

Why I Teach:

Joyce Ostertag

Call it fate or call it destiny, but thanks to a connection she made in college, Joyce Ostertag made her way to Benchmark School nearly 30 years ago and has remained a dedicated part of the school ever since.

Following her time as a classroom teacher for one year in the middle school and then two years in the lower school, Joyce took on her current role as one of the school's lower school supervisors. While that remains her main responsibility, over the years she also has had the chance to get back in the classroom to develop curriculum in science, social studies, and technology. "I love the opportunity to be in the classroom because it gives me a different relationship with the students and teachers," Joyce said. She also leads the Science Discovery Club during Benchmark Summer Camp and enjoys using her personal interest in photography to take photos and create video slide shows for the lower school.

The flexibility to grow in her role is part of the reason that she has stayed at Benchmark for so many years. "[As Benchmark teachers], we're able to develop and pursue our interests and strengths and use them to help the school," Joyce said. The other reason she has stayed dedicated to Benchmark is the culture of the school. "Benchmark's emphasis on research and having theoretical perspectives that you apply to practice as a teacher is unique," she said.

Joyce's favorite part of teaching is "working with the students and seeing them get excited about their learning, as well as working with the teachers and sharing in their excitement." Although some of her favorite memories stem from her "crazy science projects" and the ability to be creative as a teacher, she ultimately loves the impact she can make on the lives of students. "I really feel like these kids need me and I can make a difference here," Joyce said. "It's wonderful as a supervisor to see the students grow and change from year to year." 🌱



Tell us about yourself, Joyce!

Where did you go to school? I went to Clarkstown High School South in New York. After that I went to Gettysburg College for my undergraduate degree where I majored in psychology with an elementary education certification, and to graduate school at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where I earned my master's degree in educational psychology.

What is your favorite memory from your school years? Probably when I was an exchange student in Germany for a year during my junior year in high school. I went through the Rotary Youth Exchange.

What was your favorite subject when you were in school and why? Science, because I loved the information and the order of science (I always liked answers!).

What is your favorite book? *Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle because it was my first exposure to the amazing genre of science fiction.

What teacher most influenced you during your school years? I can't pick just one; I had so many teachers who I respected and who encouraged and challenged me.

What are your hobbies outside of Benchmark? When my Benchmark schedule allows me (Benchmark is a hobby in itself!), I am very active in my church as a deaconess, singer in the choir, and caterer. I also have always been an avid reader and enjoy gardening.

What is an interesting fact about you? I grew up working on a campground in the Adirondacks of New York. Another one is that I have a huge collection of tablecloths and dishes (that can probably serve 200 people).

Tell us about your family. I am very blessed with a close family and have two sisters, a niece and a nephew. I also can't forget my cat, Max.