

Sebastian Sentinel



Principal's Message

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Firstly, I want to congratulate Cassie Clark on her recognition as this year's Character Counts representative for Sebastian. It is a tremendous honor and we are lucky to have students with her capacity on our campus. Our goal is to help students develop and have the confidence for the next level and Cassie embodies this. She, along with nominees from all middle schools in St. Johns County, will speak at the Annual Character Counts Breakfast this month.

Secondly, I feel it's important to both thank and welcome our new School Advisory Committee (SAC). It is one of the most important groups on campus as we continue to frame the vision for Sebastian whilst looking at ways to address some of the concerns we face. We also look at campus improvement projects to include safety and appearance. We welcome any ideas or input as we strongly feel that these "middle years" are the most important from a developmental viewpoint. We have scheduled guest speakers for students and parents throughout the year and many of these ideas come from our SAC. I so appreciate their work and dedication to improving our school, and I want to remind all parents that they are welcome to attend SAC meetings at any time throughout the year.

We have now completed our first Inquiry/Eagle Hour session and I'm excited with the ideas and solutions our students worked on. We will continue to shift the instructional model to a project-based approach. It requires more from our teachers and from our students. We worked through a project-based unit at a faculty meeting in early October and it was powerful to see the energy and creativity. We have much to learn and improve on but listening to students speak on how to tackle "red tide" and other community projects augers well for the future.

I announced last month that we have partnered with Flagler College to be a laboratory school for their education interns and practicum students. It, thus far, has been an exciting opportunity as these students bring a level of creativity and connectedness that is important for middle school students. Our teachers will also get an opportunity to visit Flagler College and frame some of their own professional development. Our goal with this is to constantly improve and modify our delivery methods of teaching.

Finally, please mark your calendars to attend our first STEAM Exhibition Showcase on Thursday, December 13, 5:30 – 7:00pm. It will give you a glimpse into the depth of our student work.

As always, thank you for your support.

Wayne King
Principal



Sebastian Middle School

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Wayne King

Principal

Angela Hensley

Assistant Principal

Kelvin Pruitt

Dean

Pam 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.

OCTOBER 2018

Volume 2

Issue 4

Sebastian Sentinel

October 2018

Published Four Times Per Year

2955 Lewis Speedway

St. Augustine, FL 32084

Issue 4

*Please watch for our next newsletter in January 2019, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

SMS Earns STEM School Certification

Sebastian Middle School was honored at the September 18th St. Johns County school board meeting for earning the distinction of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Certification, awarded by the STEM School Certification Review Committee at the University of Florida Lastinger Center. SMS is the first school in St. Johns County and the only middle school in the state of Florida to earn STEM Certification.

The faculty, staff, students, and parents of Sebastian Middle School collectively earned this distinction by developing and maintaining a shared vision of STEM education as demonstrated by innovative ways of highlighting STEM within the curriculum and in exhibition spaces throughout the school. Further, Sebastian Middle School has secured stakeholders to serve as STEM business partners, helping to enhance the STEM literacy of the faculty and students.

Evidence of Sebastian Middle School's efforts in integrating STEM throughout the school is apparent in the technologies being utilized, inquiry-based lessons being completed, and collaborative opportunities that students have in applying knowledge to practical, real-life experiences. Sebastian Middle School was required to submit a detailed school portfolio, which was measured against a rigorous rubric, and host a site visit by the review committee in order to earn certification, which is valid through the 2022-23 academic year.

Growth Mindset Grading Policies at SMS

With first quarter report cards posting on Home Access Center (HAC) on October 24, parents may be wondering exactly how their student's grades were compiled. Like all schools in St. Johns County, SMS uses the following district-wide grading policy:

- 5% homework
- 25% formative assessments
- 70% summative assessments

The difference between "formative" and "summative" assessments are as follows:

Formative assessments are measures used throughout the learning process to provide feedback that promotes learning and informs instruction. These may be quizzes or chapter tests, designed to test not only what the student has learned, but more importantly what he or she has still yet to master! So when you see a "bad" grade on a formative assessment in HAC, do not despair! As a growth mindset school, we embrace mistakes, as they help us identify what our students still need to learn. At least two formative assessments must be given prior to each summative assessment during a quarter, and most teachers set up their grading policy with many more grades than that so students have plenty of chances to bring up one poor grade.

