



Willow Wood
limitless learning

one size
does not
fit all



Welcome Director's Message

When visitors walk into the building for the first time they often remark on the special feeling the school has.

That feeling (which I call magical) is a combination of the history and philosophy of the school, the energy of the staff, and the spirit of the students.

We know that one size does not fit all and that students flourish when their school embraces their strengths, addresses their needs and respects their dignity. My staff and I have been

successfully delivering student-centered, individualized education in a warm and caring environment for over 40 years.

That's the magic we make at WillowWood.

If your family is seeking a new style of school with a strong history of inspiring students, come by for a visit. I'd love to meet you.

Joy Kurtz
Director

We know that one size does not fit all and that students flourish when the school embraces their strengths, addresses their needs and respects their dignity.



Welcome Principals' Messages

We all learn differently. When teachers recognize this and help students to understand how they learn best, it creates an environment that is truly limitless.



It's not earth-shattering; it's simply good teaching to provide an opportunity for students to understand themselves in the context of a world that is constantly changing around them – and to do so in a place that is caring if needed, nurturing at times, firm with guidelines, positive in approach, and always, challenging students to be their best.

My staff and I strive to provide such an environment at WillowWood in our efforts to produce life-long learners fully cognizant of the world around them and the tools they need to establish their place in it.

Fred Howe
Principal

I am proud to have been a part of the WillowWood family for almost 30 years, and I love my job! I am passionate about teaching and enjoy being a part of creating a caring and effective teaching team.

I believe in the power of changing lives by reaching students and helping them achieve their goals. At WillowWood we don't limit ourselves to traditional ideas and methods – we persist until we find an approach that meets the varying needs of all of our students.

Jill Block
Principal of Lower and Middle School





History

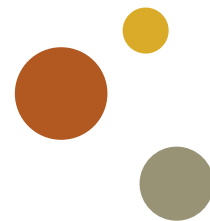
A Right to Learn

WillowWood was opened in 1980 by Joy Kurtz and Heather Spear.

The two teachers had developed a unique approach to teaching while working across the hallway from each other in the 1970s: by combining the needs of students in the special education program and those of the general population of students, the two had honed the individualized approach to education still employed at WillowWood today.

WillowWood opened to just 30 students in the fall of 1980, but expanded its size, population and the grades taught within the year. When a full building became available in 1983, the school moved to the building on Willowdale Avenue where the school lived until 1997.

In 1997, when the school's population had outgrown its space, WillowWood purchased the current building at 55 Scarsdale Road – 43,000 square feet on three acres. And this is where the school lives today, with a population of around 250 students: big enough to be bustling, and small enough to be familial.



Philosophy

Personal Education

WillowWood has been ahead of the educational curve in recognizing, since its inception, that one size does not fit all.



WillowWood has a long tradition of delivering targeted, personal education which considers each student's needs, inclinations and strengths. This individualized approach ensures that students are able to discover and embrace their strengths, address their weaknesses, and maintain their dignity. Classes are small, the atmosphere is warm, and the pedagogical approach is holistic.

WillowWood is a family-style school. Students and teachers enjoy friendly, genuine interactions in and out of classes. Students at WillowWood find a remarkable lack of clique-competition and bullying, as students internalize the family feeling.

Conflict is dealt with quickly and fairly, with understanding and through communication whenever possible. Students are given agency and encouraged to set personal goals, to develop self-advocacy and communication skills – all while knowing that help is available for the asking and that assistance provided will respect their dignity. All of this makes WillowWood a great school for a wide variety of students.

Reluctant students learn to take chances. Students who feel rudderless are encouraged to find their interests and engage with them. Student strengths are enriched, encouraged and explored. Anxious students become leaders, lonely students make friends, and *all students get a chance to relax and become themselves. Everybody learns.*

Academics

Respect for Individuals

WillowWood's academic program is broad. Our classes run from the first grade to the end of High School, and prepare learners for post-secondary pursuits.

All of our courses follow the Ontario Curriculum, and students leaving WillowWood for other schools are prepared and on-track. WillowWood is inspected regularly by the Ministry of Education, and we regularly receive accolades for our adherence to their regulations and guidelines.

Our small class sizes in all grades and individualized programming allow students to work at their challenges, find and embrace their strengths and passions, and reach their potential. Students are able to enrich or remediate as needed, in specific areas – so a student excelling in English but struggling in Math can work at two grade levels at the same time.

