

# Sebastian Sentinel



## Principal's Message

Dear Eagle Families,

This has been a busy start to the school year, and it has moved quickly! It feels as if we were just holding our summer STEAM camp for our new rising 6th graders. Those same students now move confidently class to class and have adjusted to the pace of a seven-period day. Likewise, our new faculty members are enjoying being part of the Eagle family, and I encourage you to read on to see our feature piece about the wonderful additions to our faculty.

One of the most enjoyable features of this year is that we have been able to reintroduce after school Clubs on Tuesdays. Our students have a wide variety of experience open to them including band, orchestra, chess, cross country, TV Production, Robotics, Drama, National Junior Honors Society and more. It is wonderful to see our students learning new skills and honing talents. I am grateful to all our faculty members who give of their time and energy to create these experiences for our students.

We continued our Dive into the STEAM theme from summer camp into Red Ribbon week. We looked at different elements of diving and surfing, such as buoyancy, heat transfer, pressure and absorption of light and discussed how forces within and around us can lead to a healthy, drug free life. Students created 'surfboards' and wrote across them all the hobbies and people that create 'buoyancy' in their lives. We used these to create one giant surfboard to show we are stronger together!

I am grateful for the never-ending creativity of our faculty and their passion to create engaging and authentic learning experiences for our students. I am also thankful for the diligent and unending support of our families and business partners. It is my honor and privilege to continue to serve as your Principal.

K.T. Gabaldon, Principal

If you aren't on our mailing list, please check out Ms. Gabaldon's weekly updates by clicking on the Principal's Message on the Sebastian Website.



## Sebastian Middle School

2955 Lewis Speedway  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

**904-547-3840**

**Kirstie Gabaldon**

*Principal*

**Jennifer Gamble**

*Assistant Principal*

**Kevin Hayes**

*Dean*

**Recia Smith**

*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 2021

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Issue 3

**Sebastian Sentinel**

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St. Augustine, FL 32084

Issue 3

\*Please watch for our next newsletter in January 2022, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.



## Sebastian Middle School Website

The SMS website has up to date information that is important to stay informed about all activities at Sebastian. It can be found at:

[www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/](http://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/)



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Calendar



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## From the Art Room

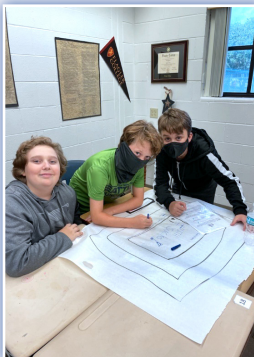
In the art room, SMArtists have been working very hard on their Still Life Unit. So far we have discussed what a still life is, how to add depth to a work of art using value, and how to draw what you see. Check out some of their awesome work!



## Civics News

Civics students are off to a great start. We began our year with the study of Citizenship, including the rights, responsibilities, and obligations as well as the Naturalization process. We then had an AWESOME experience with our Media Specialist, Mrs. Barnard creating a form of government within the Minecraft Education portal. Groups of 5 students worked together to build within the characteristics of a Representative Democracy, Monarchy, Communism or Anarchy. Wow!! We had some great projects.

We are now studying the foundations of our government and how the Founding Fathers were influenced by Philosophers and Enlightenment documents in creating our Constitution. I hope your child is enjoying learning Civics so far!!



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## Media Center

The Media Center, consisting of Media Specialist, Ms. Barnard, and Para, Ms. Dempsey, is in full swing. They started out the year with Media Center orientations then collaborations with classes. With Civics, they worked on Minecraft to build worlds based on forms of government. Then with Intensive Reading, they had "Speed Dating with a Book" to give students choices of books for a class novel study. With Ms. Hartley's language arts classes, they helped create Sways (an online presentation program) to create a soundtrack based on the tone and mood of Edgar Allan Poe's *"The Tell-tale Heart."* And steadily going on, they hosted the Scholastic Book Fair during the week of September 27-October 1. This was the first in-school book fair they have had in TWO years so it was well-received by both students and teachers.

A Big Thank you to all of the teachers, parents, staff members, and students who purchased from the Scholastic Book Fair! We were able to meet and exceed our goal of \$3700. Thank you also to the PTO and our amazing volunteers who helped us during the book fair.