Summative assessments are more comprehensive evaluations aligned to specific standards at the end of a defined instructional period or unit of study. These assessments are weighted more heavily as our students have been given the chance to practice and relearn via the formative assessments. Nevertheless, when a student does poorly on a summative assessment, he or she does have the opportunity to retake that test before the end of the quarter for an improved score. Students should schedule a summative test retake with their teacher, during lunch or after school, usually on a Tuesday or Thursday when an activities bus is always available to transport students home at 3:30pm. A minimum of 3 summative assessments per quarter will be given.

Our goal at Sebastian Middle School is for students to view learning as a challenge and the difficulty of material being learned as a way to grow their brains. If your student is able to master every subject at school without ever studying or receiving a poor grade, then she or he isn't being challenged and may be bored. The struggle to learn is what sticks with us. Embrace it!



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Eagle/Inquiry Hour at SMS

After introducing Eagle Hour on Wednesdays last year with great success, SMS modified the format this year to add an "Inquiry" component which incorporates the learning themes and essential questions for each grade level:

- 6th Grade – Changes: How can we make water potable and accessible for all?
- 7th Grade – Choices: How do technological innovations affect society?
- 8th Grade – Challenges: How can we stop the spread of diseases?

Each semester, students will spend 4 Wednesdays in a club activity of their choice (e.g., yoga, coding, art, board games, photography, dance, weightlifting, etc.). Students will then switch and spend the remaining 4 Wednesdays in the semester in an "Inquiry Hour" developing a project to address both the theme and the essential question for their grade level. For example, Mr. McCoy and Mrs. Lavalley's Inquiry Hour is working to create water filters, testing them and measuring the particles per million, in order to make water clean and accessible for all. In selecting their Inquiry Hour, students were given both "voice and choice" by electing to participate in a group with the following end products:

- Engineering and Technology product (robotics, coding, 3-D printing, environmental, construction)
- Science-related product
- Humanities (art, written/spoken word, drama, PSA)
- Calculations/Probability/Equations-based product

Students will have an opportunity to present their projects to their families and others at our school-wide **STEAM Exhibition Night on Thursday, December 13, 5:30 - 7:00pm**. Please plan to join us!

PTO Corner

Thank You for Supporting the Alternative Fundraiser!

Thanks to the generous support from parents, grandparents and teachers at SMS who were pleased with the prospect of avoiding catalog sales this year, the PTO exceeded its fundraising goal of \$2,000 by raising an astounding \$2,734 through our Alternative Fundraiser! THANK YOU to everyone who made an outright gift of any amount to the SMS PTO, 100% of which will benefit our students and teachers this year at SMS. If you didn't make a gift but would still like to, the PTO accepts gifts at any time!!

Zombie Run/Fall Social – October 19, 5:30 – 7:30pm

To celebrate the season of Halloween and burn off some candy calories, the PTO invites all SMS families to join us for a school spirit event on Friday October 19 from 5:30 – 7:30pm. A 2-mile Fun Run for all ages on school grounds will begin at 6:00pm and yes, there will be zombies along the course for a little extra incentive to run faster! Registration fee is \$10/runner (\$40 max per family), which covers the cost of a t-shirt and goodie bag for each runner. Food trucks will be on hand to provide dinner and our own DJ Darkside (Cafeteria Manager Mike Hardee) will be spinning tunes. A "Zombie Makeover" station will help participants get into the Halloween spirit. Please join us for this one-of-a-kind fun event!

Volunteer Opportunity: SMS Eagle Store/King's Trolley

Every other Wednesday, the PTO opens either the "Eagle Store" in the cafeteria during lunch or the mobile "King's Trolley" which visits individual classrooms throughout the school day. The Eagle Store and King's Trolley are a key part of the SMS Positive Behavior Incentive System (PBIS) which rewards students for good behavior with LiveSchool points. Students may spend their LiveSchool points on items such as school supplies, earbuds, books and snacks/candy in the store/trolley. If you have a few hours to spare, volunteering on a Wednesday to help with the Eagle Store or King's Trolley is a wonderful way to interact with our students. Please email PTOsebastian@gmail.com to be added to the list of potential volunteers. In lieu of time, the PTO also gratefully accepts any donations of items to sell; please mark items for "Eagle Store" and drop off in the Front Office at any time. Thank you for your support!



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Growth Mindset Parent Workshop & Book Study

Sponsored by the PTO, parents, grandparents and other family members are invited to join Mindset Works trainer Janna Peskett to learn how to help your student embrace challenges and develop resilience in the face of setbacks!

