

Sebastian Sentinel



Principal's Message

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Firstly, I do hope you had a wonderful summer. It has been a long but rewarding time for us here at SMS. We hosted three Summer Camps which gave us an opportunity to meet hundreds of kids. It also kept a feeling of energy in the building in the absence of students. I see it as beneficial to continue to host camps and will survey you as parents to see what ideas you might have for summer engagement in the future.

We've hired ten new teachers and are excited to welcome them to the SMS family this year. We are especially proud to announce that we have earned the STEM State Certification, as a result of our work with the University of Florida Lastinger Center over the past two years. As the only middle school in the State of Florida to have achieved this honor, this speaks to the commitment of our teachers and our students to explore, create, and apply knowledge in the classroom. This can be done in many ways but certainly our Elective Classes play a key role in this.

I encourage you as parents and guardians to become involved and attend events that we host throughout the year. Your participation will provide you with an opportunity to see how our students are developing their capacity to think. Although we are pleased to report that our state-wide "school grade" improved to a "B" this year, we know that FSA scores are only one indication of how our students are progressing. Our goal at SMS is to target the creativity gap in order to better prepare our students for high school.

My challenge to our students this year is to document their effort and time spent on tasks, projects and homework. It is important then to look at how that preparation relates to the score earned on that task. There is no substitution for adequate preparation and we need to continue to teach our students how to study.

Finally, we will launch a "Culture of Kindness" here at SMS in 2018. We are always in total control of how we treat each other and I feel this is the next step in our development here.

I look forward to connecting with each of you as the year progresses. Thank you in advance for your support.



Wayne King
Principal

Sebastian Middle School

2955 Lewis Speedway
St. Augustine, FL 32084
904-547-3840

Wayne King

Principal

Angela Hensley

Assistant Principal

Kelvin Pruitt

Dean

Pamela Cooper

Instructional Literacy Coach

Vision

At Sebastian Middle School, all students will achieve personal success in their learning and become responsible and productive citizens.

Mission

In order to prepare our students to live in and contribute to a changing world, Sebastian will provide a balanced, varied school curriculum designed to meet the academic, cultural and social needs of individuals from the diverse backgrounds of our community.

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*Please watch for our next newsletter in October 2018, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

Five “Must Do’s” for Parents to Support their Child’s Success in School

1. **GET AND STAY CONNECTED.** Register and access the district’s online grade reporting system, Home Access Center (HAC), and online learning management system, Schoology. Links to both systems are on the home page of the SMS website (<http://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>). Students will have their own account usernames and passwords for each system. *Parent usernames and passwords for Schoology (which is used by 6th-12th graders district-wide) will be sent home during the first two weeks of school.* If you do not have or cannot remember your username and password for HAC, please contact Ms. Cindy Willey at cindy.willey@stjohns.k12.fl.us for this information.
Parent trainings for both systems will be held this fall. Interim and quarterly report card grades will be available in HAC, and teachers post assignments and study guide information in Schoology. We encourage you to monitor your child’s progress on a weekly basis and communicate with your child’s teachers if you have questions, concerns, or if you’d like to request additional resources that may help your child master course standards. Be aware of how your student is doing in school and *TALK ABOUT IT*. Your interest and involvement has a tremendous effect on your student’s performance and attitude at school.
2. **ESTABLISH A SOLID HOME STUDY ROUTINE.** Encouraging and supporting this daily activity will improve your student’s attitude and performance at school and instill a work ethic that endures for a lifetime. Here’s how:
 - a. **SET A SCHEDULE.** Establish a regular timeslot, seeking your child’s agreement and commitment to reserve this time each day for homework and study. Creating a solid routine in middle school will make a huge difference in your student’s high school experience.
 - b. **CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT.** Middle school students can be easily distracted. Teach them to create an atmosphere conducive for concentration, which for most students means putting away the phone/ipad and turning off the TV and loud music. Having a defined space in your home for study works for some students but not all. The most important factor is the discipline of doing it every day, regardless of whether or not your student has assigned homework due the following day.
- c. **OBSERVE AND ENGAGE.** Psychologists suggest that it takes three weeks to break or establish a habit. Commit three weeks to assisting with your student’s daily routine. Make good homework practices a habit for both of you.
3. **MAKE DAILY ATTENDANCE THE EXPECTATION.** Very few things have as much negative effect on academic performance as poor attendance. Be clear in your attitude towards attending school every day. As your child graduates from school and goes on to enter the working world as an adult, successful employment depends largely upon regular attendance. Set that expectation now.
4. **ENCOURAGE EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY.** Studies show that involvement in after-school clubs, sports, and arts programs improves academic performance, attendance, and discipline issues. SMS offers something for everyone and a full listing of extra-curricular activities is available on our website. For students needing transportation home, there is an “Activities Bus” available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which picks up at SMS at 3:30pm and delivers students to St. Augustine High School to transfer to their regular bus route.
5. **HELP YOUR STUDENT PLAN FOR POST-GRADUATION.** Middle school is a quick three years! Begin talking with your student now about career interests and passions. Several free online career assessment questionnaires are available such as <https://www.sokanu.com/> that may help. Assist with a search for colleges or technical training programs that will prepare them for a career that interests them. No matter what they dream of doing after graduation, planning for the next step is a wise choice. Whether they go on to a college, university, career or technical school, the information and skills they learn in middle and high school will always be important in the working world. Everyone, in every kind of job, needs to be able to write and speak clearly, listen carefully, understand what is written and spoken, and use math effectively.

