Executive Leadership Team

**Margaret Fairbanks**  
**CO-FOUNDER, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

All IOB programming is overseen by Director of Education Margaret Fairbanks. In her role as Lead Teacher, Margaret goes to great lengths to ensure that students have a successful learning experience. After reading through all applications, Margaret contacts parents to talk through the format of the workshop, making sure that any additional supports, such as providing a written or visual schedule, are in place for every session. She also discusses areas of sensory sensitivity so that strategies can be put in place to allow students to focus on their projects, not on sensory challenges. During each class, Margaret leads circle time, checks on students and their progress, and steps in if she sees any signs of frustration. Additionally, Margaret leads share time at the end of class with the focus on making sure that each student leaves with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Margaret has been a special education teacher for the past 10 years after earning her Masters in Special Education from the University of Minnesota. She most recently worked at Whitefish Bay High School in Whitefish Bay, Wis., with students who have the most severe needs, in addition to serving as the transition coordinator with a focus on life after high school for students with special needs. Prior to Whitefish Bay, Margaret worked at Milwaukee College Prep (MCP), an urban Charter School. As MCP's Special Ed teacher from 2009-13, she was hired specifically to work with neurodiverse students. She currently serves as MCP's autism consultant.

While she's been officially practicing for the past decade, her work as a special education teacher truly began 18 years ago on the day her son, Harry, was diagnosed with PDD-NOS, otherwise known as a label of a child with autism.

**Mark Fairbanks**  
**CO-FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mark's background in visual and user-centered design has been a huge asset in the development of curriculum, as well as the overall experience of Islands of Brilliance. With 25 years of experience working in advertising, design and digital agencies in Milwaukee and Minneapolis—not to mention work published in prestigious international award shows including Communication Arts and The One Show—his standing in the creative community is a great asset in recruiting both professionals and college students interested in becoming mentors and volunteers.

Mark currently serves as the Social Entrepreneur In Residence at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Lubar Entrepreneurship Center. He is a champion for the neurodiverse community with a passion for educating others on not only the challenges faced by those living with autism, but the exceptional capabilities and talents they possess. His 2014 Tedx Talk, “Thirteen Years on an Island,” is a moving account of his experience as a father of a son living with autism and their family's journey from the devastation of the initial diagnosis to the genesis of Islands of Brilliance.

When not occupied with IOB, he finds meaning and art spending time on the natural prairie and woodland gardens that surround the Fairbanks' family home. His most cherished moments are around the dinner table with Margaret and their two boys, Charlie and Harry.