WillowWood offers a wide variety of novel courses, depending on student interests and teacher knowledge sets. At different times over the last decade, we've offered classes in dance, German language, health and nutrition, film studies, photography, exercise science, and more.

We also employ the STEAM integrated approach to learning. STEAM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

WillowWood also offers and encourages out-of-classroom experiential learning. We offer yearly

opportunities for travel (to Europe, Costa Rica, and China/Hong Kong), as well as more local outings – to Queen's Park, the TIFF Lightbox, Kensington Market, Rogers Centre, farms, theatres, and more. We also bring guests in to teach students about a wide variety of career paths. We've had business leaders, politicians, doctors, film producers, photographers and actors visit our classes and our annual career fair. All of these encourage students to see the application and results of learning, and inspire curiosity, diligence, and goal-setting.

Finding areas of passion and strength is a key mission for us. All staff keep an eye out for opportunities which may allow a student to find or explore a talent or interest – whether this is in a subject area, an extracurricular area, a social situation or any other niche. *No one is left to slip through the cracks.*

40 Years delivering targeted, personalized education that considers each student's unique needs, inclinations, strengths, and learning styles.



WillowWood's Art Programs are thorough and broad. Students with an interest or talent are provided whenever possible with opportunities to learn, perform and teach others about their passions.

Arts

FILM STUDIES

WillowWood incorporates Film into courses from Middle School onwards – as narrative, and technical analysis. Students who enjoy it can take two courses in Film Studies – one an overview of Film history in Hollywood, and another concerning Canadian and World film. We've sent students to Film School many times over the last decade.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS

The technical and behind-the-scenes aspects of the Arts are important at WillowWood as well. Students with an interest have opportunities to learn about lighting, mics and sound, set-design, costume and makeup, writing and directing.

Students interested in Photography, Animation, Design and Film can take courses which include practical application, software, and theoretical aspects.

VISUAL ARTS

Our Visual Arts program has been around as long as the school and has helped develop gifted artists who've gone on to OCAD and Fine and Practical Arts programs in colleges and universities.

THEATRE

Our Theatre program has run for decades and has blossomed mightily since the gymnasium was built in 2001; we now have a strong tradition of two annual shows – Holiday Happening, a variety show, in December, and a full-school Musical Theatre production in the Spring involving students from all grades.

MUSIC

Our robust Music program offers students of all ages a chance to shine, whether it be in a rock band, a choir, or as a solo performer. Students perform at assemblies, Springfest, and in the Cafeteria Coffeehouse during lunch.



Fitness, health and athletics are a major part of WillowWood life.

Students of all ages are encouraged to participate in some aspect of the program, whether that be a team, a workout regimen, or a healthy approach to food and health. While we love to win when we compete, all of our activities are underlined by a belief that there is much more to athletics than that: all of our coaches and teachers place emphasis on effort, participation, and the many lessons that can be learned from team-play, goal-setting and competition.

FACILITIES

WillowWood has an excellent gymnasium and fitness room and our facilities and programs continue to grow. We have two local parks for the better-weather months, a basketball court outside, a track and field area for Lower and Middle School, and a partnership with Shendy's Swim School that has allowed us to add swimming to our program roster. We head out into the GTA and beyond for experiences such as rock climbing, trampolining, treetop trekking and camping.

COMPETITIVE SPORTS

WillowWood plays as a member of the SSAF (Small Schools Athletic Federation), competing with schools

Healthy Active Living

from all over the GTA in many sports including: Cross Country Running, Ultimate Frisbee, Flag Football, Golf, Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, Curling, Bowling, Ice Hockey, Soccer, Ball Hockey, Softball, Track and Field, Table Tennis and Golf. The numerous championship banners hanging in our gymnasium are testament to the success of WillowWood Warriors sports teams.

INTRAMURAL SPORTS

Opportunities for all levels of the school to play basketball, soccer

or ball hockey are available during lunches and after school. Students often take the initiative of arranging tournaments, pickup games and staff-student contests. Leadership and cross-level opportunities abound – Senior students helping coach or officiate games, for example, with the Primary grades. Yoga and meditation clubs run during lunches, and a growing number of students are taking advantage of this.