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SMS Policies and Procedures for 2018-19

We are excited to welcome our students and families back to school! Please be aware of the following policies that may affect your student at SMS this coming year.

Cell Phones

Cell phones must be turned off and put away while on campus. Phone calls and text messages during the school day are strictly prohibited. Students needing to make a phone call during the day should go to the Dean's Office to request the use of the phone. Sebastian Middle School will not investigate nor be held responsible for missing or damaged cell phones. Students should be aware that violation of this policy is considered defiance and could lead to suspension.

Delivery of Items to Students during the School Day

Sebastian Middle School promotes personal responsibility and encourages students to be responsible for remembering to bring all necessary items with them to school each day, including lunches, homework, textbooks, PE and athletic team uniforms, and band instruments. If an item is inadvertently left at home, parents may deliver items to the Front Office during the school day. To avoid interruptions in the classroom, teachers will be notified via email that an item is waiting for the student in the Front Office. Students are welcome to stop by the Front Office between classes to check to see if an item is waiting for them. Parents are also encouraged to email teachers directly notifying them of the late delivery of an item.

Tardy Procedures

Students entering Sebastian Middle School after 7:45am must report to the Guidance office to sign in and receive a tardy pass to give to their teacher. Excessive tardies will result in disciplinary action/elimination of privileges to include participation in sports, clubs, field trips, etc.

Sick Day Procedures

Parents do not need to call the school if your child will be staying home sick. You will receive an automated email and/or text message noting your child's absence. On your student's first day back to school, s/he should bring a note signed by a parent or guardian to the Front Office explaining their absence; please

clearly write your student's first and last name on this note. Per district policy, all absences in excess of 15 days (excused or unexcused) will require a doctor's note. Parents are encouraged to email your child's teachers to ask for make-up work, especially in the case of an extended absence.

Early Dismissal

Parents and guardians wishing to sign out their student before the end of the school day must come into the Front Office with photo identification. Students will NOT be released during the last 30 minutes of the school day in order to minimize classroom disruptions. **If it necessary to retrieve your student for a scheduled appointment/meeting, please plan on arriving in the Front Office no later than 1:30pm (12:30pm on Wednesdays).** Thank you for your cooperation in preserving instructional time at SMS!

