

# Sebastian Sentinel



## STEM Coach Letter

The Greek Philosopher Diogenes said, "The foundation of every society is the education of its youth." Here at Sebastian Middle School, we have the responsibility, and privilege, to help mold that foundation. Through our STEM and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) classes we introduce students to a plethora of different career-oriented topics, in doing so, we begin to light a spark and interest that not only develops many skills but can lead to life-long career pathways.

To help ignite student interest we hone in on things important to them such as pop culture. When we are learning a 3D design program, we have students design a skate park, sneaker store, or their dream house. If we are teaching audio engineering, the students compose their own music that they can later make into a ringtone or alarm for their parent's phones. To teach coding, we have students code games like Minecraft in Mr. Huffman's class.

In addition, we integrate these skills and topics into the other core classes. In 7th grade ELA students read "The Boy who Harnessed the Wind." by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. Then in STEM class students worked on building a wind turbine. In social studies with Mrs. Sims and Mr. Stevens, students learned about the systems of government and then created their own websites using the skills they learned in STEM class. In 6th grade social studies students will learn about the Greek and Roman empires and then work on designing and 3D printing miniature columns, temples, and sculptures. These are just some of the many examples of interdisciplinary connections we make here at our amazing school.

We have evidence of success when students want to learn the skills, when they go home and work on their projects without being given homework, when they call us over to show us their latest creations with enthusiasm, and when they tell us they want to pursue a career on the topic we introduced. Recently, St Augustine High School declared that they had an uptick in their aerospace academy enrollment from Sebastian. While interviewing their freshman class, many attributed their interest in aerospace to their 8th grade STEM classes.

Sebastian, a Cognia STEM certified school, continues to move forward and upward creating those foundational building blocks that carve out career pathways for this generation, and the ones that follow. We are deeply grateful to the community members who serve on our STEM advisory board who continue to help us strengthen our study to career correlation and continue to make Sebastian an exciting place to learn!

by Frankie Portelos, STEM Coach

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.  
<https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/principals-message/>



\*Please watch for our next newsletter in March 2024, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

## 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*

**Frankie Portelos**  
*STEM Coach*

**Amy Borie**  
*Testing Coordinator*

### 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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## 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:

<https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>



## We Welcome our New Teachers

### Kelly Boyer/ ELA/Theater

Hi! I'm Kelly Boyer, I'm a Florida native but I have moved all around the country and have been back in Florida for 3 years now. I have 3 kids in the St Johns County School District, ages are 16, 13, and 9, and I am a newlywed! My husband also works for the school district as a Behavioral Therapist. I attended the University of Florida after High School and I have my Undergrad Degree in English Literature. I love to read, be outside, go to the beach, hiking, traveling, and spending a lot of time with my family! Thank you for the warm welcome here at SMS!



### Amanda Burgos/ ELA/Dance

Hello! My name is Amanda Burgos, and I was born and raised in Miami Florida. I just moved to St. Augustine in June with my fiancé, cat, and dog! Ever since I could remember, I have always wanted to be a teacher. Although I knew I wanted to teach English, I never dreamed that I would be able to teach dance at a school as well. This is my third-year teaching English to 8th graders, and I am extremely grateful to say, my first year teaching dance at a public school. These past few weeks have led to some of the most exciting and rewarding experiences that I've had in my teaching career so far. I am so fortunate to be able to teach the two subjects that I love most at an amazing school like Sebastian Middle.



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## Next Level Coding

In addition to 7th and 8th grade students learning about building web sites and developing game sites that prepares them for State of Florida Industry Certifications, students are also learning how to program in a computer language called Python.

The above chapter one game project is from a seventh-grade student taking Computer Science Discoveries. Throughout the year, students' progress through four chapters from Ozaria.com learning how to program using the computer language called Python.

Chapter two has the students make a story using several different characters. The below picture is from another seventh-grade student.

Both students took ICT 1 in sixth grade. These students learned how to learn block coding and basic text coding using a program called Codemonkey.com in addition to taking Industry Certifications in Cyber Security Essentials, Word Processing Essentials, and Multi-media Essentials. Each of these three distinct curriculums each take approximately one quarter to complete. CodeMonkey offers students the ability to learn other computer programming skills.

CodeMonkey offers students in ICT 1 the opportunity to build basic games and solve problems. The picture below is from a sixth-grade student that is coding a winter skiing game from Codemonkey.com. Embrace winter! Create a skiing game with our monkey the skier. Avoid bumping into the flags scattered along the route and reach the finish line before losing all lives.



Our goal is to prepare students for high school classes in the Aerospace Academy at St. Augustine High School. Mr. Portelos, our STEAM Coach, was informed that students that were in our ICT 3 class for school year 2022 – 2023 was very prepared for advance computer programming classes in high school.

ICT 3 last year integrated into the curriculum Coding in Minecraft by Prodigy, learning the program language called JAVA Script. The Industry Certification for this program is the hardest certification offered at Sebastian. This program by Prodigy was offered at only one middle school in the county last year and supported financially by the St. Johns County District CTE office. Thirteen eighth grade students passed this industry certification last year.

