

Sebastian Sentinel



Principal's Message

Dear Eagle Families,

Reflecting on my first semester as Principal of Sebastian Middle School, I am extraordinarily impressed by and grateful for the hard work and resulting accomplishments of everyone in our Eagle Family—students, teachers, staff, and parents. I am particularly proud of the Arts in our STEAM school, which are as important as our intense focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. If you had a chance to catch one of the Holiday Concerts in December given by our SMS String Orchestra, Guitar or Band classes, you would agree that their performance was outstanding. Kudos to Mr. Rogers for his excellent work with our music students. Likewise, our visual Art teachers Ms. Hagy and Ms. King continue to inspire great works in mediums like collage, batik, grid drawings, and even tiny houses constructed of graham crackers. Follow them on YouTube at “Amazing SMArt Teachers” and Instagram @SMArtist904 to see examples of student work. Finally, thanks to Ms. Trosclair, our new Jr. Thespian Club represented SMS incredibly well in its first competition in 15 years, earning top honors to move on to state competitions in the spring.

The parents and grandparents in our SMS community continue to overwhelm me with their generosity and support of our Title 1 school. With your help, we were able to make the holidays brighter for 25 deserving “Angel” students this year. I also want to extend a grateful thanks to the PTO and all of the volunteers who came out during the last busy week of school in December to staff our Holiday Shop, which allowed every student to purchase one gift for a family member, friend or teacher using PBIS points.

This second semester brings new challenges and opportunities to deepen our learning and apply our skills through meaningful projects. We began the first week back at school with a re-emphasis on Single School Culture, reminding students of the expectations and procedures that are in place to create a positive learning environment. I encourage you as parents to also review the Single School Culture document with your students; a link to this document can be found on the home page of our website, www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us.

We continue our work this semester to achieve recertification as a STEM school, working with Cognia, a nonprofit organization that works with educational institutions around the world. Inquiry Hour will kick off on February 4 and culminate in a Spring Exhibition Event on April 7, 5:30-7:30pm. Read more about Inquiry Hour in the article on page 4 and please mark your calendars now to attend Exhibition to learn from your students and their peers!

continued on page 2

*Please watch for our next newsletter in March 2020, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

Sebastian Middle School

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

Kirstie Gabaldon
Principal

Angela Hensley
Assistant Principal

Kevin Hayes
Dean

Matt Hodges
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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Issue 1

Principal's Message

continued from cover

Thanks to The Halbrook Family Foundation, we are putting the finishing touches on our new 348 square foot Greenhouse, which will be opening its doors in the coming weeks for use by teachers and students in studying a whole range of environmental issues and strategies. Finally, students in our gifted elective classes traveled to Kennedy Space Center on January 10 to work with NASA data generated by the international space station and learn about the impact of space on plant growth. We will be using this data as we explore growth in our SMS greenhouse.

Many of our 8th grade students began their final semester at SMS with the much-anticipated week-long trip to Washington, DC, January 12-17. This opportunity to take learning about history and government out of the classroom and into our nation's capital is unparalleled and we were pleased to take a total of 90 students on the trip this year. Upon their return, our 8th graders will be exploring their options for high school and registering for career academies at the high school of their choice by February 3.

Again, my deepest thanks to our students, parents, teachers and staff for the positive energy, creativity, and commitment you bring to learning. It is my honor and privilege to serve as your Principal.

Sincerely,
Kirstie Gabaldon
Principal

Capture the Memories with an SMS Yearbook

Under the guidance this year of Ms. Ludwick, the SMS Yearbook promises to be the best one yet! Be sure to pre-order yours today for \$35 by visiting the following website: <https://commpe.pictavo.com/> and follow the prompts in the dropdown menu to find our school. Yearbooks will be delivered to students the last week of school. A limited number of extra copies will be ordered which are likely to sell out quickly, so the only way to guarantee your student a yearbook is by placing a pre-order online by the deadline of March 16.

