

Greetings Kaleidoscope Families!

It's that time again to step back and reflect on another year of Kaleidoscope. And, as always, I find myself a little awestruck by just how much happens here—and by the very real impact this little school has on our island families and community.

If you think of this Annual Report as the Board's yearly final project, then this year's project has a theme: **What do we need to do now to make sure Kaleidoscope is here for the long haul?**

We know the cost of doing this work is changing. **Wages and benefits are increasing**, and our financial projections tell us we will face budget shortfalls in the coming years if we don't make some intentional changes. This isn't a crisis—it's an **invitation to get to work**.

Our goal this year is to strengthen the bridge between Kaleidoscope and the **broader Orcas community**. We are working to expand communication and outreach, build meaningful relationships, and create a thoughtful **donor development plan** that will strengthen our financial foundation for the future.

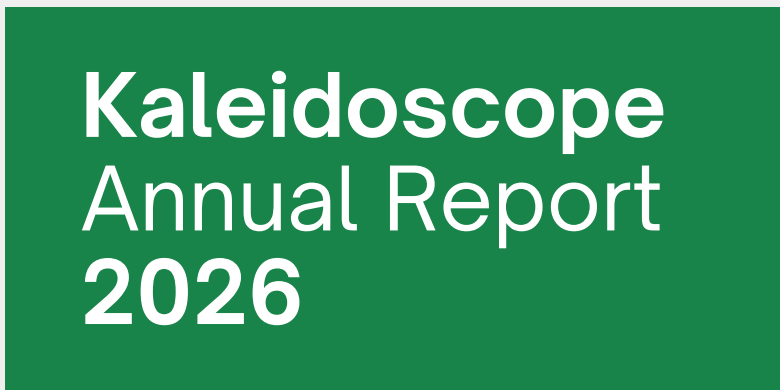
And we need more people around the table. We are actively looking for folks to contribute in ways that work for them: as **ambassadors** making connections and building goodwill in the community; as **committee members** bringing fresh perspectives; or as **volunteers** helping out with projects around the school or delivering lunches to the forest. Heck, we're even recruiting **a couple of new Board members**, if that sounds like something up your alley!

Kaleidoscope has always been a **community effort**. Our job as a Board is to help ensure that this community continues to see the value of this remarkable program—and has opportunities to be part of **sustaining it**.

So, as you read through this report, I hope you'll celebrate what we've accomplished, ask questions about where we're headed, and consider **how you might help us get there**.

We couldn't do it without you!

With gratitude,
Regan Vaughn
Board President, Kaleidoscope



Kaleidoscope by the Numbers

For the 2025-2026 school year, Kaleidoscope:

- Was open for **251 days**, more than **2,500 working hours** which provided nearly **204,300 hours** of high-quality preschool and childcare services to island families
- Supported over **120 children** from **90 families** who work for **over 100 unique businesses**
- Facilitated **over 1,000 bags of food** from the Orcas Island Food Bank finding their way into island homes (Each week, Kaleidoscope staff pick up the bags from the food bank and arrange them so families can pick them up at the end of their work day)
- Provided approximately **1,000 hours** of inclusive, 1:1 education dedicated to the support of children with special needs
- Had **103 students** in attendance on our busiest summer day
- Was **1 of 15 programs** chosen from across Washington state to participate in the COMETS study (read more →)
- Received funding for **708 hours** of preschool from the Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECEI), a local organization whose mission is to provide all of Orcas Island's youngest learners permanent access to high-quality education
- Served **12,284** wholesome breakfasts, **14,331** nutritious lunches, and **13,673** delicious snacks for a total of **40,388** meals shared across programs
- Provided summer programming for **25 Big Kids** (read more →)
- Returned approximately **3,000 golf balls** to Orcas Island Golf Course
- Employed over **30 people**, making Kaleidoscope the largest county-based, year-round 501(c)(3) employer in San Juan County
- Received over **100 musical lessons** from Music Charly, thanks to the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival Preschool Music Program
- Facilitated **272 hours** of teaching team gatherings for assessment, planning, reflection, individualization, discussion, and professional growth
- Spent about **80%** of our **2-million dollar operating budget** on supporting our staff in the form of wages, benefits, training, etc. Our employees are assets worth investing in!
- Supported **28 children** who were new to childcare
- Helped **15 kiddos** learn to use the potty independently
- Prepared **18 kids** for kindergarten



