

## Celebrating Kindness

Every other Friday, our school community comes together for our Choose Love Assemblies, an energizing tradition filled with games, laughter, and meaningful recognition.

Each assembly begins with a student-written joke or riddle before moving into the main event of filling the Choose Love bin. Throughout the week, students earn "Duck Notes" or "Choose Love Cards" for demonstrating Courage, Forgiveness, Gratitude, and Compassion-in-Action. During the assembly, one card from each classroom is read aloud, and those students spin the Choose Love Wheel to determine how many ducks they'll add to the bin.

With fun challenges, class competitions, and opportunities to shine, students play an active role in building excitement. Once the bin is filled, the school celebrates with events like dance parties, ice cream socials, and more.

Once a month during the assembly, we also honor our "Choosing Love This Month" nominees, two students and one staff member who consistently model these values.

These assemblies are a joyful way to celebrate kindness, strengthen community, and bring the Choose Love pillars to life.

Nicole Desharnais, MA  
Board Liaison & Communication Specialist

## Learning



## Spring Beauty

## Student Art

This month in the art room our students have been inspired by spring! The warm weather has us drawing flowers and animals. These are some beautiful drawings of bunnies from Bridget's class!

Robyn Allen  
Art & Music Teacher



## Dietary Guidelines for America

## Nutrition

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) offer advice on what to eat to support health and reduce disease risk. Updated every five years, the latest 2025-2030 guidelines include some positive shifts, along with a few areas that may be unclear.

### Key Takeaways:

#### Limit Highly Processed Foods & Added Sugars

Focus on whole, nutrient-dense foods and home-prepared meals when possible. Cut back on packaged, highly processed items like chips, cookies, and sugary drinks. Added sugars should be kept very low, with no more than 10 grams per meal, and artificial sweeteners are not recommended. Choose whole, fiber-rich grains over refined carbohydrates like white bread.

#### Choose Healthier Fats

Incorporate healthy fats from whole foods and oils like olive oil. While options like butter or beef tallow are mentioned, it's still recommended to keep saturated fat under 10% of daily calories, which may feel inconsistent. Overall, while the guidelines emphasize reducing added sugars and processed foods, some recommendations—particularly around fats and other nutrients—can be controversial.

Lesley Robie, RDN, CNSC  
Registered Dietitian

## Dietary Guidelines For Americans



## Annual Pie Eating Contest

## Happenings

Each year, one of the most anticipated traditions on campus brings equal parts laughter, excitement, and a little bit of friendly chaos, the Annual Pi(e) Day Pie Eating Contest.

Held in celebration of Pi Day on March 14th, this beloved event has become a highlight for both students and staff. What started as a fun way to recognize a mathematical constant has grown into a spirited community gathering that everyone looks forward to.

Participants eagerly volunteer (and are sometimes enthusiastically nominated) to take part in the challenge: finishing a personal-sized, sugar-free pie as quickly as possible with no utensils allowed. With whipped topping flying and crowds cheering, the energy in the room is contagious. Contestants dive in face-first, determined to claim bragging rights for the year, while spectators rally behind their favorites, creating an atmosphere full of laughter and encouragement.

Beyond the competition itself, the event is a powerful example of community in action. Students and staff come together in a shared moment of joy, stepping away from daily routines to simply have fun. For many students, it's an opportunity to take healthy risks, build confidence, and feel supported by those around them. For staff, it's a chance to model participation, humor, and connection.

The Pie Eating Contest is more than just a messy good time, it's a reminder of the importance of creating spaces where joy, laughter, and community thrive. By the end of the event, there are smiles all around (and maybe a little whipped topping left behind), but the memories made are what truly stick. As the tradition continues each year, one thing remains certain: Pi Day wouldn't be the same without the contest.

Nicole Desharnais, MA  
Board Liaison & Communication Specialist



## Helping Kids Cope with Constant News

In today's digital world, children and teens are exposed to a constant stream of information, much of it distressing. While staying informed can be valuable, repeated exposure to upsetting news can increase anxiety, fear, and emotional overwhelm. Caregivers play a critical role in helping children process what they see and hear.

Young people are still developing the ability to regulate emotions and make sense of complex information. Without support, distressing news can lead to anxiety, sleep disruption, irritability, or behavioral changes.

### How to support your child

- Keep communication open: Ask what they've seen and how they feel.
- Validate emotions: Let them know their feelings are understandable.
- Keep it age-appropriate: Avoid overwhelming details.
- Offer reassurance: Highlight safety, support systems, and helpers.
- Model calmness: Your reactions guide theirs.

### Managing media exposure

- Set limits on screen time, especially before bed.
- Be aware of platforms and content your child engages with.
- Encourage breaks from scrolling.
- Watch or review content together when possible.
- Teach critical thinking and how to spot misinformation.

