



Selected as a NASET (National Association of Special Education Teachers) School of Excellence annually from 2014-2022.

# Maryville Jen School

Spring Issue

April, 2023

## Principal's Address:

Greetings,

I am excited to share updates on the construction of our new building and the remainder of the spring term. As you know, our project team has been working diligently to renovate our new facility located in Niles. Our vision to expand academic, social-emotional, and vocational learning opportunities for our students are coming into focus as the progress of the renovation unfolds. The construction crews have been busy installing all new mechanicals, electrical, and plumbing. In addition, a few new walls have been added, drywall hung, and painting is taking place. As I write this, excavation for the new elevator is happening, and new lighting, door hardware, and appliances are all being installed.

We have been working with the project team to ensure the new facilities provide students with enhanced academic and vocational learning spaces. There will be capacity for 12 academic classrooms and 8 vocational/careers technical education classrooms. Each learning space will be equipped with the state of art technologies and interactive media. We are also excited about the common areas, such as our gymnasium with a stage, cafeteria, and completely redesigned kitchen.

The Maryville Board of Directors continues supporting and guiding this massive undertaking. George Rourke and Mike Munroe have been especially instrumental in providing guidance and being hands-on with this project.

As we approach the end of the school year, I want to remind you that these last few weeks are crucial for our students. We must all stay on track to ensure our students finish the year strong and prepared for the next chapter of their lives. Please feel free to contact your child's classroom team with any questions about your child's progress.

Important Dates to remember:

- Fourth quarter ends May 4<sup>th</sup>
- May Term starts May 5<sup>th</sup>
- End of the year Awards and all-school celebration on June 1st
- Graduation will be held on June 2nd, 2023, at 10:30 am in the Stevens Center

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We cannot wait to celebrate the completion of our new building and more of your children's academic milestones.

Thank you and be safe,  


Ann M. Craig  
Director of Educational Services/Principal

## Social Media

Like Jen School on Facebook!



Follow @jenschool on Instagram!



Tweet @JenSchool2 on Twitter!



## Ramp Builds

By: Stavros Kouriabalis - Para/Job Coach

Hello everyone, Jen school is excited to share with everyone our first ramp build of the new year! This week was extra exciting because of the number of Jen school students we had out helping. Two full classrooms were able to come together with the help of Mr. Paul, the wheelchair ramp guru. It was amazing to see all these students working together and helping each other with the build. We hope that in the next one, we can get the same group of students out there and continue to make a difference in our community.



## Garden/Greenhouse

By: Mark Trerotola - Teacher

"Spring unlocks the flowers to paint the laughing soil." — *Bishop Reginald Heber*



If it is in the 80s one day and snowing the next, it must be spring in Illinois. The weather cannot fool the Jen School gardeners though. Students and staff have been nurturing sprouts in the greenhouse to be transplanted into the numerous beds that have been tilled and weeded. To date, the greenhouse contains Ukrainian tomatoes, bee and butterfly pollinator plants, plants that are good for birds, cardinal climbers, zinnias, milkweed, cauliflower, onions, nasturtiums, basil, and eggplant, just to name a few. May will be the time when many of these will either be transplanted into the outdoor garden or potted for a Mother's Day plant sale. It is always nice to see when winter's grip loosens, so we can begin to fill our garden beds again.



## CLASSROOM

## ORNER

### Teaching Vocabulary

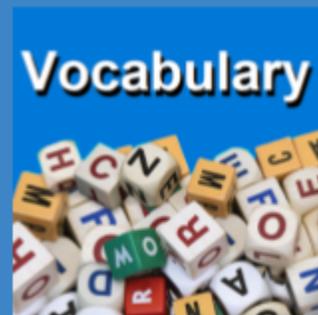
By: Moissette Mc Nerney

When students are deficient in vocabulary, their reading and writing range is limited, not to mention an inability to express themselves successfully. The appreciation for a fully developed vocabulary can be lifelong. Acquiring a full vocabulary benefits students not only in school, but socially and in work life.

It has always been a goal of the Jen teachers to engage students in rich conversations; questioning students, receiving their responses, and asking them to reflect on topics, whether specific curriculum or social-emotional discussions, meaningful conversations are key to vocabulary development.

Vocabulary instruction with our students may include excerpts from novels, nonfiction texts of various types, and content-area tests to enhance word learning. Describing word meaning in a related framework or providing a student-friendly definition substantiates a developing vocabulary. We tend to encourage our students to provide examples of their own so that they can build their own meaning and personalize a word while relating to it in their own context.

The most important thing we can do is take a student's perspective where vocabulary, and life, are concerned. Teachers know the gratification of growing our own vocabulary; with that in mind we adjust lessons to accommodate the variety of learning styles our students present with. We do this by framing new words in examples that are familiar to our students, whether geographically or culturally. Sensitivity blankets every aspect of our teaching as we reach across the room to help our students learn and grow.