Transportation Changes

If you need to make a transportation change for your student, please call the Front Office at (904) 547-3840 by 1:30pm (12:30pm on Wednesdays). Again, to minimize classroom disruptions, preserve instructional time, and avoid confusion at the end of the day, **transportation changes will NOT be allowed during the last 30 minutes of the school day.** Thank you for honoring this strictly-enforced policy.

Also, please note that the St. Johns County School District Transportation Department handles all bus transfer requests. **Due to space availability, SMS is NOT allowed to issue "bus passes" for students to ride home with a friend on a different bus.** If you need to request a bus transfer, please visit the district website to download a provisional transportation waiver (under quick links on the home page).

Parent Drop-off and Pick Up

Students being dropped off at SMS in the mornings between 7:25—7:45am or picked up in the afternoons between 2:00—2:20pm (1:00-1:20pm on Wednesdays) should be dropped off or picked up using the loop in front of the school. **Please do not park in the school's front parking lot** and drop off or have your child meet you there, as crossing a busy parking lot is not safe for our students.



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Our STEAM Summer Camp was Out of this World!

Over 70 rising 6th graders attended a STEAM-based summer camp the week of June 11-14 to explore outer space using science, technology, engineering, art and math. This grant-funded program allowed students to attend the camp free of charge, giving them a chance to spend invaluable time at SMS getting to know each other, some of their teachers, and their new school environment. Needless to say, the students who attended had a BLAST!



Space-themed Painted Tiles



Cooper Kiker holds the rocket he built and launched during camp



Students show off their "diplomas" on the last day of camp

STEAM Expands into Agriponics

Thanks to the wonderfully generous support of the Halbrook Family Foundation, Sebastian Middle School is adding an Agriponics component to our STEAM focus this year. Two greenhouses are currently on order and will be installed by the end of September for use by students in the STEAM elective classes. Agriponic systems allow us to grow food without the use of soil and with minimal water. Developed as an "urban farming" method, it employs the use of vertical systems to grow organic produce with low energy costs. As our students grow up into a world of increasingly scarce resources, empowering our students to grow their own food is a skill that will serve them well throughout their lives.

STEAM Summer Reading Assignments

It's not too late! All SMS students are invited to read at least one book from this year's SSYRA list and complete 5 activities from the Bingo Sheet below. All students who turn in this summer reading assignment by Friday, August 17 will be invited to an Ice Cream Sundae Party with toppings galore!

Sebastian STEAM Summer Reading 2018-2019



Read at least 1 SSYRA book and write a short summary in addition to completing any of the five boxes below.



<p>Read a Non-Fiction Book about Science. This could be about weather, nature, animals, chemistry, biology, health and the human body, rock formations or more. List book below.</p>	<p>Read a book about Coding or Robotics and write a paragraph in first person making connections to your own life experiences with coding or robotics</p> 	<p>Read a book that has been made into a movie, then watch the movie. Compare the two using a Venn diagram. (You can make it by hand or on the computer)</p>	<p>Go to a local bookstore, library, or even online and make a list of five books you would want to read. List the price of these books and add the totals. Don't forget to add Sales Tax</p> 
<p>Visit the public library and partake in one of their EVENTS. A list of suggested events, times and locations can be found on the back. List the event you attended above.</p>	<p>Try reading a book on Mackinexia, the EBook database provided by SMS. Go the Media Center's webpage for more information.</p> 	<p>Read a graphic novel (A book that looks like a comic book).</p> 	<p>Read a book of poems or a novel written in verse. You can find a list of suggestions on the SMS Media Web page. Book Title: _____</p> 
<p>Read a Science Fiction Book. Write a list of 10 questions you have about Science after reading this book. List book below.</p> 	<p>Create an advertisement for a book using prez, wordle, powerpoint, word animoto, publisher or another digital tool.</p> 	<p>Read an additional SSYRA book and redesign the cover. You can either draw by hand or use a digital tool.</p> 	<p>Read at least 250,000 Words! Add them up by using ARbookfind.com and searching the books you read to find the "Word Count." Keep a list of the books and their word counts to get a total.</p> 