Ms. Ludwick also invites parents and students to upload their own personal photographs for inclusion in this year's yearbook. Visit the Pictavo website link listed above and click on the "Upload Photos" link which will walk you through the process. Photos of SMS students in and out of school are welcomed!

Finally, parents of 8th grade students are invited to purchase dedication ads in this year's yearbook! Ranging in price from \$100 for a full page ad to \$25 for 1/8 page, ads can be purchased and designed using the Pictavo website link. Proceeds from 8th grade ads will be used to purchase a dedicated "yearbook computer" for use by teachers and students in compiling the SMS yearbook for years to come. The deadline to submit an ad has been extended to Friday, January 31. Email Katie Lay with questions at sklay723@comcast.net.

Volunteer Opportunities at SMS

Parents, guardians, grandparents and other adult family members are invited to help further the mission of Sebastian Middle School by volunteering your time, energy, and expertise in a number of ways this semester! Please mark your calendars to assist with the following events and activities:

- Eagle Store – Various dates, during lunches (9:45am – 12:15pm)
- Scholastic Book Fair – February 3-7, shifts from 7:30am – 2:00pm
- Career Fair – TBD in March; presenters needed!
- Spring Fling – Thursday, March 12, 12:00-2:00pm
- 8th Grade Dance – Friday, April 24, planning/set-up/decorations
- Exam Proctors – Dates TBD in May

If you would like to sign up to volunteer for one or more of the above, please email Volunteer Coordinator Susan Connor at Susan.Connor@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

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Policy & Procedure Reminders

The beginning of the second semester is an excellent time to refresh our memories by reviewing the policies and procedures in place at SMS to create the most conducive learning environment possible.

Fast Food/Drinks: Please note that SMS does not allow fast food, other special lunches or outside coffees/drinks to be delivered to students and eaten in the cafeteria. All outside drinks must be finished before entering school in the mornings.

Drop-Off Policy: To promote personal responsibility and minimize classroom disruptions, parents should only drop off keys, lunches, or athletic equipment needed by the student for a practice or game that day. All other items, including homework, textbooks, PE uniforms, and instruments, should be kept at home and brought in by the student on the following day.

Daily Announcements: Looking for an answer to "What's going on at school this week?" Check the homepage of the SMS website at <http://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/daily-announcements/> for a list of announcements that are made over the intercom every day to students!

Early Check-outs: Parents or guardians wishing to sign students out before the end of the school day must come into the Front Office no later than 1:20pm (12:20pm on Wednesdays) with photo identification. To preserve instructional time and minimize classroom disruptions, students will not be allowed to check out early between 1:20-1:50pm (12:20-12:50pm on Wednesdays).

Transportation Changes: Day-of changes in transportation may be made by calling the SMS Front Office BEFORE 1:20pm (12:20pm on Wednesdays). Please note that SMS is not allowed to issue "bus passes" for students to ride home with a friend on a different bus. Parents must request an emergency waiver online with the SJCS Department of Transportation in order for a student to ride a bus other than their designated route.

Tardy/Attendance Policies: Students cannot learn if they are not at school! Please make every effort to help your student get to school on-time every day. Doors to SMS open at 7:10am and 1st period begins promptly at 7:35am. Three tardies to the same class (including 1st period) will result in a referral to the Dean's Office. Absences should be reported in writing within 48 hours of the student's return to school. Notes should be dropped off in Guidance, or emailed to Mary.Pitman@stjohns.k12.fl.us. Please visit this section of the SMS website for more information on our attendance policy: <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/attendance/>

Dress Code: Dean Hayes invites parents and students to follow these guidelines:

- Hoods and hats are not to be worn on heads at any time inside the school building.
- No slides! Shoes must have a back or strap on the heel.
- Skirts, dresses, shorts, baggies, culottes, etc. must be no shorter than 4 inches above the knee.
- Midriff or "cutout" dresses/tops may not be worn.