COMETS Study Continues

Kaleidoscope had the privilege of continuing participation in COMETS, an ongoing research study through Washington State University evaluating the impact of outdoor preschool on children's gut health, stress, well-being, and resilience. COMETS stands for **C**hildhood **O**besity: The role of the gut **M**icrobiome, **O**utdoor **T**ime, and **S**tress. Our kiddos wear "superhero belts" for 2 separate weeks to record physical activity during which families collect saliva and stool samples (of kiddos and adults!) after which the research team returns to Orcas to collect the specimens. This is our third year as Scientists. Only 15 schools across the state were chosen to participate, and we are excited to see the scientific proof of what we already know - that Forest School is cool!

Another Summer of Big Kids!

This summer we gathered school aged groups for 9 weeks to explore the forest, collaborate with friends, learn about nature, and chill in the hammock. We even made space for Wednesday afternoons during the Spring. Many of them were Kaleidoscope alumni, so it was awesome to reconnect with those families and spend time with the new, larger version of these people. We also made some new friends along the way and look forward to doing it again next year.

Other Updates

Through the Orcas Island Community Foundation's GiveOrcas campaigns, Kaleidoscope was able to fully fund our Bringing Books Home program which will put more than 1,032 books in 86 homes across the island **and** secured funding to ensure the safety of our forest which has allowed us to work with certified safety arborists to improve the health of all **7.3 acres** of our forest learning space.

The Orcas Garden Club awarded us funds to revitalize our center's garden and get creative in forest gardening. Our kiddos LOVE gardening, especially if it involves eating strawberries they had in a hand in growing.

Amber Paulsen, our director, traveled to Olympia with a dedicated team of professionals from Opportunity Council's Child Care Aware Team for Childcare Advocacy days where she was able to meet with legislators to emphasize the critical role childcare plays in Washington State's economic health.

The Kaleidoscope Team

BOARD

Aaimee Johnson - Alex Stephenson - Amanda Caps - Chris Adams - Conor Anderson
Katherine Minnick - Mandy Niehoff - Regan Vaughn

STAFF

Adelai Robison - Alexandria Beyer - Alison Calhoun - Amari Houston - Amber Paulsen
Becca McDowell - Breena Sunn - Brita Brahce - Eava Wood - Eliot Paulsen
Emily Ibarra-Garcia - Emma Orantes - Erika Smith - Gisselle Valladarez - Heidi Staub
Iris Arevalo Perez - Jenna Hillenbrand - Jess Townsend - Jessica Staub - Katelyn Minnis
Kelly Doty - Leigh Rothschild - Mery Schutz - Mimi Nikaido - Mira Johnson - Riley Copeland
Samantha Pickard - Shannon Quishenberry - Shelbi Rogers - Shelby Sanders
Tatum Wright - Tracy Lavoie - Uriah Koch - Walker Blevins - Yanni Ibarra



Thoughts from Kaleidoscope Families

Kaleidoscope has been a tremendous blessing for our family over the past three years. Amber and the rest of the team are kind, accommodating, and thoughtful in their approach to child care and education. We are so grateful that our son has had the opportunity to attend this program!

Leah

We are so grateful for Forest School! Our son's curiosity has blossomed so much because of how enthusiastic the Forest teachers are about his interests. We feel lucky to be able to give him such a special childhood here on Orcas!

Mia

My four year old has an extremely advanced vocabulary for describing her feelings thanks to her forest school teachers. She's constantly teaching me new things for example a cute "rainbow breathing" technique for when she is feeling really worked up, excited, angry, or sad. She's grown so much in emotional regulation this year and our family has so much gratitude for the Kaleidoscope team. 🍌

Haley

Our family is so grateful for Kaleidoscope. I know they care deeply about my kids. We have been through so many important years with them and it feels like we're all collaborating together to help our kids thrive through the many phases we've walked through. I appreciate their expertise and approach which has always had our kids success at the heart of it. Thank you!