# Autism Acceptance Month

By: Donna Hoffman - School Psychologist

Each year during the month of April, individuals and organizations across the globe celebrate Autism Acceptance Month, previously named Autism Awareness Month to promote acceptance of autism instead of the previous goal focusing on educating and raising awareness of autism. The monthly cause first initiated by the Autism Society in 1972 now emphasizes promoting acceptance, celebrating the differences, and being more inclusive towards autistic individuals around us.



Autism is a neurological developmental disability that affects approximately 1 in 36 children in the U.S., with boys 4 times more likely to be diagnosed. The American Psychiatric Association changed the term autism to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in 2013. ASD is now an umbrella term that covers various levels of autism, but both terms continue to be used. Autism affects people of all races, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. There is no one cause of autism, but research shows that it tends to run in families, with children born to older parents having a higher risk. Each person's individual experience of autism and needs for supports and services can vary widely. However, autism often affects a person's ability to communicate, to respond to surroundings, and to form relationships with others.

Some children diagnosed with severe ASD can be non-verbal and/or display restricted and repetitive behaviors. Challenges can include being bullied in school, self-harming behavior, hypersensitivities, struggles with attention and impulsivity, anxiety, and medical issues such as gastrointestinal disorders, seizures, and/or obesity. Around 70% of autistic people are diagnosed with some intellectual impairment. Many struggle with organizational skills. Moreover, nearly half of young adults with autism remain unemployed and unenrolled in higher education in the two years after high school. Independent adults with autism can be misunderstood in the community, which can pose a safety concern for them.

However, many teenagers with autism do well in high school with the right interventions and tools. Placement in supportive educational environments with accommodations is important and often autistic students benefit from speech/language and occupational therapy in addition to social work services. Autistic children are often visual learners and process visual information better than auditory information. Many have average to gifted levels of cognitive functioning. ASD students may excel in science, engineering, and math as these are technical subjects that do not rely heavily on social interaction. Other strengths autistic students may display are a strong memory, being precise and meticulous, being honest and reliable, and being dependable regarding schedules and routines.

Asperger syndrome is a previously used diagnosis on the autism spectrum that was used to identify students with strong verbal language skills and intellectual ability. The term "Asperger's" is no longer used due to the poor connotation assigned with this terminology. The new term that is being used increasingly worldwide is "neurodivergent". Professionals are encouraged to stop referring to "high functioning" and "low functioning" to distinguish among autistic people. Instead, when speaking about autistic students, it is recommended to mention the skills a person has or has not yet mastered. Moreover, the preferred language for a person diagnosed is to call them an autistic person rather than a person with autism. This minimizes the stigma that being autistic is something bad like having a disease. Autism is something one is and not something one has. We are all different people with unique strengths and weaknesses and as a community, we need to be better at accepting diversity. Consider the possibility that someone may be autistic when encountering a person with awkward social interactions. Try to empathize and understand, don't judge or bully. This month let's celebrate our autistic students, family members, and friends and help them live their best lives!



## SPORTS PAGE

By: Dan Baffin - PE Teacher

The Jen School student athletes continue to make this a year to remember by bringing home another division championship. The student athletes that participated in basketball finished the year a remarkable 7-0! They accomplished this with great teamwork, team leadership, and as always great sportsmanship. They left it all on the court during each game and really made us proud with their unselfish play. The spring softball season is underway, and we could not have asked for better weather for our first game. We continue to look to improve week to week as we learn the ins and outs of the sport. Last but not least, we look to move up in the standings in our spring bowling league as we move to wrap up the season by the end of April.



# Staff and Student Spotlight

By: George Nikolaou - Social Worker

For this month, Jen School is highlighting our newest staff member, Ms. Collette! She is working in the kitchen as an assistant chef and has been in the field for 28 years. Ms. Collette loves making super flavorful foods, focuses on quality and presentation, and ultimately wants to make people happy when taking that first bite. She enjoys being a part of Jen School and would describe herself as kind, caring, helpful, and a team player. Outside of school, Ms. Collette enjoys art, cooking, and decorating. Welcome aboard, Ms. Collette!

For this month, Jen School is highlighting Devon. Devon is currently a Junior, who truly enjoys coming to school, where he makes connections with peers and staff daily. His biggest dreams in life include graduating college, becoming rich, and being near his family. At school, he enjoys participating in PE as well as CAAEL sporting events. Outside of school he enjoys playing video games and is looking forward to graduating high school to move to the next chapter in his life.

## Getting to Know Ms. Collette and Devon

What is your favorite color?

**Ms. Collette: Purple, Red and Gold**

**Devon: Red**

Have you ever had a nickname? What was it?

**Ms. Collette: Yes, C.C.**

**Devon: Yes, Zibby**

If you were a superhero, what powers would you have?

**Ms. Collette: Magical powers**

**Devon: I wouldn't change anything about me because I'm already a hero!**

What is your favorite holiday?

**Ms. Collette: Thanksgiving**

**Devon: My Birthday**

What was your favorite subject in school?

**Ms. Collette: Home Ec. & Art**

**Devon: PE**

What's your favorite movie and/or favorite book?

**Ms. Collette: When Harry Met Sally & Julie and Julia**

**Devon: I have a favorite TV series and it is Raising Dion**

What motivates you to work hard?