### Promoting emotional regulation

- Maintain predictable routines.
- Encourage movement and physical activity.
- Practice calming strategies like deep breathing.
- Offer creative outlets such as drawing or journaling.
- Prioritize sleep, nutrition, and quality time together.

If your child shows ongoing signs of distress – such as persistent anxiety, withdrawal, or changes in sleep or appetite – consider seeking support from a mental health professional. You don't need to shield your child from the world, but you can help them feel safe within it. By staying connected and teaching coping skills, you're helping build resilience that will last a lifetime.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC  
Behavioral Health Clinician

## DIGITAL WELLNESS

Finding Balance in an  
Always- Connected  
World



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## The Foundation of Learning

At Spaulding Academy, we use the DIXON LIFE Assessment to guide skill development across meaningful areas of life. The Essentials Domain represents the foundational, must-have skills that individuals need in order to access learning and safely participate in everyday environments. These are the building blocks—skills that support basic engagement, independence, and readiness to learn.

Within the Dixon LIFE Assessment, the Essentials Domain is the starting point. It focuses on early and prerequisite abilities such as attending to tasks, following directions, imitation, early communication, play, tolerating routines, and simple daily living skills. Without these core skills in place, it can be difficult for individuals to successfully develop more advanced abilities in other areas.

Strong Essentials skills help students communicate their needs, participate in routines, and build independence at school, home, and in the community. Our team works on these skills throughout the day using structured support, play-based learning, and individualized strategies—because every small step in this domain creates opportunities for bigger successes.

The LIFE Assessment is designed as a progression of skill domains (including Foundational, Independence, and Liberating), and the Essentials Domain directly supports growth across all of them. When students build strength in essential skills, they are better able to engage in learning opportunities, develop independence, and participate more meaningfully in their home, school, and community environments.

Nicole Hilliker  
Behavior Specialist



## Unplugging to Reconnect

From a Permanency department perspective, creating “phone-free” times within the home can be a highly effective way to support a child or teenager’s emotional regulation, family connection, and overall mental health. Caregivers are encouraged to introduce these boundaries in a collaborative and structured way, such as establishing phone-free periods during meals, before bedtime, or during designated family time. Framing this as a household expectation (rather than a punishment) helps reduce resistance and promotes consistency. When parents model this behavior themselves, it reinforces the message that disconnecting from devices is a shared value, not just a rule for youth. Over time, these predictable breaks from technology can reduce overstimulation, improve sleep hygiene, and create space for meaningful interaction. For our clients who live here on campus, home visits are an important tool in building relationships, trust, and healthy patterns. Reducing screen time on home visits is another great way to increase connection and reduce the stress that can be associated with screen time.

Incorporating phone-free times into a daily schedule can also provide children with a greater sense of stability and routine, which is especially important for those experiencing stress or emotional challenges. As a case manager, I often recommend that families build these moments into an existing structure, such as after school decompression time, evening routines, or weekend activities, so they feel natural rather than restrictive. During these times, offering alternative activities, like going for a walk, playing a game, or engaging in a shared task, can help ease the transition and make the experience more positive. Consistency is key, and even small, manageable changes can lead to meaningful improvements in attention, mood, and family connection over time.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC  
Behavioral Health Clinician

## Permanency

### 10 WAYS TO UNPLUG FROM TECHNOLOGY

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- OBSERVE YOUR DAILY USAGE
  - SET SCHEDULED TIMES FOR BUSINESS USE
  - GET UP, STRETCH, AND WALK AROUND
  - KEEP TECHNOLOGY OUT OF THE BEDROOM
  - USE AT LEAST THE FIRST HOUR IN THE MORNING TO BE COMPLETELY PRESENT
  - BE PRESENT IN CONVERSATIONS
  - CREATIVITY IS FUELED BY GOING OUTSIDE
  - USE AIRPLANE MODE
  - WRITE A HAND-WRITTEN NOTE INSTEAD
  - INVITE YOUR FRIENDS OVER (WITHOUT PHONES)
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## A Little Piece of Programming

The Day Program has a natural rhythm, one that balances structure, flexibility, and meaningful growth for every student.

Mornings begin with students working through their daily routines, building independence in those small but important moments before heading out to school. For those who remain on campus, the day shifts into focused skill-building, where students are supported in developing everything from play and social skills to daily living routines. Lunch becomes another opportunity to practice independence and community.

Afternoons offer a chance to unwind with choice time, giving students space to recharge after a full morning.

No two days look exactly the same. With changing schedules, appointments, and even snow days, the program adapts seamlessly. And when extra support is needed across campus, the team is always ready to jump in.

At its heart, the Day Program is a supportive, ever-evolving environment where students grow through both everyday routines and meaningful moments.

Nicole Desharnais, MA  
Board Liaison & Communications Specialist

## Residential