Ms. Deacutis and Ms. Wedge received a grant from Sebastian's wonderful PTO to purchase books for their Intensive Reading classes. They were able to get a class set for each of them of Gordon Korman's *The Unteachables*, a Florida Sunshine State Young Reader's Award book. They were also able to buy additional high interest novels to add to their classroom library. The books were purchased from the Media Center's Scholastic Book Fair.



Pictured L-R: Ms. Deacutis, Ms. Farrow PTO President, and Ms. Wedge

## School Calendar

### Thursday

**November 11th**

Veteran's Day, Student / Teacher Holiday

### Wednesday - Friday

**November 24th - 26th**

Thanksgiving Day Break

### Tuesday December 21st

Second Quarter / First Semester Ends

### Wednesday - Tuesday

**December 22nd - Jan 4th**

Winter Break, Student/ Teacher Holiday

## 8th Grade Academy Dates / 2021-22

### January 6th

Application Process Opens

### January 18th - February 3rd

Academy Presentations (aka "Academy Nights") for individual high schools see school website for dates/ locations <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/guidance/>

### January 13th

Virtual High School Showcase

### February 7th, 2022

SJCC Auditions

### February 10th

Application Process Closes

Please contact the 8th grade Guidance Counselor Ms. Fortune at [Leanne.Fortune@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:Leanne.Fortune@stjohns.k12.fl.us).



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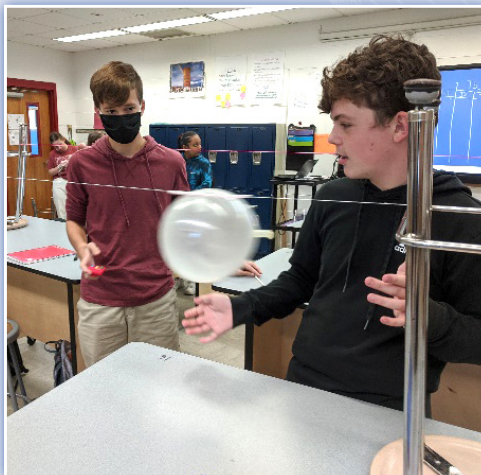
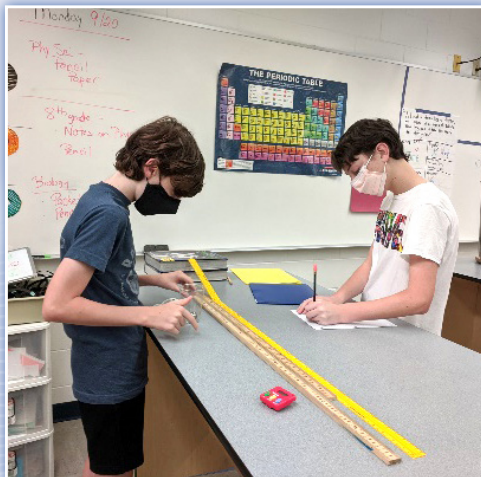
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## 8th Grade English

In 8th grade English, students are really stretching their writing muscles! Students have been writing back and forth with a randomly assigned pen pal, both of them using creative pseudonyms. From names like "Space Unicorn" to "DarthSithlord60007000 eggsandbaconaregood" students are showing their vibrant sides. There's rumors and mysteries going around about who might be who, with students trading clues as to their identities and some going as far to write full blown riddles or create small scavenger hunts! Students usually write to their partners about what they're doing in class - the latest poem or suspenseful story - but sometimes they write about what's going on in their lives. Sometimes, you just need someone to bend an ear. It's been so wonderful to see students in all three 8th grade ELA classes take the chance to get to know a new potential friend through letter writing, and it's been inspiring to see students get so excited about writing and receiving mail.

## Science

Mrs. Nall's physical science students have been engaged in learning about Newton's three laws of motion. Special thanks to the parents who helped purchase items for their "Let's move it with Sir Isaac Newton" project through the Donors choose program. Students have been calculating the speed and acceleration of marbles moving down inclines and investigating balloon rockets carrying marbles. Next we will run experiments studying projectile motion using catapults. Science always on the move!!



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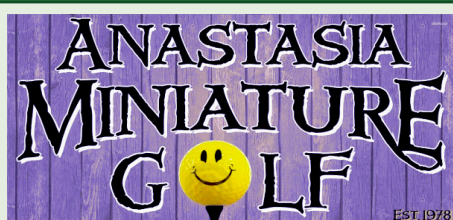
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## PTO Corner

Welcome from the PTO! We are here to provide the support and experiences that make it so special to be a Sebastian Eagle. Thank you to all who have contributed to our Check Writing Campaign so far! We have big plans to boost our student incentive programs, schoolwide projects, and to get our faculty and staff the resources they need to enhance their programs and to show our appreciation.

