Hello! My name is **Natalie Elam**, and I am your child's Primary (1-2) teacher for 2026-2027. I am so excited to get to know all my students and families!

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME & OUR CLASSROOM

This is my 5th year at TPS and my 13th year teaching. I love being a teacher at TPS. I have a bachelor's degree in Outdoor Recreation and Elementary Education from Southern Illinois University. I also have a master's in early childhood education from Arizona State University. I have taught preschool in Illinois and New Zealand, and in a multiage K-4 classroom in England. After teaching abroad, I spent 6 years at home with my children while we lived in Tempe, Arizona. We moved to Bloomington in 2019 and love it here! I taught K-2 online at MCCSC and then found my teaching home at TPS in 2022. I enjoy using STEM and project-based learning in my classroom. I think it is important to make a connection with each child and family. I look forward to getting to know you all. When I am not teaching, I enjoy spending time with my husband, two kids and dog: hiking, traveling, enjoying the outdoors, playing board games, doing puzzles, and reading.

Your child can call me Ms. Natalie, and my pronouns are she/her.
You can reach me at nelam@theprojectschool.org.
Our classroom will be known as the 1-2 KIWIS!
Click here to complete a Classroom Survey to help me get to know your child and family!

HIGHLIGHTS YOU CAN EXPECT IN OUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

We will spend the first couple weeks of school getting to know each other, spending time building our classroom community, and going over routines. We'll also spend time doing assessments to learn more about your child's strengths.

INTRODUCING OUR ARTS & INCLUSION TEACHERS

Here are some additional educators who support the learning of our students:

Sara Irvine (Ms. Sara, she/her) – Visual Arts Specialist
Howdy from (K-8) Visual Arts at TPS with Ms. Sara. I've been with TPS since its 2008 inception and am one of the founders of this wild and wonderful place. When I'm not at TPS2 wrangling the Visual Arts Rodeo, I am at home with my 5 horses, 5 dogs, and one cat. One of my favorite times of year is when all the TPS babes come to Yard Dogs Farm for Field Days. Giddy-up! Reach me: sirvine@theprojectschool.org.

Chris Bultman (Mr. Chris, he/him) – Performing Arts Specialist
Mr. Chris has been the Performing Arts specialist for TPS since 2010, and this year marks his 32nd year of teaching. He began in 1994 at The Curtis School in Los Angeles, where he also spent many of those sixteen "California years" as a performer in music, theatre, and TV – including brief co-starring roles as rather random French doctors on the soap opera "Days of Our Lives." Aside from his passion for all things performing arts, Chris loves outdoors, his dog Moshi, and his big, loving family! Reach me: cbultman@theprojectschool.org.

Em Jalkanen (Ms. Em, she/her) – Primary Inclusion Teacher
I am the Primary Inclusion Teacher at The Project School. This is my second year in this role after spending more than 12 years teaching in early elementary classrooms. I love partnering with students, families, and teachers to create learning experiences that help every child feel included, supported, and successful. One of my favorite parts of my job is celebrating each student's unique strengths while helping them build confidence, independence, and resilience. Outside of school, I enjoy reading, playing games, and spending time with my

husband and our three energetic children. I am looking forward to a wonderful year of learning and growing together! During the first few weeks, I'll be popping into rooms to observe and spend time with students exploring likes/dislikes, strengths, and what they are working on. Reach me: ejalkanen@theprojectschool.org.

WHERE OUR CLASSROOM IS LOCATED

Our classroom is on the first floor on the east side of the Main Building. Your child will walk up the ramp and enter through the Main Building front door each morning. Once they enter the front door, they'll turn right and walk straight to enter a double classroom. The front half is our room, and the back half is Ms. Alanna's!

WHO ELSE AT TPS CAN HELP!

We want to make sure that you know that everyone on our staff is excited to welcome you and your child, and eager to help all of you feel comfortable at the start of the new year! Specifically, we want to mention some key people and the roles they play, along with their contact information. You can always find their names and contact information on the website, too:

Lori Ihle – School Principal
Contact Ms. Lori with overarching instructional questions (beyond classroom curricular topics)
lihle@theprojectschool.org

Nicole Eller – Special Education Coordinator
Contact Nicole with questions about Individual Education Plans and support services
neller@theprojectschool.org

Alex Wulf – Office & Facilities Manager
Contact Alex with administrative and payment questions
awulf@theprojectschool.org

Angie Fish – Food Services Director
Contact Angie with meals-related questions
afish@theprojectschool.org

Bri Jacobson – Health Aide
Contact Bri with health and medication questions
health@theprojectschool.org

Rene Riley – Life Skills Coach | Mike Emmert – Social-Emotional Learning
Contact Ms. Rene & Mr. Mike with social-emotional or socio-economic support needs
rriley@theprojectschool.org | memmert@theprojectschool.org

Amy Jackson – Communications & Outreach Director
Contact Ms. Amy with communications, website, and events questions
connect@theprojectschool.org

I cannot wait to welcome everyone to a great year!
Natalie

This institution is an equal opportunity employer.