- **Date: Thursday, October 18**
- **Time: 6:00 – 7:00pm**
- **Location: SMS Multipurpose Room**

Hosted by Principal Wayne King, a 3-session Book Study will follow to discuss "The Parents We Mean to Be" by Richard Weissbourd. Copies of the book are available at SMS; email Parent Liaison Susan Connor at susan.connor@stjohns.k12.fl.us to reserve your copy of the book today.

- **Book Study Meeting Dates: Thursdays, November 8, 15, 29**
- **Time: 5:30—6:30pm**
- **Location: Growers Alliance Café, 322 Anastasia Boulevard, St. Augustine**

Please plan to join us for one or more of these sessions!

English Language Arts News & Notes

Eighth grade ELA classes combined for a PBL (project based learning) session to activate prior knowledge for our novel study of *Fever 1793*. Working in groups, students planned a pandemic kit by researching costs and supplies, securing an exit plan, providing for family members (and pets) and determining how to market and sell their kits online and/or in a store. Valuable life skills were learned through collaboration and action!



8th Grade Career Fair – December 5

At SMS, we want our students to focus on their future by looking at how you found your future! What academic path did you take? What is fulfilling about your career? What challenges did you face in pursuing your career? What is the earning potential students could expect? If you are interested in sharing your career with our students, we invite you to become a Career Day presenter. Our 8th Grade Career Day will be held **Wednesday, December 5 from 7:30am—12:30pm** and a 6th/7th Grade event will be held in the spring (date TBD). If you are interested in participating in one or both events, please email Susan Connor at susan.connor@stjohns.k12.fl.us for more information. Thank you in advance for helping to spark interest in our students' futures!

AVID Students Get a Jump on College Scholarships

All 6th-8th grade AVID students at SMS will have the opportunity to apply for their first college scholarship this fall! The contest is conducted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars each year and students are invited to respond to a different patriotic topic. This year, they will be writing essays in their AVID classes on "Why I honor the American flag" for the chance to win up to \$5000 and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, DC. As writing skills are an important focus in our AVID classes, this was a great real-world application of these skills. Students are excited about the opportunity and have been working diligently on their essays, which are due October 31, 2018.

This contest is open to all 6th-8th grade students in the US; interested students should see Ms. Waters for more information and an entry form. Additionally, the AVID page on the school website (located under the "Academics" link on the homepage) includes links to many scholarships that middle school students can apply for now. Good luck and happy writing!



AVID®

Decades of College Dreams

Eagle Athletics



Football

Our SMS Football team, coached by Austin Witt, is currently 3-4 and very much in the playoff picture with 2 games yet to go. Be sure to mark your calendars to attend our final home game vs. Swiss Point on Wednesday, October 17, 7:00pm at Pomar Park, 1600 Masters Drive, St. Augustine. A few of our 8th grade stand-out players are pictured.



Marquice King defending a pass.



Mark Harvey carrying the ball.



Bryant Vlicky staring down his opponents.

Soaring Eagles Volleyball

Our boys and girls volleyball teams have had a challenging season but they are learning and growing together as a team. And most importantly, they are having a ton of fun!



Jack Harris-Hynes prepares to set.



The Eagles breaking it out after a win against Fruit Cove!



Our Eagle girls high five after scoring!

SMS Sports, Clubs & Afterschool Activities

Studies show that students who get involved in sports, clubs or other after-school activities do better academically and enjoy school more. Encourage your students to try one or more of the following:

Sport/Club/Activity	Teacher Sponsor	Meeting date(s) and times
Art Club	Hagy/King	Tuesdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm
Baseball/Softball	St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association	Tryouts: February; Season: March-April
Boys & Girls Basketball	Razey	Tryouts: early December; Season: January - February
Builders Club	Pardo	Every other week on variable days; 2:00 - 3:30pm
Chorus Club	Rogers	Tuesdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm
Cross Country	Hayes/Mathis	Tuesdays/Fridays, 2:00 - 3:30pm; Meets in October - November
Dance Team	Burkhardt	Tuesdays, 2:00-3:30pm, Season: January - February
Drama Club	Hodges	TBD Spring 2019
Dungeons & Dragons	Ludwick	Tuesdays/Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm
National Jr. Honor Society	Reese	Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm
String Orchestra	Rogers	Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm
Student Council	Allen/Mathis	Last Tuesday of Every Month, 2:00 - 3:00pm
Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)	Fortune	Last Tuesday of Every Month, 2:00 - 3:30pm
Tennis	St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association	Tryouts: January/February; Season: March - April
VEX IQ Robotics	Brown/Harvey	Tues/Thurs, 2:00-3:30pm
WSMS TV Show	Tagliarini	As needed

Note: Many of our after-school activities are offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays because the district provides transportation home on those days for our students. An "Activities Bus" picks up students at SMS at 3:30pm on Tuesdays/Thursdays and transports them to St. Augustine High School, where students transfer to their regular bus route home. An SMS administrator rides the Activities Bus to SAHS with our students to ensure that they get on the correct bus home.