WillowWood encourages the use of technology in learning throughout the school, at all levels, and for varied purposes.

Technology and Communication

COMMUNICATION

WillowWood's online presence enhances communication. Through our Blackbaud/MyWillow system, website, and regular e-newsletters, as well as our YouTube and Facebook presences, we strive to keep information flowing clearly to all of our parents, guardians and students.

Of special note is our Blackbaud/MyWillow system, where students and parents can keep up with homework as well as attendance

and marks, and which allows students preferring digital organization to download notes and assignments.

WillowWood takes an engaged and active approach to our evolving relationships with smartphones, gaming and social media, with an emphasis on mindful engagement and mental health.



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology has changed the way children can learn – and how teachers can teach.

Technology is an integral part of our teaching and learning process through several evidence-based practices designed to support academic performance. Computers of all types are welcome in classrooms (laptops, tablets, smartphones) and encouraged for academic purposes. Our school-wide wireless network and display tools make it easy to integrate online materials such as instructional videos, websites, online maps and communication tools.

Academic Support programs for Lower School students use tablets for their hands-on and inspiring learning apps. Teachers help students learn to live in a healthy, balanced way with their screens, and to use them to help organize, plan, present and communicate what they are learning.



The Foundation Program

Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2 Individualized Education

KINDERGARTEN, GRADE 1 AND 2 PROGRAMS

Grade 3 is the first major transition period for students in Ontario.

Our K, Grade 1 and 2 Foundation Program makes the jump to upper primary easier for all students, especially those with unique learning styles.

The program offers individualized program delivery of core areas of learning. This enables students to learn at their own level of skill development and independent functioning.

We offer double the Language and Math instruction that is typically available in Grade 1 and 2 programs, and support it with music and physical education.

We include Social Skills development in the curriculum to help students cope with stress, work effectively in teams and treat others with respect.

Technology has changed the way children can learn and how teachers can teach. It forms an integral part of our teaching and learning process through several evidence-based practices designed to support academic performance.

In addition, the program includes cognitive skill development in the areas of memory, attention, visual and sensory processing and integration.

LEAP AHEAD TO GRADE 3

This program provides us with a comprehensive understanding of your child's learning style. We identify and nurture strengths and challenges early in the learning process helping

us create a personalized education plan that is put into effect in Grade 3.

The Foundation Program provides the building blocks crucial to your child's academic and social success.

Your child will benefit from:

- In-school diagnostic testing, tracking and goal-setting
- Research-based best practices
- Intensive Language instruction
- Targeted technology use
- A flipped classroom model
- Intensive Math instruction

- Cooperative learning
- 40 years of experience delivering student-centered, individualized education in a warm and caring environment

We apply a unique, research-based approach to academic skill development for students in grades 1-2.



Summer Programs

WillowWood's Summer programs offer educational and fun activities for all ages. Students in Grades 1 to 8 can participate in the Discovery Program, which includes academic classes (Reading, Writing, Math, Science), Leadership programs and Arts activities.



WillowWood offers a variety of Summer Programs for different ages and interests.

For Grades 1 to 6 the day program Camp Discovery is a mixture of academic skills, training and summer time fun.

For Grades 7 and 8 students there are the Challenge Yourself and Leadership Training Programs, and a combination of both.

Young teens (Grades 7 to 10) can enroll in skill-specific programs to enhance their English and Math education, or to help make a successful transition to High School classes.

For High School students, we offer a wide variety of grade 9 to 12 credit courses for academic and applied and other programs.

Preparation for the Grade 10 Literacy Test is available, as is our fantastic TOSS program which teaches students how to use helpful assistive technologies such as voice-to-text software and organizational tools.

High School students can take credit courses to catch up or jump ahead. Classes offered depend on enrollment and interest; recent offerings include Math, English, Science, History, Geography, ESL, and recently introduced Online course offerings.

Academic offerings can be balanced out with fun, active classes in Tennis, Swimming, Leadership, Arts. All of these programs offer opportunities for personal exploration and group-skill building, and teachers in the Summer Programs are all trained professionals with the same invested, enthusiastic approach that WillowWood uses all year long.