Here's our online link to the Check Writing Campaign, Spirit Wear, and Business Partner Opportunities: <https://my.cheddarup.com/c/sebastian-middle-school-pto-store>

Volunteer opportunities are popping up around school! Please make sure you fill out the School Access Form (link found on the SMS website as well as the SJCS website) to become an approved volunteer.

Without the support of our Business Partners, we'd be nothing but a few notebooks and pencils. THANK YOU to these generous businesses for supporting us!

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Thank you to Farmhand Kchn for hosting our first Spirit Event! Our next Spirit Night will be at Zaxby's on Tuesday, October 19th from 5-8pm.

Email us [PTOSebastian@gmail.com](mailto:PTOSebastian@gmail.com) anytime! Thank you again for your support!

Jennifer Farrow, PTO President

## School Policy questions?

Please see our Code of Conduct for our Dress Code and Attendance policy: <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/attendance/>

## Are you having HAC access issues?

If you or your student are unable to login to HAC or Schoology please contact the school to confirm why the account is blocked. It could be a simple glitch in the system, or it might be due to the fact that your residency documents on file have expired. HAC & Schoology accounts are necessary for your student to access while in school and/or at home. Your student typically will use one or both accounts daily for classwork, testing, checking grades and assignments among other things. Please ask your student if they have been unable to access HAC or Schoology so that you can address this issue quickly.



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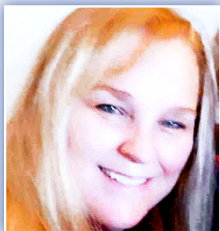
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# New Teachers



## Michelle Geraghty - VE support / ESE

Hello, I am originally from the southside of Chicago, IL. I recently moved to St. Augustine for the sunshine! My husband and I have 3 kids and a dog.

I have many hobbies which include reading, cooking, and vacationing (Not sure if vacationing is a real hobby, but it is to me)

I have a degree from Trinity Christian College, which is in IL. I love to learn new things. Learning is fun and interesting. I became a teacher to inspire the younger generation of learners.



## Ms. Suzanne Goldberg - ISD Paraprofessional

Hi! I have enjoyed getting to know the kids and our school! Some information about me, I was born in Wisconsin and am a huge Packers fan. I grew up in Gainesville and am also a big Gators fan. I graduated from Flagler College with a degree in Business, and I worked in the banking industry before becoming a full-time mom in 2011. I have 2 kids, Emma a 5th grader and Ryan a 2nd grader.

In 2014 my family moved to Charlotte where my husband was part of the grand opening for the first Publix store to open in North Carolina. We lived in Charlotte for 4 years and while living up there I worked at the YMCA. We are happy to be back in St. Augustine. I enjoy spending time with my kids, going to the Alligator Farm, the beach, thrift stores, and state parks. I also enjoy volunteering at a horse rescue in Hastings, gardening, yoga, reading, and running. Since my kids are older, working at the school is an exciting new opportunity for me. I am passionate about kids and learning and I hope the students feel confident and supported to explore who they would like to be!



## Ms. Recia Smith - ILC

I am originally from Kentucky and moved to Florida at a young age. After completing my bachelor's degree in elementary education, I taught elementary for 8 years. I then decided to move on to secondary education, which I love! After teaching high school for several years, I completed my master's degree from UWA.

My husband and I chose to move to St. Augustine after our four children left the nest, and it has been one of the best decisions we have ever made.

My hobbies include boating, fishing, reading, and playing tennis. Most of the time you will find us attending college football games and tennis matches at UF...Go Gators!

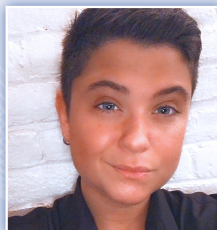
The reason I enjoy education is because of the impact I can make on the students. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing your students graduate from high school and accomplish their goals.



## Ms. Lisa Wedge - Reading

Hi! I was born and raised in California, then moved to New Hampshire where I met my husband and we settled to raise our boys. I love running, hiking, swimming, and taking my dog to the beach. I enjoy spending time with my husband, my 2 sons, and now my sweet granddaughter. Just this year, my husband and I made the big decision to move to Florida. I love the history and beauty of this city and can't wait to explore more of Florida for sure!

