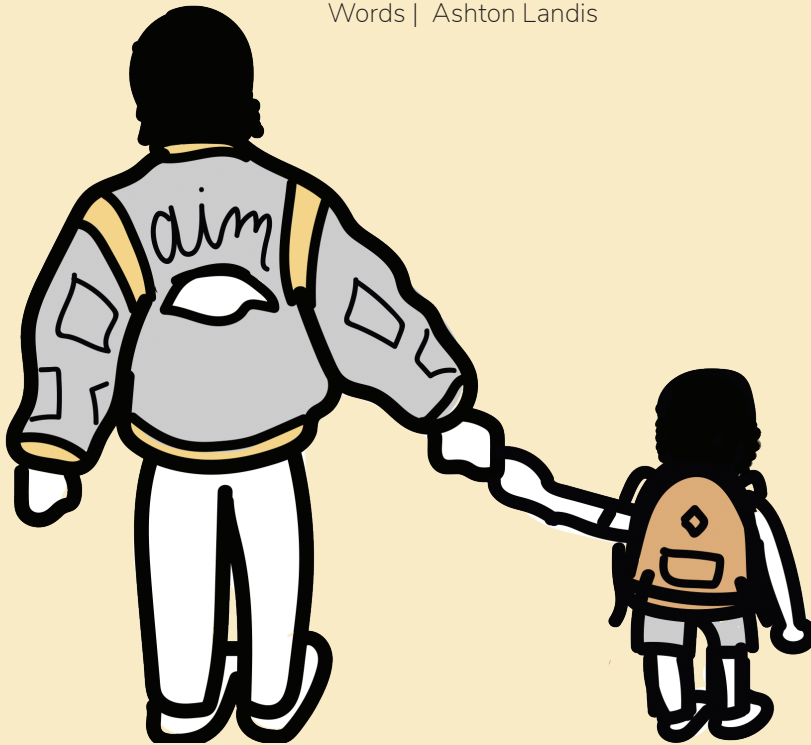


# The Buddy System

ADOPT INTEGRATE AND MENTOR (AIM) IS CELEBRATING ITS TENTH YEAR.

Words | Ashton Landis



Community: it's like taking a glass and filling it with a few drops of food dye. When you first put the dye into the glass, the surface tension keeps the liquid concentrated in a tight circle in the center. When you add a drop of water, the once concentrated circle spreads to the edges of the cup but still maintains its bright color. As you continue to add water, the dye and the water mix and swirl until eventually, it takes on an entirely different appearance. Sure, the water still has color, but it doesn't have the same vibrancy it once did. The original beauty is diluted.

When most schools grow, their values slowly diminish. However, even twenty years and 690 students later, Geneva continues to maintain the same sense of community it had when it began. To most, this concept would seem to be nothing more than an unrealistic daydream. At Geneva, that daydream is our reality.

Adopt. Integrate. Mentor. These three words are responsible for cultivating the spirit of community at Geneva. In 2008, Geneva started the AIM program. At the time, Geneva had its first group of Rhetoric students, and the community was beginning to grow.

It was then that Mr. Brad Ryden, head of school, came up with the idea to create a program where the high school kids could be with the younger kids. At first, the program involved all of the high school students. Eventually, as the school continued to expand and grow, the program morphed into being just juniors as well as any seniors that wanted to volunteer.

Every Wednesday, the entire junior class, as well as the majority of the seniors, goes to visit the Grammar School campus and mingle with the class they are assigned to. Many would think that the activity was fun while it lasted but is soon to be quickly forgotten. At Geneva, it's actually quite the contrary.

Many Rhetoric School students still fondly remember their AIM buddies so many years later. Now, they have the same opportunity to give back. The impact of many of the students who have graduated and gone on to college has not been forgotten.

### AIM Buddy: David Winston '11

"I recall some of the boys seeming to fret over my height, but in taking a knee and bringing the conversation down to their level, their minds were generally put at ease. I know that was a wonderful lesson for me: meeting people on their level likely leads to better conversations and relationships. Every morning with the AIM kids, my shortsighted mind was given a healthy reminder to prioritize better."

Mrs. Morris' Kindergarten Class:  
Jackson Friesenhahn, junior

"When we first met David, he was really tall, so we were all kind of scared of him. We eventually realized how cool he was."



I KNOW HIM | David Winston brings Christmas cheer to his AIM class during the first year of the program.

### AIM Buddy: Josh Chandler '17

"I remember that AIM class; they were such great kids. I remember playing games with them, talking with them about Thanksgiving traditions and about school. Just getting to spend time with them each week was a blessing and a joy I'll never forget. They absolutely made a lasting impact on me."

Mrs. Duce's Second Grade Class:  
Brooks Fessler, sophomore

"We used to play freeze tag and football with him. He used to let us stay out on the recess field until after school started. I don't think I realized it at the time, but I really looked up to him."



HIGH FIVE | Students held a special assembly for Josh Chandler after raising money for his surgery.

## AIM Buddy: Nick Thornton '15

"I really enjoyed building relationships with them while they were experiencing what I experienced years ago. Being older always gives you that abstract ability to be impactful and hopefully make at least a small difference in one of his/her lives. The best part about it is seeing AIM buddies of mine as high schoolers & college kids when I come back to visit and still being able to connect with them."

Mrs. Naquin's Fourth Grade Class:  
Evan Schaefer, senior

"What I remember about Nick, was he and Nolan Townsend. They had such a great friendship and they played off of each other. Our whole class loved them. More recently, I remember Nick coming back to play basketball with us in open gym. It's nice to have a graduate come back from your childhood to play with you in high school."



COME ON | Nick Thornton runs with his AIM buddies at one of the first Jogathons.



SEURAT | An AIM student painted with dots sits with Hannah Vandiver.

## AIM Buddy: Hannah Vandiver '14

"In high school punctuality was a big pain point for me, especially in the mornings, but Mrs. Morris and that group of kids made me want to get up earlier to see them and spend time with them. I always looked forward to it, and it was a great thing to break up my busy week. Cody Lane and Gracie were in that class and we really bonded. AIM really brings Geneva culture together. So many special connections and bonds that span – not only grades, not only Grammar School, Logic School, Rhetoric School – families and generations."

Mrs. Morris' Kindergarten Class:  
Cody Lane George, junior

"I'll always remember the one Wednesday that it snowed and we all got to play in the snow with our AIM buddies."

Mrs. Morris Kindergarten Class  
Gracie Janse, junior

"I remember we had a snow day, and I was so excited because I knew I was gonna see my AIM buddies the next day. So, I did the obvious thing and brought them a bag of snow ... which by that time was just a ziplock full of water."