**Ms. Collette: To serve and create**

**Devon: My family and grades**

What is something you've done that you are proud of?

**Ms. Collette: Helping people in need**

**Devon: I know how to have a growth mindset**



# A Plate From Our Kitchen

By: Maysaloon Alkhafaji - Paraprofessional/Job Coach

Cooking and food are two very important aspects of being human. People always search for what pleases and satisfies their distinctive palates. Cooking plays a major role in the development of human life and getting to know many different foods from different cultures. That is why we seek here at Jen School to teach our students this wonderful art of cooking.

This week we prepared **penne pasta with mushrooms, peas, and goat cheese**.

As usual, under the direction of Chef Zach, the students listened to the chef's instructions and watched him demonstrate, and then they started making the dish themselves. They enjoyed learning how to handle the utensils and ingredients with care. In these culinary experiences, the students get to experience every aspect of the cooking experience. One of the students participating in this activity expressed, "This is a good experience for me. I learned how to make pasta, how to wash the dishes and clean all the cooking utensils after finishing cooking, as well as wiping and sterilizing kitchen counter surfaces." The students are learning life skills that can also translate to a job or career if they find they have the interest and passion for it.



# Try it in YOUR Kitchen

## Makes 4 Servings

### Ingredients:

2 cup Penne (par-cooked)  
½ Cup Saved Starchy Pasta Water  
2 cup Canned Tomatoes (pureed)  
1 cup Goat Cheese (crumbled)  
¾ cup Heavy Cream  
½ cup Cremini Mushrooms (sliced and lightly sauteed)  
¼ cup peas (thawed)  
¼ cup Parmesan Cheese (grated)  
2 Tbsp Neutral oil  
5 Basil Leaves  
2 Garlic Cloves (minced)  
Zest of a Lemon  
Pinch Crushed Red Pepper  
Salt to taste

### Directions:

- In a large pot sauté oil and garlic. When the garlic starts to color, add the crushed red pepper and lemon zest. Continue to sauté for 15 seconds.
- Add tomato and basil. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to medium-low.
- Stir in mushrooms and peas.
- Add cream, both cheeses and salt if needed.
- Add the penne. Stir until pasta is al dente. Add starchy pasta water if the sauce gets too thick.



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING & SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION



*Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) recommends that every school transportation professional complete the BOTL school transportation training:*

**[www.truckersagainstrafficking.org/school-transportation](http://www.truckersagainstrafficking.org/school-transportation)**

*This sheet is meant to provide additional context and information for special needs transportation professionals alongside/upon completion of that training.*

Anyone can be at risk for human trafficking, including any child. Traffickers target individuals with vulnerabilities that they can leverage to exploit their victims. Therefore, students with disabilities may face increased risk of being trafficked/exploited for several reasons:

- They may often experience discrimination and/or isolation, creating an enhanced desire for friendship and belonging that traffickers can manipulate.
- Difficulties with communication and/or speech can affect their ability to get help and/or report abuse.
- If they are dependent on a caregiver, they may be vulnerable to exploitation by that caregiver and/or predisposed to comply with a trafficker's requests or commands.
- They might be unaware/uneducated about consent, healthy relationships, and their rights.
- Traffickers sometimes target disabled individuals to gain access to their public benefits, and might withhold those benefits as a method of coercion.

## THE FACTS:

- Children with disabilities are **at least three times** more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities.<sup>1</sup>
- Between January 2015 and December 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline documented **2,116 potential victims** that had a pre-existing health concern or disability (e.g. physical disability, mental health diagnosis, substance use concern, intellectual/developmental disability).<sup>2</sup>
- In a review of 54 sex trafficking cases reported in Florida from 2007 to 2014, roughly **one-third of the cases** involved girls with intellectual disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

## INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKING:

In addition to the indicators of trafficking every school transportation professional should be on the lookout for, special needs drivers may also notice these potential red flags:

- Signs of assault, restraint, physical abuse, or malnourishment
- Nonverbal cues or body language indicating fear, anxiety, or trauma
- Medical equipment or mobility aids that are broken or need maintenance
- Service animals that appear neglected or uncared for
- Interference from a caregiver/potential trafficker with attempts to speak to the student alone

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

***Any suspicion of trafficking of a student should be reported through the proper school and state protocols.***

These are some additional resources to learn more about the topic:

- National Human Trafficking and Disabilities Working Group: <http://iofa.org/national-trafficking-disabilities-working-group/>
- National Human Trafficking Hotline: US: 1-888-3737-888 | Canada: 1-833-900-1010
- State or county boards/councils of developmental disabilities

## SOURCES:

1. The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities. Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/focus.pdf>
2. Individuals with Disabilities May Face Increased Risk of Human Trafficking. Polaris, 2018: <https://polarisproject.org/blog/2018/08/individuals-with-disabilities-may-face-increased-risk-of-human-trafficking/>
3. Sex traffickers target girls with intellectual disabilities. Atlas of Science, 2016: <https://atlasofscience.org/sex-traffickers-target-girls-with-intellectual-disabilities/>