

Jen Benjamin - Occupational Therapist

LEARNING

Jen Benjamin, MS, OTR/L, has been an Occupational Therapist for over 20 years. Jen started her career in education in a school very much like Spaulding as a paraprofessional when she was only 17 years old. She quickly fell in love with Special Education, so after college and graduate school, she returned to the school setting as an Occupational Therapist. After many years in many districts, Jen was asked to "just fill in for a bit" at Spaulding after Irene Gordon retired; that was almost 15 years ago. Jen's specialty is working with children who have challenges with sensory processing and fine-motor skills, such as those needed for handwriting, typing, and Activities of Daily Living (ADLs).

Last year, Jen partnered with Charley Suter, Spaulding's Technology and Innovation Coordinator, to explore ways to use Virtual Reality to help our students. They started by creating individualized Virtual Reality scenarios designed to meet the specific sensory needs of Spaulding students. One student inspired a playground scenario from his favorite swing, which helps the student achieve a state of calm self-regulation even when he can't access that particular swing. Jen and Charley have also made VR scenarios to help children get ready for a trip to the dentist, filming onsite at Concord Pediatric Dentistry. Currently, they are focused on utilizing VR to prepare students for vocational setting and duties. Jen has also partnered with Robyn Allen, Art and Music teacher, in order to integrate sensory aspects into artwork that can help students (and staff!) with self-regulation.

Jen loves how the field of OT has evolved throughout the years, from a child using an abacus when she first started back in the 80s to now using VR goggles and iPads. Similarly, Spaulding is constantly changing and evolving, between welcoming new students and celebrating the success of students moving back to their home districts. One thing that does not change is the dedication of the staff and the constant collaboration among staff from all disciplines. Jen says, "The opportunity to work so closely with teachers, paraprofessionals, behavior specialists, SLPs, PTs, Health Services, Dining Hall staff, and other specialists is what sets Spaulding apart from every other school I've ever worked in, and it is my favorite things about Spaulding - next to the kids."



To Learn More Visit: <https://www.spauldingservices.org/>

Cico de Mayo in the Art Room

STUDENT ART

This month in the art room our students have been hard at work preparing for our multicultural celebration! These taco piñatas were created by Stephanie's class for their celebration of Cinco de Mayo. Our students learned about traditional Mexican piñatas and were inspired to create their own piñatas. These were made from cardboard and tissue paper. They make me smile every time I walk into my classroom!

Robyn Allen,
Art Teacher

Ask Your Child: What is your favorite celebration?



Healthy Snack Tips

- **Make it balanced** - Include foods from at least two different food groups at snack time. This will fill your child up in between meals and provide additional nutrients and energy needed for their growing bodies. To change things up, you can also offer "mini meals" like a slice of whole-grain toast with peanut butter or half a sandwich.
- **Make your own** - Try making your own trail mix with items like unsalted nuts, dried fruit, plain popcorn, whole grain cereal like Cheerios, pretzels, and/or seeds.
- **Plan ahead**- Portion snack foods into reusable containers so they are easy to grab and ready-to-go. Kids will typically need 2-3 snacks throughout the day so it's a good idea to plan ahead. You can also pre-wash and cut fresh fruits and vegetables for easier access.
- **Offer nourishing snacks**- Offer 2-3 options at snack time your child can choose from. Keep your kitchen stocked with plenty of nutritious options like low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and lean protein so there are plenty of options to choose from.
- **Choose a snack location**- Have a designated area where snacks will be consumed like the kitchen table. This will help limit distractions. Avoid snacking while watching TV or using other electronic devices. You can also schedule set meal and snack times so your child has a predictable routine.

Here's a nutritious snack you can make together with your child:

- **Fruit and yogurt parfaits.** Have the ingredients set out like low-fat yogurt, fresh berries or other fruit, and dry cereal or granola. Allow your child to make their own by layering the ingredients they choose together.

Brittany Rozen,
Registered Dietitian

NUTRITION



Ask Your Child: What is your favorite snack?

Multicultural Celebration

This month our students at Spaulding Academy & Family Services came together to celebrate our school's multicultural event. The community center was filled with excitement as each class took the stage to showcase their unique talents and traditions. From traditional dances to a rubber duck race, our students displayed a celebration of diversity. But the celebration didn't stop there!

As the performances ended, students served up delicious dishes from their cultures for everyone in attendance. Students also got to show off their creativity by displaying beautiful crafts they made inspired by the culture they learned about.

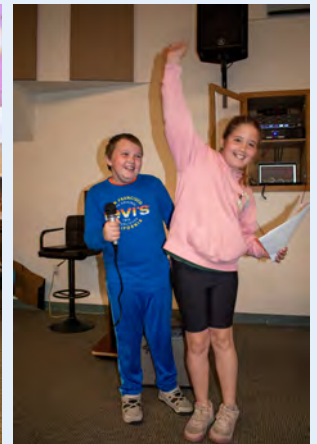
The students were dressed to represent their holiday, some in costumes representing characters they played and others in clothing inspired by the traditional dress of their culture. The students looked confident and proud as they represented their holidays.

Overall, the multicultural event was a true celebration of diversity and inclusivity. It was a beautiful reminder that every person has something unique and special to share with the world.

Robyn Allen,
Art Teacher



HAPPENINGS



Ask Your Child: How did you Choose Love today?

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