****Please return this handout and all activities to Pam Cooper at the beginning of the school year****

Sunshine State Young Reader Award-Winning Books 2018-19

- *The Firefly Code* by Megan Blackmore
- *A Crack in the Sea* by H.M. Bouwman
- *How Lunchbox Jones Saved Me From Robots, Traitors, and Missy* by Jennifer Brown
- *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora* by Pablo Cataya
- *The Girl Who Could Not Dream* by Sarah Beth Durst
- *The Van Gogh Deception* by Deron Hicks
- *Restart* by Gordon Korman
- *The Library Book 1 (Curse of the Boogin or Surrender the Key)* by DJ MacHale
- *Frogkisser!* by Garth Nix
- *Forest of Wonders* by Linda Sue Park
- *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez
- *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds
- *Short* by Holly Goldberg Sloan
- *Click's* by Tamara Ireland Stone
- *Eureka Key (Secrets of the Seven)* by Sarah Thomson



Why Social Media is Not Smart for Middle School Kids

Article below taken from *Psychology Today*, written by Victoria L. Dunckley, M.D. an integrative child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist, the author of *Reset Your Child's Brain*, and an expert on the effects of screen-time on the developing nervous system.

- 1. Social media was not designed for them.** A tween's underdeveloped frontal cortex can't manage the distraction nor the temptations that come with social media use. While you start teaching responsible use of tech now, know that you will not be able to teach the maturity that social media requires. Like trying to make clothes fit that are way too big, they will use social media inappropriately until they are older and it fits them better.
- 2. Social media is an entertainment technology.** It does not make your child smarter or more prepared for real life or a future job; nor is it necessary for healthy social development. It is pure entertainment attached to a marketing platform extracting bits and pieces of personal information and preferences from your child every time they use it, not to mention hours of their time and attention.
- 3. A tween's "more is better" mentality is a dangerous match for social media.** Do they really have 1,456 friends? Do they really need to be on it nine hours a day? Social media allows (and encourages) them to overdo their friend connections like they tend to overdo other things in their lives.
- 4. Social media is an addictive form of screen entertainment.** And, like video game addiction, early use can set up future addiction patterns and habits.
- 5. Social media replaces learning the hard social "work" of dealing face-to-face with peers, a skill that they will need to practice to be successful in real life.**
- 6. Social media can cause teens to lose connection with family and instead view "friends" as their foundation.** Since the cognitive brain is still being formed, the need for your teen to be attached to your family is just as important now as when they were younger. Make sure that attachment is strong. While they need attachments to their friends, they need healthy family attachment more.
- 7. Social media use represents lost potential for teens.** While one can argue that there are certain benefits of social media for teens, the costs are very high during the teen years when their brain development is operating at peak performance for learning new things. It is easy for teens to waste too much of their time and too much of their brain in a digital world. We know from many studies that it is nearly impossible for them to balance it all.

How Can Kids Slow Down? First, we need to slow down and rethink what we are allowing our kids to do. We need to understand the world of social media and how teens use it differently from adults. Here are a few tips that work well for many parents.