REMEMINDERS

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Inquiry Hour Promotes Project-Based Learning

Working in groups of two or more, over 170 students presented their projects developed during last fall's Inquiry Hour sessions to approximately 80 parents, grandparents, district staff, and community leaders during an Exhibition Event on November 20. Pictured here are students who developed projects using science, technology, music, written and spoken word, and even movement!

After collecting feedback from students and conducting a brainstorming session with parents, teachers and staff at the conclusion of last fall, we will launch our Spring Inquiry Hour on Tuesday, February 4. Students will again be working in groups and through the lens of a specific discipline to develop a wide variety of hands-on projects to address a relevant topic of their choosing. For example:

- Converting an old school bus into a tiny home
- Addressing homelessness through "Plarning" (weaving with recycled plastics instead of yarn)
- Plotting and understanding your personal carbon footprint
- Creating musical compositions as a representation of weather incidents
- Journaling/scrapbooking to reflect Mars colonization
- Creating a middle school Escape Room game

At the conclusion of the 8-week session, students will again have an opportunity to present projects to the public during an **Exhibition Event on Tuesday, April 7, 5:30-7:30pm at SMS**. Please mark your calendars now to attend!



Celebrate Reading During Literacy Week: January 27-30

Literacy Week is a statewide initiative held to promote the joy of reading! At SMS, we will host Dress-Up Days and other fun activities to support reading. All students who participate in the following will receive PBIS points:

- **Monday 1/27 – Hunt for a Good Book** (wear camouflage)
- **Tuesday 1/28 – Hats Off to Authors** (wear your favorite hat in honor of our Visiting Author Eric Walters)
- **Wednesday 1/29 – Tacky Tourist Day** (wear tourist attire to reflect "Oh the places you'll go" by Dr. Suess)
- **Thursday 1/30 – Favorite Literary Character** (dress like a character from your favorite book)

In addition, each day a mystery reader will read a quote during the morning announcements from his/her favorite book. Students will be invited to bring answers (title of book and name of mystery reader) to the Media Center each day for a chance to spin the wheel for prizes!

Finally, on Tuesday 1/28, SMS will host a special visit from SSYRA author Eric Walters. All students who have read the book "Elephant Secret" by Eric Walters and completed the corresponding quiz in the Media Center prior to 1/28 will be invited to a special luncheon with the author.

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Junior Thespians at SMS

Adding another outlet for the A (Arts) in our STEAM school, SMS launched Junior Thespians as an after-school club this year. In December, Mrs. Ralin Trosclair and 18 students represented SMS for the first time in 15 years in a District 1 Florida Jr. Thespians Festival (AKA "Thestival"). The students pictured here performed in 13 different events, and 11 of our performances were judged as "Superior" or "Excellent." Students will present their performances during a **Thespian Showcase/Night of the Arts later this semester (date TBD). All will be invited to attend!**

Rehearsals for our spring production begin on January 23rd. The spring production features 2 One-Act Plays: "Just a Stage He's Going Through" and "To Date or Not To Date." Any students interested in working tech (backstage) during the production should see Mrs. Trosclair to sign up. The production will be presented in April (date TBD).

Following the spring production, the Jr. Thespians Club will meet weekly after school on Tuesdays, 2:00-3:00pm, in April and May to plan for next year. Any person interested in learning more about the club should plan to attend those meetings. All are welcome!



And the 2019-20 Winner Is...

Congratulations are in order to the following exemplary individuals who are being recognized for their outstanding work at Sebastian Middle School this year:

- Teacher of the Year – Darren Tagliarini, 6th Grade Guidance Counselor
- Rookie Teacher of the Year – Emily Ludwick, 7th Grade English Language Arts
- Employee of the Year – Cedric Wolfe, Custodian
- Adult Volunteer of the Year – Jennifer Stevenson, PTO President
- Senior Volunteer of the Year – Lynda Eidson, Master Gardener and ESE classroom volunteer
- Youth Volunteer of the Year – Kaiti Rossi, former SMS student and current 9th grader at SAHS

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Did You Know . . .our SMS Teachers are “Artsy”!

