

## “How Your Disability Shaped Your Decision to Study the Program you Chose”

What is the ideal classroom design for students with autism?

I believe that neurodivergent students should learn in environments that accommodate their needs and emphasize their interests.

My name is Willow Salsky, I am an autistic student going into my second year at Queen's University for a joint degree program in Con-ed (teaching) and Fine Arts with a minor in French Studies!

I was diagnosed with autism a month before my 18th birthday. Prior to that, I did not have the appropriate vocabulary to express why certain aspects of life were so challenging for me and seemingly natural for other people.

Learning about my disability has introduced challenges and beauty. Recognizing my needs has been life changing, something as simple as letting my body move the way it wants has given me so much freedom and authenticity. I have an understanding of why my interests feel so powerful, and accepting such traits has helped me make connections and friendships with like-minded people. Receiving the diagnosis has been challenging as now I finally have an explanation for the meltdowns, shutdowns, social confusion, and sensory discomfort, even with accommodations, they are permanent, and not something I can keep telling myself I will grow out of.

Receiving this diagnosis has been powerful for me, labels hold importance and my identities of being queer, nonbinary, and autistic has helped me understand how to accommodate myself in a society that is not built for such identities. Being open and honest about my identities has connected me to like-minded friends and peers as well as educational and professional opportunities where a supportive, enriching, prideful, understanding environment is built. I have been wondering and experimenting with the question of what an ideal classroom design for autistic students would be like.

During my first experience working and learning in the educational field, my supervisor supported my enthusiasm and interest in autism advocacy. I created and presented information about autism awareness/acceptance to students, it was dazzling to facilitate their learning and create a supportive environment where the autistic students in the class felt represented.

As a student in elementary and high school I struggled a lot academically and socially, I want to develop my understanding of autism, so I can help limit the challenges I faced for future generations of disabled students.

This past April, I was a student teacher at an alternative education school. During summers, I got the fantastic responsibility to coach horse back riding lessons, be a cabin councillor, and run various activities; I loved creating an atmosphere to help neurodivergent campers make

connections and achieve personal growth. Next month I am deeply thrilled to be working at a camp focused on providing a space for queer, trans, and neurodivergent Jewish youth!

Queen's program of Education and Fine Art has given me the opportunity to pursue my interests in an academic setting that provides me with a knowledge based to bring to various career settings. After graduation, it is my goal to help other neurodivergent youth and artists thrive with an emphasis on their interests and accommodating their needs in either a classroom, therapeutic, or guidance environment.

I believe that autistic and LGBTQ+ people should have access to safe, sensory accommodating environments with supportive people in which they can exist unapologetically. I believe that schools should recognize the differences in their autistic students and provide such spaces to show that even with differences, you are still accepted in this world.

I am passionate about helping people enjoy aspects of life, as well as sharing and learning knowledge about accessibility and disability. Queen's provides me with a program where I can explore my interests in artistic expression, and disability accommodation in the educational field to transform diverse needs into an inclusive setting. If granted this scholarship, I will be able to pay for art supplies and sustain my educational practice during teaching placements.

The ideal classroom design for autistic learners is abstract and important. Within the con-ed and fine arts programs at Queen's, I can discover my educational pedagogies with an emphasis on inclusion and accommodation.

**Proof of Graduating High School in 2023**

- Jamie Brooke Salsky is my legal/birth name
- Willow Salsky is the name I choose to go by



Ontario

# Ontario Secondary School Diploma Diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario

This Diploma is granted to  
Ce diplôme est décerné à

*Jamie Brooke Salsky*

a student of  
élève de

Westmount Collegiate Institute

who has fulfilled the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma  
in accordance with the provisions of the Ministry of Education, Ontario.

qui a rempli les exigences prescrites pour l'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario,  
en vertu des dispositions du ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario.