Alainah

This was our family's 3rd at the kaleidoscope forest program. Our kids love spending time in the forest. We love that they get to spend so much time in nature and seeing how creative they are. We so are grateful for our experience.

Ashley

We absolutely love Kaleidoscope and feel so lucky that Amelia gets to spend her days there. The teachers are truly wonderful - so caring, attentive, and genuinely excited to help her learn and grow. We love getting to see all the pictures of her throughout the day and the thoughtful, fun activities they plan for the kids. Most importantly, Amelia is always so happy to be there, and seeing how comfortable and excited she is makes us feel so confident that she is in the best hands.

Annalies

The team of teachers and staff at Kaleidoscope truly goes above and beyond to support families. I've felt so supported every step of the way, and it means so much to know my kiddo absolutely loves his time in the forest, surrounded by friends and kind, caring teachers.

Kyra

I have watched the boys thrive in the forest and there hasn't been one second where I felt like our family did not belong or fit in. I am a true believer in the forest school setting and everything/everyone it has to offer.

Katherine

It's hard to understand the importance of early learning - until you have a kid. Then you see how important it is for your child to learn from their peers, to socialize, to play, and to discover who they are. Kaleidoscope offers the space, the professionalism, and the safety for our child to grow and learn.

Jeff

I love it!

Ellie

My son has grown so much during his year in the Forest. It has been wonderful to see him become more confident and outgoing. He has developed such heartwarming relationships with both staff and his peers, which has been incredibly meaningful to our family. The program has been truly special, and we are so grateful for the care, encouragement and support our son and family have received. We feel very fortunate to be part of such a wonderful community and to watch him flourish in the Forest.

Tiffany

We are so grateful for the teachers and staff in the forest and Kaleidoscope community. We have watched Etolin just bloom and thrive from her forest experience. We are always impressed with the knowledge she comes home with - from being able to identify different flowers to being able to name a number of different heavy equipment machines (EXCAVATORS!!!) Thank you!

Mandy

We'll sing the Kaleidoscope Team's praises all day! Our family has been navigating some big changes - and big feelings - this year and Colm's teachers / Kal staff have met and supported us at every step along the way. We are full up with gratitude for the way he is received, cared for, taught, fed, guided, and lovingly corrected. Sterling is loving the summer Big Kids program - so glad this is an option for our family to stay connected in the future.

Carlin

Our three kids have had the incredible opportunity to attend Kaleidoscope's Forest Program. Our youngest is in Cedar and our two older kids were able to be part of the big kids program this summer for a few weeks. I have been told that next summer they want to do the Big Kid Forest program for as many weeks as we can swing because they loved it so much. And our youngest's experience in the Cedar classroom has similarly been positive. There are many days she doesn't want to go home when we get there because she's having so much fun.

Kate

We've been so happy to be a Kaleidoscope family for the past four years. Charlie started in Waddler when he was one, moved into Toddler, then the Forest. Each classroom has been a special experience and our family has felt supported by the teachers and staff with every joy and challenge. In the forest, Charlie learned critical Kindergarten readiness skills such as sharing, problem-solving, using the bathroom independently, expressing feelings, fine motor skills, and counting - among many others! Charlie's three years of forest school have made him well-prepared and ready for the next step, Kindergarten. Our 2.5 year old Sam is now following in Charlie's footsteps in the forest.

Betsy

Kaleidoscope has been such a wonderful place for our family. We are incredibly grateful for the outstanding care Kaleidoscope provides for our 5- and 3-year old kiddos. They have created a space where our children are able to grow, rest, explore, and have truly enriching and holistic experiences while my husband and I are at work. It gives us such peace of mind knowing our kids are in an environment where they are cared for, nurtured, and encouraged to be curious and themselves. We have seen growth in the both of them, and we are so thankful for the thoughtful, dedicated people who make Kaleidoscope such a special place. We wholeheartedly recommend Kaleidoscope to any family looking for exceptional childcare.

Quincy

Where do I begin?! Amazing! Wonderful! A blessing to this community and I'm forever grateful 🍌

Brittany