“Music has the power to impact a child’s future. It provides an opportunity for artistic expression, development of the mind, and an understanding of our world and how the arts have in most cases made it a better place.” Charles Rogers, SMS Music Teacher

“I was in Choir from grades 1-12, Drama from grades 6-12, Piano from grades 4-11, Chorus and Band from grades 8-12 and took Painting, Drawing and Sculpture classes from 8-12. Without the arts, my life would be empty...” Heather Hagy, SMS Art Teacher

“I took Art classes from grades K-12, I played in the Band in 5th grade, I designed masks for a play in college, and earned a Bachelors of Art from Monmouth University.” Kelly King, SMS Art Teacher

While our dedicated Arts teachers clearly have an extensive background and training in their craft, we asked the rest of our SMS teachers to share their experiences with the arts while they were students. Read on to be surprised at which teachers are “artsy”!

Rebekah Bell, ESE: I sang in my church chorus during middle school, and acted in Peter Pan and Aesop’s Fables at Bay Street Theater in Eustis, FL. At Florida Gateway College, my work in photography, graphic design, and 3-D design was presented in many of the college art galleries.

Sarah Burkhardt, Math: Ballet and dance of all kinds!

Margaret Cody, ESE: I began playing flute in 4th grade and then added French horn in 7th & 8th.

Susan DeAcutis, Social Studies: In middle school, I was acting in plays/musicals. I was so in love with musicals and acting, that I interned at a theater throughout high school and was accepted to a private college for acting. I was also interested in art though, taking painting and sculpture classes throughout middle and high school and eventually earned a BS in Graphic Design.

Sarah Edwards, ELA: I sang in chorus in middle school and high school. I learned to play guitar in college, and now I sing and play with the worship team at my church (Colonial).

Kirstie Gabaldon, Principal: I was involved with dance, theatre, chorus throughout secondary school.

Natalie Giacosa, ELA: I acted in plays during middle school, I have 12 years of piano training, and took several years of Jazz dance during middle and high school.

Debbie Hartley, Critical Thinking: In 7th grade, I played Bofur, a dwarf in a musical version of The Hobbit. In 9th grade, I worked on sets and costumes for a production of Guys and Dolls.

Liezel Henry, Math: I was in high school choir. Also, I was in cartooning class and my drawing was selected as a front cover of a local DoD magazine (Department of Defense) in Japan.

Bernie Huffman, ICT: Throughout middle school, high school, and college, I was in our church youth music group, playing and singing at church services. During college, I also acted in a play, “Princess and the Pea.”

Meghan Johns, STEAM: I played the clarinet and saxophone in middle school and high school band.

Teri Lydigsen, Social Studies: I was in chorus and band in high school. I played the clarinet and was part of the color guard (flags) in our marching band, which won many titles and marched at Chicago Bears games each year.

Joy Manning, Electives: I have participated in the arts in some form throughout the years: behind the scenes, on stage, writing, etc. for college conservatory productions, community theatre, elementary, middle, and high school productions, and Florida Army National Guard Youth.

Rachel Mathis, Science: I was in the band and choir, acted in plays, and helped with costume design.

Crystal Moody, ESE: I was in band in middle school, and played the clarinet and a few more instruments. I went on to play the clarinet in high school and as a senior, I was the leader of the band, the drum major. I loved it.

Amy Ridilla, Science: I was in the band from grades 6-12.

Kate Torboli, ESE: I was in the performance chorus in high school.

Heather Watson, Science: I played the clarinet, guitar and piano in middle school. For some of our high school plays, I designed and helped create some of the background sets.

We need spots filled...