I am a graduate of Lesley University in Cambridge MA, earning a Master's degree in Language and Literacy. My passion is reading, and I love that I get to share that with students! I chose to teach the middle school grades specifically, as I feel this is one of the most unique and fun age groups. I hope to be a positive influence in the educational lives of each student, and an encouragement to them each day!



## Ms. Melissa Munafo - Music

Hello! I am Moe Munafo, the new music teacher at Sebastian Middle. I am a brand-new resident to the state of Florida, originally from Massachusetts. I am in my seventh year of teaching in the public school system. I began my teaching career in 2014 and taught in both the city of Lynn MA as well as the city of Springfield MA.

I received my bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of New Hampshire where I received a full-tuition scholarship for my success and achievement as a trumpet player. In my years of experience in education, I have mastered the technique and performance of many musical instruments. When I am not teaching, I am also a freelance DJ, singer, and songwriter. I love working with and inspiring my students as well as engaging the community with performances.



## Mr. Nick Monsanto - PE

I am from Palm Coast, Florida, just south of Saint Augustine. I graduated from Flagler College with my bachelor's degree in Sport Management and played soccer for the Saints! I currently live in Jacksonville with my wife Kylie and our two dogs, Ginger and Lulu. My wife is also a teacher in Duval County. When I am not teaching or coaching soccer in Jacksonville, you can find my family at the beach or enjoying the outdoor Florida weather. I like to teach because it allows me to pass on the great lessons that I was taught when I was in school. Sports and fitness were always part of my life growing up and I am very excited to continue to pass along a love for the things that I enjoyed so much.

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# New Teachers



## Ms. Jessica Rigsbee - English Language Arts

Before moving to Saint Augustine this August, my husband and I lived near (and are originally from) Durham, North Carolina for most of our lives. But, I grew up in Central Florida (near Orlando) so I am a Floridian at heart! I attended the University of Florida (GO GATORS!) and received my BA in English. After college, I was a writer, editor, and journalist before I decided to

become an English teacher. My husband is a writer and we met through my journalism work almost ten years ago.

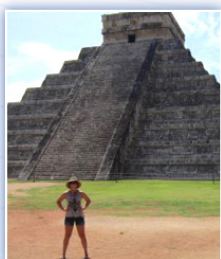
We have a Beagle and Husky mix named Bella (named after Twilight) and a gorgeous, Queen-of-the-House cat, Ophelia (named after Hamlet). When I am not at work, I am a digital artist and enjoy drawing portraits of families, pets and houses for my commissioned work. I also write and create English curriculum/lessons for teachers. In my free time, I enjoy reading, cooking and trying new foods, and watching totally mindless TV like Siesta Key! I like to teach because I love to spread good cheer and share my obsession with learning and everything English!



## Ms. Linda Hof - Testing Coordinator / Social Studies

Being an Air Force brat, I had the opportunity to live in 9 states, but when asked where I'm from, I would have to say New England. That is where I spent my formative years, and I am all about my New England sports (Go Bruins!). Growing up knowing so many different types of people had a huge influence on my educational philosophy, that being that

all children deserve the very best education we can give them. With 20 years of experience in education, I am thrilled to be the Testing Coordinator at Sebastian and proud to be a member of the Eagle team!



## Ms. Tracy Clauson - Spanish

My name is Tracy Clauson and I have been teaching Spanish for 11 years. I graduated from Florida State University (Go Noles!) in 2009 and spent my first 7 years teaching in the Tallahassee area. My husband and I have two young children - Nolan is 6 and Dakota is 4. We moved to St. Augustine 3 years ago to be closer to the beach - we love to fish and surf! I spent my first 3 years in

the area teaching at Nease High School. When I am not teaching I love to spend time outside with my family, our Chocolate Lab, Ollie and our flock of chickens. I love to work in my garden, cook, and practice yoga.



## Ms. Andrea Clark - Math

I grew up in Tallahassee, FL, where I also attended Florida State University and performed as a member of the Florida State University Flying High Circus (an extracurricular performing art associated with the university). After getting married, I moved to St. Augustine to be with my husband and have lived here ever since.

Both of my children, Holly and Wes, are students at St. Johns County schools. There are more than just us four humans in our household, though! We have two dogs, four cats, 17 chickens, and four ducks. The ducks and chickens are outside, not all in my house.