WillowWood has many support programs for students as part of our mandate to provide education for all.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Academic supports are numerous and varied. Individual student needs are assessed to determine which will be employed, in consultation with students and parents. Small class groupings and fluidity between grade levels are a starting point, and individualized lessons and extra teacher support bolster results for most students who need it. Specific skill instruction in identified problem areas occurs individually and in micro-groups.

Extra support programs are provided to students who need them – some for an extra fee, and some complimentary. All are decided after an assessment of need, and some are limited in the number of students who can participate. Regular IEP-directed supports are implemented in classrooms as a matter of daily course.

In the Lower and Middle School (Grades 1 to 8) extra support programs include programs such as Reasoning and Writing, Reading Comprehension, Expressive Writing, Math Support, Organizational Skills, and Assistive Technology.

Support Programs

Respect for Individuals

In the High School (Grades 9 to 12), students can receive extra support in the TOSS (Technology and Organization: Strategies and Skills) program, which focuses on organizational, time management and learning strategies through the use of various technologies. This program is offered in cooperation with a credit course (GLE10, 20, 30, 40) available to students with an IEP and or as a non-credit support.

For all students learning English as a Second Language (ESL), support programming is provided automatically. Should a student require more intensive programming, parents/guardians will be contacted.

Daily after-school tutoring and study groups are available for all students (in Homework Hubs), and teachers are always willing to help at other times.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

WillowWood has a counselor on staff to support students struggling with social or emotional issues. She is available during school hours to support students and their families and to help students find a healthy balance between keeping up with school and managing stress.

We also have an Art Therapist in our Lower School who meets regularly with small groups to discuss interpersonal issues and teach healthy problem-solving skills.

GUIDANCE

High School students have a Guidance Counselor, available to help with making choices – about courses to take, paths to follow, and with the College and University application process.



WillowWood takes a team-oriented approach to helping students adjust to living in Canada

WillowWood's International Program is a fully immersive environment integrated with our Domestic Program. Toronto is a safe yet vibrant city that welcomes students from all over the world. Our K to 12 international students get the same team-oriented approach to learning for which WillowWood is famous. Students experience Canada and become part of a warm, friendly environment that is dedicated towards student success. Your child's team includes:

International Program

- International Student Coordinator
- Highly qualified teachers
- Arts instructors
- English development instructors
- Athletic coaches
- Club leaders
- Guidance counselors (to assist with post-secondary planning, applications and scholarships).

Together we embrace each student at their own stage of learning and set clear, personal and curricular goals for achievement. This can involve a greater focus on developing English skills, often through our ESL program.

In our High School division, the program focuses on acceptance into post-secondary education in Canada and around the world. Students from WillowWood attend some of

the most prestigious programs in Canada including the Universities of Toronto (U of T), Waterloo, McGill, McMaster, and Western.

WillowWood international students are encouraged to compete in various Canadian Mathematics competitions such as the Fermat, Euclid, Pascal, and Cayley contests. Our students routinely place in the top 10 percent of the country and we could not be more proud of them.



“WillowWood School helped me discover my talents, which greatly contributed to all of my academic accomplishments. I was able to go to my dream school (UofT), and with the creativity derived from my experience at WillowWood, I founded an early stage Fintech startup.”

Eric Lee - WillowWood Graduate '21 and winner of U of T's prestigious Robert M. Friedland Engineering Award

Testimonials

Inspired to Take on the World

“ I think WillowWood is the best thing that ever happened to me. This school has given me everything – confidence, happiness, great friends and memories. ”

“From the day we first came to see the school and meet the staff, we knew it was the right place. Your view was that students should be challenged to their level of ability by a teaching staff that was both understanding and sensitive to students’ special social and academic needs. It was exactly what we were looking for!”

Parents

“I think WillowWood is the best thing that ever happened to me. This school has given me everything – confidence, happiness, great friends and memories I will keep with me forever... Thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn, play, and grow up here. You truly saved my life!”

Alumni

“Joan gained confidence in herself and smiles a lot more! She is finally seeing results with her hard work and gets excited when a new project is assigned. We never have to ask her to do homework, she dives in as soon as we get home!”

Parents

“In Simon’s early years at WillowWood, we questioned whether he would make it to college because of his severe Learning Disability. Simon’s teachers thought otherwise; they assured us that Simon would continue to university – and they were right. To date, he has received several law school acceptances, including Osgoode Hall Law School.”

Parents

“This is the first year that Andrew is excited about school.”

