-5/29
- Theatre Intensive – January 6<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - 2pm – all school performance
  - 6:00 – family and friends
- Swimming: 1/9, 1/16, 1/30, 2/6, and **one additional date (TBD)**
- Other trips (going out, extra field trips, etc.): TBA

### Spelling and Math:

**Math Facts:** We hold daily math facts practice in the classroom moving through all four operations. Each student receives the individualized time needed to master a specific concept. **New:** We are not sending the daily math facts assessment sheets home daily.

**Spelling:** We teach spelling using the Orton Gillingham approach. We assess on Thursdays. We explicitly teach spelling rules and red words in the classroom. The lists come home so you can see what we are working on and for additional practice if your learner is interested.

### Lunch/ Allergies/Snack

We eat lunch outdoors or in the classroom. The school will provide a daily morning snack for all elementary children. Please keep any other snacks at home.

### **Personal Belongings**

Please label all your child's personal belongings; this aids our effort to help the students keep track of their things and minimize lost and found objects. We will keep their rain gear and extra clothing in their cubbies. **Everyone must have rain gear:** Raincoat, rain pants, and rain boots.

If your child has something from home that they would like to share with classmates, they will have an opportunity during “**Show and Tell**” on Fridays. Please help us limit items to the following: something from nature, photographs, something they have made, or something from another culture. \*\*Please keep toys at home.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

We will celebrate with your child on their birthday or half-birthday during the school year. Each student brings in a poster of photographs (please, no digital frames). There should be one picture from each year of life. We encourage your child to write captions to help them present their story. You are welcome to send in a birthday snack to share with the class. Please let me know if you plan to send something.

### **Home/School Communication**

Each student will have a “home folder” that comes home and should return to school every day. We will utilize this folder to send notes and forms back and forth to school. Please help your child develop a habit of bringing it to school daily. This is an excellent opportunity for them to practice independent responsibility.

During the school day (8:20 - 3:40), I am focused on your children. If there is something I should know, please leave a message at the front desk. Should the need arise, please reach out via email so we can schedule an in-person meeting. My email is [jaime@traversechildrenshouse.org](mailto:jaime@traversechildrenshouse.org).

### **Friendship Groups**

Trisha Short, our mental health specialist, will lead friendship groups to supplement our work in social/emotional growth. She will meet with Willow Classroom on 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, and 12/3.

### **Room Parents:**

Lauren Magnatta – Mother of Cassie - [ljmagnatta@gmail.com](mailto:ljmagnatta@gmail.com)  
Arielle Castine – Mother of Charlie - [rucinsk9@gmail.com](mailto:rucinsk9@gmail.com)

I am thrilled to get to know each of your families! I am excited to know your children and share a grand adventure of curiosity, learning, and discovery with them!

Warmly,  
Jaime Janiszewski  
Willow Classroom Lead Guide  
She/her/hers