- 1. Delay access.** The longer parents delay access, the more time a child will have to mature so that he or she can use technology more wisely as a young adult. Delaying access also places a greater importance on developing personal authentic relationships first.
- 2. Follow their accounts.** Social media privacy is a lie: Nothing is private in the digital world, and so it should not be private to parents. Make sure privacy settings are in place but know that those settings can give you a false sense of security. Encourage your teen to have private conversations in person or via a verbal phone call instead if they don't want you to read it on social media.
- 3. Create family accounts.** Create family accounts instead of individual teen accounts. This allows kids to keep up with friends in a safer social media environment.
- 4. Allow social media only on large screens.** Allow your teens to only use their social media accounts on home computers or laptops in plain view, this way they will use it less. When it is used on a small private phone screen they can put in their pocket there are more potential problems with reckless use. The more secret the access, the more potential for bad choices.
- 5. Keep a sharp eye on the clock; they will not.** Do you know how much time your child spends on social media a day? Be aware of this, and reduce the amount of time your child is on social media across all platforms. The average teen spends nine hours a day connected to social media. Instead, set one time each day for three days a week for your child to check their social media. Do they benefit from more time than that?
- 6. Plan face-to-face time with their friends.** Remember that they don't need 842 friends; four-to-six close friends are enough for healthy social development. Help them learn how to plan real, in-person, social get-togethers such as a leave-phones-at-the-door party, a home movie night, bowling, board games, cooking pizza, or hosting a bonfire. They crave these social gatherings so encourage them to invite friends over and help them (as needed) to organize the event.
- 7. Spend more real non-tech time together.** Teens who are strongly attached to their parents and family show more overall happiness and success in life. They still need us now more than ever. It is easy to detach from them: Teens can be annoying! But attaching to family allows them to detach from the social media drama. Your child needs to feel like they can come home and leave the drama of their social world behind for a few hours. They want you to help them say no to social media and yes to more time with the family. They are craving those moments to disconnect, so make plans and encourage this at home. Don't give that smartphone all the power in your home; help tweens choose healthier forms of entertainment. They have the rest of their life to be entertained by social media, but only a limited time with you.

PTO

2018-19 PTO Officers

Maria Carlson,
President

Jennifer Stevenson,
Vice President

Jenny Persson,
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Stefanie McMaugh,
Secretary

Aubrey Mulligan,
Business Partnership Coordinator

Megan Kiker and Cam Thompson,
Hospitality Co-Chairs

Doris Flaherty,
Box Tops and 5-Star Coordinator

Kishna Patel,
Eagle Store Coordinator

PTO News and Notes

Sebastian Middle School has an active Parent Teacher Organization and invites you to become involved! Joining the PTO is FREE – you simply need to give us your email address to become a member. If we miss seeing you at Back-to-School Orientation events, please email us at PTOSebastian@gmail.com to join PTO. Please include the name and grade of your student.

In 2017-18, the SMS PTO raised over \$21,000 (net) to support innovations and improvements in education at our school! Specifically, PTO funding was used for the following this past year:

- Scholarships to deserving students to attend the 8th grade field study trip to Washington, DC and the 7th grade trip to Tallahassee.
- Improvements to our campus such as the installation of benches in the front of our school to provide seating for students both before and after school during daily parent drop-off and pick-up.
- Guest speakers like Sunshine State Young Reader Award winning authors like Taryn Souders (*How to (Almost) Ruin Your Summer*) and Christina Gonzalez (*Moving Target*) and "Odd?Rod", an African-American poet raised by a drug-addicted mother who uses poetry to address overcoming adversity.
- Professional development for teachers, sending them to conferences which provide ideas and inspiration for our classes here at SMS.
- Materials and supplies for club activities offered through our "Eagle Hour," which provides students with enrichment opportunities during the school day on a weekly basis.
- Support for student incentive programs in reading, math, and positive behavior, including an "Eagle Store" where students can "shop" for school supplies and other fun items using Live School points earned for good behavior.
- Honoring teachers and staff throughout the year with gift cards and special occasion luncheons.
- SSYRA books for the library and support for SSYRA incentive programs like a field trip to the IMAX theatre and an end of year breakfast for students who read at least 4 SSYRA books.
- Support for the SMS Angel Fund, which provided gift cards to teachers and students who were most negatively impacted by Hurricane Irma and other tragedies throughout the year.



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Building a Culture of Kindness at SMS

Using our Positive Behavior Incentive System (PBIS), an important goal for Sebastian Middle School is to achieve a cultural shift that supports discipline, increases academic achievement, and creates a positive atmosphere wherein all students are able to thrive. In the coming year, PBIS will focus on positive reinforcement and relationship building in an effort to support the current discipline model and enable teachers to create more meaningful interactions with students. Our key emphasis is building positive behavioral incentives within the classroom. Our PBIS team consists of teachers, administrators, parents and students that will meet regularly to make sure we are meeting the needs of the school. Our goal on a school wide level is to recognize and incentivize positive behaviors displayed by our students individually and as groups.