Parents

“There are no words to describe the impact that WillowWood School has had on the life of our family and to Amanda. Her life has been transformed thanks to the amazing staff and teachers who went above and beyond every day. She has been accepted into all of the Colleges and Universities that she applied to, which was something we did not know to be possible when she joined the school.”

Parents

“They help the students create, then build work practices that will set them up for success not only for exams but for life moving forward.”

Parent

“Sam has truly blossomed under your care and guidance and we will forever remember all that you have taught him – both academically and emotionally. We know that Sam has the strength, security and strong sense of self to move forward to the next step of his journey – and that is because of the incredible staff and programming at WillowWood. From the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU.”

Parents

“Jack goes to school with a smile every day. He views WillowWood not just as a school but a second home. Thank you all for giving Jack the confidence to succeed.”

Parents



Admissions

A Holistic Approach

Would you like to see our school in action? Come to an Open House event or book a personal tour.

WillowWood admissions involve determining the fit between the student and school. Our process involves several steps:

DOMESTIC APPLICATIONS

1. An information interview with the parent(s) or guardian(s).
2. In Lower and Middle School (grades 1 to 8), the prospective student usually visits the relevant grade's classroom for a morning. In High School, (grades 9 to 12), the student comes in for an interview with a member of the admissions team, and a tour.
3. A review of documentation is conducted by the admissions team.
4. Placement is offered.

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS

1. A parent, guardian or agent contacts the school and receives a list of required documents.
2. The information is assessed by our admissions team.
3. An interview meeting (in person, telephone or Skype) is held with the prospective student and our admissions team.
4. Placement is offered.

Inquiries are welcome all year.

To learn more, please call 416 444-7644, or email admissions@WillowWoodSchool.ca.

“ At WillowWood you’ve got the process and the right people and when you put those two together, then it’s magical. ”



Video Gallery

Explore WillowWood by clicking on the videos below



Waffle Cones and Delivery Drone Commercial



New Playground and Solar Panels



Message from the Principal - Fred Howe



Message from the Alumni - Ann Fu '20



Physics 11 Class Rocket Launch



Science Show for Grades 1-6

Social Media, Tour and Blog

Check out our virtual tour, blog, videos, and news on our social media. Just click and follow!



Facebook



Instagram



YouTube



Twitter



Vimeo



Our Kids



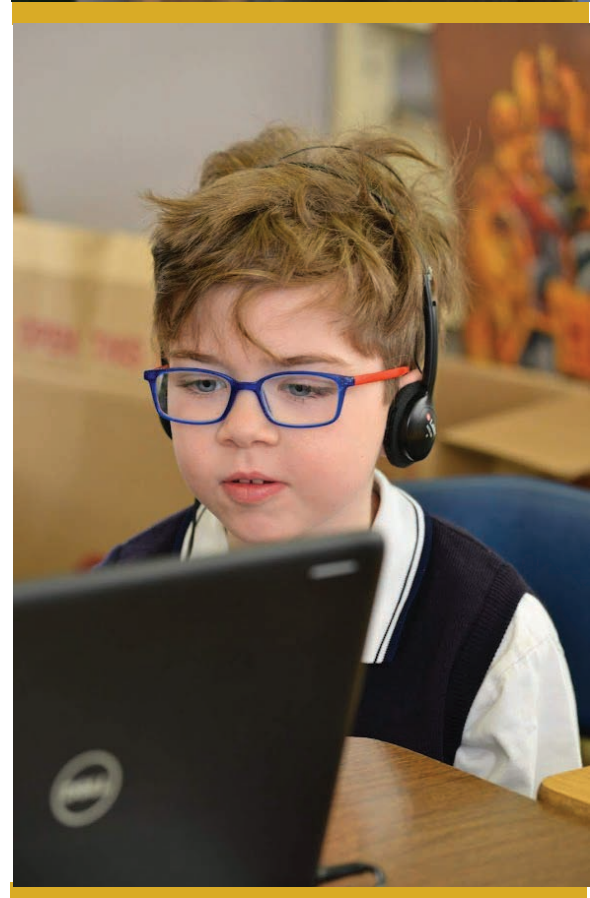
LinkedIn



Virtual Tour



Blog







WillowWood School

Co-ed independent private school for Grades 1-12

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