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We need spots filled...



...Can YOU help?

Sebastian Middle School

Susan Connor • susan.connor@stjohns.k12.fl.us

School Calendar

- Oct 17—Cross Country @ Gamble Rogers, 4:00pm
 Oct 17—Football vs. Swiss Point @ Pomar Park, 7:00pm
 Oct 18—Growth Mindset Parent Workshop, 6:00—7:00pm @ SMS
 Oct 19—Zombie Run Fall Social, 5:30pm @ SMS
 Oct 23—SAC Meeting, 2:15pm @ SMS; PTO Meeting, 5:45pm @ Growers Alliance Café, 322 Anastasia Blvd.
 Oct 24—First Quarter Report Cards Issued
 Oct 27—6th Grade Super Saturday, 8:30-11:30am
 Nov 5—Sonny's BBQ Spirit Night, 5:00-8:00pm
 Nov 12—Veterans Day: Teacher/Student Holiday
 Nov 14—Cross Country @ Fruit Cove, 4:00pm
 Nov 16—2nd Quarter Interims Issued in HAC
 Nov 21-23—Thanksgiving Break
 Nov 27—SAC Meeting, 2:15pm @ SMS
 Nov 28—Cross Country @ Bartram Trail High, 4:00pm
 Dec 5—8th Grade Career Day
 Dec 6-19—Final Exams (Single Semester Course)
 Dec 11—Band Holiday Concert, 6:00pm
 Dec 11—PTO Meeting, 5:45pm @ Villa Victor, 42 San Marco Avenue
 Dec 13—STEAM Exhibition Night, 5:30—7:00pm
 Dec 17-21—Mid-Term Exams (Full Semester Courses)
 Dec 18—Guitar Holiday Concert, 6:00pm
 Dec 20—String Orchestra Holiday Concert, 6:00pm
 Dec 21—Second Quarter Ends
 Dec 24-Jan 3—Winter Break
 Jan 7—Classes resume for students
 Jan 15—SAC Meeting, 5:30pm; PTO Meeting, 6:00pm @ SMS
 Jan 25—Night of Magic sponsored by the SMS PTO, 7:00pm
 Feb 12— SAC Meeting, 2:15pm @ SMS
 Mar 12—SAC Meeting, 2:15pm @ SMS; PTO Meeting, 5:45pm @ Café 11
 Mar 14—Spring Fling at SMS; Third Quarter Ends
 Mar 15—Teacher Planning Day/Student Holiday
 Mar 18-22—Spring Break
 Apr 16—SAC Meeting, 2:15pm @ SMS
 Apr 19 – Student/Teacher Holiday
 May 6-10—Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week
 May 14—PTO Meeting, 5:45pm @ SMS
 May 22—8th Grade Graduation Ceremony, 6:00pm @ SMS
 May 23—7th Grade Awards Ceremony, 8:30am @ SMS
 May 24— 6th Grade Awards Ceremony, 8:30am @ SMS; Last Day of School for Students!



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Attention 8th Graders! High School Career Academy Information

A Career Academy is a school within a high school that ties what you're learning in class to the high-demand careers that interest you. Career Academies provide students with fun, interesting, and unique learning experiences whether you're headed off to college after high school or plan to start employment right away. Different Career Academies are offered at every high school throughout St. Johns County and 8th grade students may apply to attend any Career Academy in the district. If accepted, you must provide your own transportation if out of zone however. Please mark your calendars now to learn more about Career Academies and apply by the deadline of February 19.

January 24	High School Academy Showcase at World Golf Village Convention Center – 3:30 – 7:00 p.m.
January 24	Online Application OPENS 8:00 a.m. for newly applying 5th, 8th and 9th grade students.
Jan. 29- Feb. 5	Academy Nights at each High School
February 15	St. Johns County Center for the Arts AUDITIONS at St. Augustine High School.
February 19	Registration Deadline – Online – Registration will be closed at 5:00 p.m.