In my free time I love to swim at the beach or at the pool, run, read, and spend time with my family. My favorite genres to read are speculative fiction, sci-fi, fantasy, and comics/graphic novels.

Teaching is such a rewarding profession to me because I love to help people find their own path to success. When a student finally understands a concept and can confidently use their knowledge to solve problems and reason through scenarios, that's the best feeling in the world for me and my student.



## Ms. Phoebe Horton - Science

My name is Phoebe Horton. I originally am from Canada. I grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia and moved to Florida shortly after college. I have finally gotten used to the weather. I spend my summers up with family up North. We love to enjoy nature and we will camp, kayak and even hit the gym occasionally.

I have been teaching for 15 years. I currently live in Palm Coast with my family including my son, and my three dogs. They are chihuahuas and they are always running around. I love to read books, watch fantasy and science fiction television as well as just go out and have fun. I think my mantra for life is work hard and play harder.



## Ms. Ashley Zinn - Science

I am from Illinois. Growing up I lived in a Chicago suburb. I spent a lot of time in the city, but city life wasn't for me. I was fortunate that I had the opportunity to spend my summers in a small town. It was there I acquired my love for conservation, the outdoors and water sports.

I became a science teacher to spread knowledge about our beautiful Earth. I earned my bachelors in Elementary Education K-8 from Illinois State where I met my husband. Then I went back to school to earn my masters in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University in Chicago.

My husband and I now live on Anastasia Island with our two kids. We can be found at the beach surfing, paddle boarding, building sandcastles and figuring out how to find the bright spot in anything life throws at us.

*continued on back page >>*



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# Sebastian Sentinel

Sebastian Middle School

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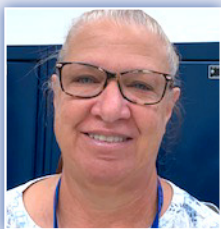
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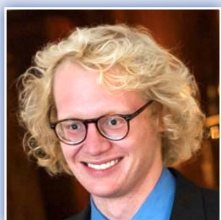
## New Teachers...continued



### Ms. Belinda Bentoski – STEAM

I grew up in San Diego, California. I went to college at Northeastern University in Boston where I studied Chemical Engineering. I have lived in several places - California, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Georgia and now in St Augustine Beach. I enjoy spending time on the beach, walking, cooking and science fiction movies. I am married and

have 4 boys Andrew, Daniel, Erik, and Ferris. My youngest son Ferris has Downs Syndrome and attends SAHS. I was teaching horticulture and water quality at a technical college in Griffin, Georgia before moving to Florida. I enjoy teaching and helping students fulfill their goals and achieve success.



### Mr. Garrett Jansen - English Language Arts

Before moving to St. Augustine this summer, I spent most of my life in that boreal region we call the Midwest. I have lived most of my life in Chicago and received my Bachelor's from Northwestern University and my Master's from the University of Notre Dame. My fiancée is a professor of English Literature at Flagler College. Naturally, we

are both avid readers, our move requiring forty-seven banker's boxes of books. I also enjoy playing piano, seeing live music, running, hiking, and playing chess. I like to teach because it gives me the opportunity to impact the lives of students, share my love of reading and writing, and watch them as they grow in both knowledge and character.

## Eagle Athletics is SOARING!

8

We have kicked off an amazing start to the sports school year with volleyball, cross country, and SJMSA football, baseball, cheer, and soccer. Every player and program is working hard to be the best they can be! At Sebastian, we pride ourselves in playing with character. Our coaches lead with integrity. Our fans cheer with intensity.

Be on the lookout for upcoming sports through [SJMSAA.com](http://SJMSAA.com). If you plan to play a school sport, you need to have a sports physical turned in to the athletic director before you start tryouts/practice. Basketball, our final school sport offering, will begin in December/January. Make sure your grades are in a good place. All students with a 2.0 GPA or lower will not be eligible to tryout or make a team. Work hard in class; work hard on the field. Go Eagles!



*The Sebastian Middle School Cheer Team supports the Sebastian Eagles Football Team. They cheer at boys football games all around St. Johns County. For most of the team, it is their first time cheering! During games and practices, the girls work on team building and trust. They practice spirit, compassion, and resilience in cheer and in school.*



*The Girls and Boys Volleyball teams are off to a great start. See the SMS website athletic pages for schedules and ticket links.*