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School Calendar

- Jan 17 – Second Quarter Report Cards posted in HAC
- Jan 20 – MLK Day/Student & Teacher Holiday
- Jan 21 – SAC Meeting, 2:00pm, MPR
- Jan 31 – Teacher Inservice Day/Student Holiday
- Feb 3 – Registration for High School Career Academies and Programs of Choice closes at 5:00pm
- Feb 6 – Communication Cornerstone, 8:30am, MPR; Third Quarter Interims posted in HAC
- Feb 14 – STEAM Advisory Board Meeting, 8:00am, MPR
- Feb 17 – Presidents Day/Student & Teacher Holiday
- Feb 18 – SAC Meeting, 2:00pm, MPR
- Mar 10 – PTO Meeting, 6:00pm (offsite location TBD)
- Mar 12 – SMS Spring Fling, 12:30 – 1:50pm; Third Quarter Ends
- Mar 13 – Teacher Planning Day/Student Holiday
- Mar 16-20 – Spring Break
- Mar 24 – SAC Meeting, 2:00pm, MPR
- Mar 31 – Third Quarter Report Cards posted in HAC
- Apr 7 – Exhibition Event, 5:30 – 7:30pm, MPR
- Apr 9 – Communication Cornerstone, 8:30am, MPR
- Apr 10 & 13 – Student/Teacher Holidays
- Apr 15-30 – District-wide Final Exams
- Apr 17 – STEAM Advisory Board Meeting, 8:00am, MPR
- Apr 21 – SAC Meeting, 2:00pm, MPR; Fourth Quarter Interims posted in HAC
- Apr 24 – 8th Grade Dance with Murray Middle School, 7:00-9:00pm, St. Augustine High School Gym
- May 1-26 – FSA/EOC Testing in Reading, Math, Science, Civics
- May 1 – 8th Grade GradVenture Trip to Universal Orlando
- May 4-8 – Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week
- May 12 – SAC Meeting, 2:00pm; PTO Meeting, 3:00pm, MPR
- May 14 – Spring Band Concert, 6:00pm, Auditorium
- May 19 – Spring Guitar Concert, 6:00pm, Auditorium
- May 21 – Spring String Orchestra Concert, 6:00pm, Auditorium
- May 22 – 8th Grade Awards Ceremony, 6:00pm, Gymnasium
- May 25 – Memorial Day/Student & Teacher Holiday
- May 27 – Last Day of School for Students
- May 28 – Teacher Planning Day

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Eagle Athletics



8

With Fall sports—Football, Volleyball, Cheerleading, Soccer and Cross Country—now concluded, our Winter and Spring sports are gearing up! Mark your calendars for the following tryouts and/or plan to come out to a game this season to cheer on our teams. Go Eagles!

St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association Sports: Baseball/Softball, Tennis and Golf

Registration is now open for these spring sports, which are organized by the St. Johns Middle School Athletic Association. Interested students should visit the SJMSAA website for more information and to register prior to tryouts at <https://www.sjmsaa.com/>. Tryouts will be held for each sport during January or February. Girls Softball will be coached by SMS Teacher Morgan Miller; Boys Baseball needs a volunteer coach. Please contact SMS Athletic Director Chad Razey with any questions at Chad.Razey@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

Basketball

Girls play at 5:30pm and Boys immediately after (approximately 6:30pm).

- Jan 14 vs. Freedom Crossing (HOME)
- Jan 16 vs. Swiss Point (AWAY)
- Jan 23 vs. Gamble Rogers (HOME)
- Jan 30 vs. Pacetti Bay (AWAY)
- Feb 4 vs. Patriot Oaks (HOME)
- Feb 6 vs. Landrum (HOME)
- Feb 11 vs. Fruit Cove (AWAY)
- Feb 13 vs. Liberty Pines (AWAY)
- Feb 20 vs. Murray (HOME)
- Feb 25 vs. Valley Ridge (AWAY)
- Feb 27 vs. Mill Creek (HOME)
- Mar 3 vs. Palm Valley (AWAY)