Dated at  
Délivré à

Thornhill

the  
ce

30th

day of  
jour de

June 2022

Minister of Education /Ministre de l'Éducation

Principal of School/Directeur ou directrice de l'école

**Proof of Fall 2023 acceptance to an accredited post-secondary institution (proof or registration to health care, criminal justice or community & social services studies will be required before the scholarship is awarded)**

Office of the University Registrar  
Student Awards  
Gordon Hall  
74 Union Street  
Kingston, Ontario  
K7L 3N6  
(613) 533-2216



#### Verification of Enrolment

Our certification system is designed to expedite the sharing of academic information with many agencies.  
Queen's University appreciates your acceptance of this official certification.

**Student Name:** Salsky, Jamie  
**Student ID:** 20330749  
**Student's Address:** 427 Princess St #2  
Kingston, ON, K7L 5S9

<b>Program(s) of Study</b> 1. BFAH Visual Art 2. BED Intermediate-Senior, French Second Lang - 2nd, Visual Arts - 1st	<b>Country of Academic Institution</b> Canada
<b>Current Academic Year</b> 2023	<b>Number of Degree Credits Successfully Completed</b> 34.5 Units
<b>Academic Year Start and End Dates</b> 2023-09-01 to 2024-08-31	<b>Current Enrolment</b> 4.5 Units, Year 02, Part-Time

#### Legend – Course Weighting and Program Length:

Faculty of Arts & Science; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Health Sciences; School of Business; School of Kinesiology & Health Studies; School of Religion

Normal full-time course load for one year ranges from 18 to 36 units  
Bachelor degree; three-year program  
Bachelor (Honours) degree; four-year program  
Bachelor of Commerce; four-year program  
Bachelor of Education/Diploma in Education; two-, three-, and four-term programs  
School of Business; length of various graduate programs available at <http://business.queensu.ca/index.php>  
School of Religion; length of various programs available at <http://www.queensu.ca/religion>

#### Faculty of Engineering & Applied Science

Normal full-time course load for one year ranges from 23 to 46 units  
Bachelor degree; four-year program

#### Faculty of Law

Normal full-time course load for one year ranges from 17 to 34 units  
Three-year program

#### Faculty of Health Sciences (School of Nursing)

Normal full-time course load for one year ranges from 18 to 33 units  
Four-year program

#### Faculty of Health Sciences (School of Medicine)

Four-year full-time program

#### School of Graduate Studies

Full-time program or part-time program  
Normal full-time program length ranges from one to seven years depending on the individual program

This document was produced on and correct as of July 26, 2023 and was made available to the student using a secure authorized login protocol.

Proof of Canadian Citizenship or Permanent Residency

 Ontario **Driver's Licence**  
**Permis de conduire** **ON**  
CANADA

1,2 NAME/ NOM  
**SALSKY,  
JAMIE BROOKE**

8 **60 BROOKSHIRE CIR  
THORNHILL, ON, L3T 7B3**

4d NUMBER/  
NUMÉRO **S0319 - 38410 - 45223**

4a ISS/ DÉL. **2022/02/10** 4b EXP./ EXP. **2025/03/06**

5 DD/ RÉF. **HH0266684** 16 HGT/ HAUT. **157 cm**

15 SEX/ SEXE **F**

9 CLASS/  
CATÉG. **G**

12 REST./  
COND. **2004/02/23**

3 DOB/ DBN **2004/02/23** **AGE 19/ANS 2023/02/23**

*Jamie Salsky*

*Jamie Salsky*

## Documented Proof of Disability



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**Developmental Assessment and Consultation Services**  
**SPECIALTY SERVICES CLINIC**  
Assessment Summary

**Name:** Willow (Jamie) Salsky      **DOB:** 23 February 2004      **CTN#:** 959059      **Age:** 17  
**Date of Report:** January 4, 2022

**CLINICAL IMPRESSION:** Willow is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**ACTION PLAN FOR THE FAMILY**

- Willow may wish to **share** this report with their post-secondary institution to assist with accessing resources and/or accommodations.
- They also may choose to **share** the report with their current school if it would be helpful for Willow in the final semester of high school.
- Willow may choose to **discuss** genetic testing with their doctor if they feel this would be helpful information to have.

**Additional information regarding resources and recommendations can be found at the end of the report.**