PBIS is a support system for academics and discipline. Our discipline policies are evolving into a relationship driven model. Our goal with discipline and PBIS is to decrease the amount of time that students spend outside of the classroom for disciplinary reasons and increase student engagement within the classroom as a result of strong teacher/student relationships.

The PBIS team has developed a framework for classroom incentives and planned quarterly school wide incentives and events, grade level incentive competitions, positive behavior student of the month recognition, and a rubric to assess our effectiveness of increased positive student behaviors. We welcome ideas and suggestions from our parents, and look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress! Please contact Dean Kelvin Pruitt at kelvin.pruitt@stjohns.k12.fl.us with any questions or suggestions.



2018-19 Suggested School Supply List*

- Pens and pencils, notebook and graphing paper, index cards, sticky notes
- 1 set of Pink, Blue, Yellow, and Orange Highlighters
- 1 set of Colored Pencils
- Glue sticks
- 10 Pack of Sheet Protectors
- 2-inch Binder with Dividers
- Headphones or Ear Buds for computer use
- USB Drive (2GB or larger)
- Homeroom (suggested donations): Tissues, Paper Towels, Hand Sanitizer, Clorox Wipes

*Additional supplies may be requested once the school year begins.

We need spots filled...



...Can YOU help?

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School Calendar

- Aug 7 – 6th grade Back-to-School Orientation, 4:00-6:00pm
- Aug 8 – 8th grade Orientation, 9:00-11:00am; 7th Grade Orientation, 1:00-3:00pm
- Aug 10 – First Day of School!
- Aug 11 – St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association Football Jamboree (Location/Time TBD)
- Aug 15-17 – Volleyball Tryouts*, 1:30 -3:30pm (Wed); 2:30-4:30pm (Thurs/Fri)
- Aug 18 – J. Crew Outlet Spirit Day, 12:00-4:00pm, 2700 S.R. 16
- Aug 21 – PTO Kick-Off Meeting, 5:30pm
- Aug 22 – Football vs. Murray, 5:00pm @ Pomar Park, 1600 Masters Drive
- Aug 29 – Football vs. Gamble Rogers, 5:00pm @ Pomar Park
- Sep 4 – Volleyball Season Begins, 5:30pm Girls, 6:30pm Boys (schedule TBA)
- Sep 5 – Football vs. Liberty Pines, 5:00pm @ Plantation Grass, 3100 Racetrack Road, St. Johns
- Sep 12 – Football vs. Fruit Cove, 5:00pm @ Pomar
- Sep 18 – Curriculum Chats/Open House, 5:30-7:30pm**
- Sep 19 – Football vs. Valley Ridge, 5:00pm @ Davis Park, 210 Davis Park Rd, Ponte Vedra
- Sep 26 – Football vs. Pacetti Bay, 5:00pm @ Pacetti Bay, 245 Meadowlark Lane
- Sep 27 – Chick-fil-A Spirit Night, 5:30-7:30pm
- Oct 3 – Football vs. Landrum, 5:00pm @ Cornerstone, 1046 Florida AIA, Ponte Vedra
- Oct 10 – Football vs. Patriot Oaks, 5:00pm @ Plantation Grass
- Oct 17 – Football vs. Swiss Point, 5:00pm @ Pomar

*Note: Any student wishing to try out for a sport at SMS must have a current physical on file.

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Staying in Touch with SMS

In addition to the Sebastian Sentinel, which is printed and mailed four times a year, SMS sends a bi-weekly newsletter via email to all SMS parents and guardians with important dates and announcements. We also send text message reminders on the day of important events. If you do not receive emails or text messages from SMS by the end of August, please send your email and cell phone information to Ms. Cindy Willey at cindy.willey@stjohns.k12.fl.us. Thank you for staying in touch with us! Also, please be sure to follow us on Twitter at @SMSEagles16.