For the school year 2023 to 2024, this program is being offered to our ICT 3 students, and a group of seventh grade student in CS Discoveries that are learning the Python computer programming language.

All these programs that are utilized in conjunction with the set curriculum are funded by Sebastian Middle School, and financial support of our business partners from St. Augustine.

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## Biodiversity Club Partners with Local Industry to Help Environment

Biodiversity club teachers Ivannia Moreno-Alvarez, Jennifer Taylor and STEM Coach Frankie Portelos began building industry relationships with First Coast Technical College (FCTC) and Guana Tolomato Matanzas (GTM) National Estuarine Research Reserve. The three visited the greenhouse agriculture center at FCTC and acquired pots and plants, including datil peppers, mustard, dill, bell peppers and more. The plants have been set up with an automatic watering system in view of the school community, who can then watch the progress undisturbed. The team's goal is to use the school's greenhouse to prepare the milkweed and other flowering plants for a pollinator garden in the school's courtyard in the spring.

The team then visited the GTM reserve to learn how they can help support the erosion efforts. GTM donated a 115-gallon tank that the team, cleaned up and turned into an aquaponics system so they can grow mangrove seeds and spartina grass. Both plants are great for holding soil together and decreasing erosion. At a later point, the spartina and mangrove seedlings will be returned to GTM for planting.



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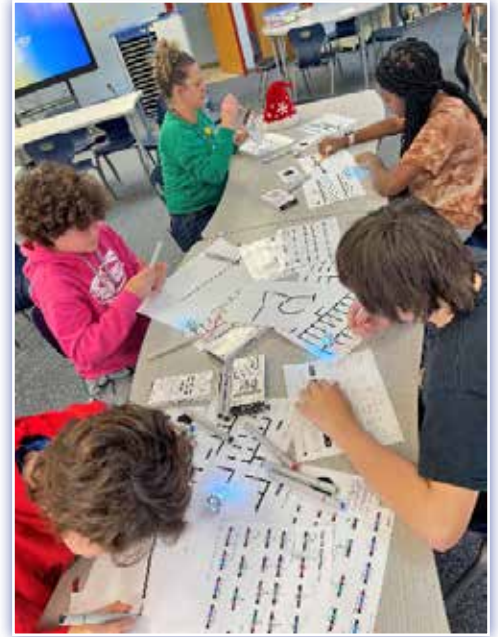
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## Media Center and STEAM

In December, Ms. Barnard borrowed Ozobots from Instructional Resources and Media Services to collaborate with several classes and incorporate STEAM lessons. With 6th grade math, Ms. Taylor and Ms. Propst integrated Ozobots into a review of integers, using the color codes to move the robots down number lines. In art classes, Ms. Hagy reviewed the elements of art and had the students use code to "gallery walk" the Ozobots. During Access Units rotation in the Media



Center, the students practiced coding and created a track for the Ozobots to race around. Finally, Ms. Torboli's Unique Skills students coded the Ozobots to create words using root words and suffixes. They had to identify if the word that the Ozobot generated was an actual word or a made-up word.



## 3rd Annual Sebastian Chili Cook-Off

December 6th marked the 3rd Annual Sebastian Chili Cook-Off. Ten teachers and staff entered chilis of all varieties. Teachers and staff voted at the end of the day. Ms. Houck won 3rd place with her green chicken chili. Mr. Stevens placed 2nd with his Cincinnati style chili. Ms. Hagy won 1st place with her traditional chili. A big thank you to Uptown Scratch Kitchen for providing a \$50 gift certificate to our 1st place winner. The Media Center hosted the cook-off and Ms. Barnard 3D printed the trophies.





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## Screenless STEM

Ms. Arnold used the money to purchase a variety of STEM games that help students with deductive reasoning, problem solving, and with building resiliency. The 6th graders pictured are playing "Genius Square" a Mensa Select game.



## Who Tries to Plant Without Soil?

The self-contained ESE unit that's who!

With the help from The Garden Ladies (Gloria and Lynda) from the Agricultural Center Master Gardener Program, the Unit brought the garden inside this year. We are trying a technique called hydroponics which is growing plants in a liquid nutrient solution. The meaning of Hydroponics is "hydro", meaning water, and "ponics", meaning labor. The water is doing the work here and enabling the fast growth of plants. We grew lettuce and had enough to make a giant salad for Thanksgiving.



## Spelling Bee Champion

Congratulations to 8th grader, Lillian Johnston who won the 2023-2024 Spelling Bee at Sebastian Middle in round 8, with the word incandescent.



**Perry D. Unwalla, Supporting Students, Staff and the Community of Sebastian Middle School.**

*Go Sebastian Eagles!*



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State Farm



Join Sebastian Middle School for their Spirit Night with the Icemen on Saturday, March 23rd at 7:00pm! \$5 of each ticket purchased through this link will be donated back to Sebastian Middle School!

To view your mobile tickets on your smartphone after purchase:

1. Use the official Jacksonville Icemen App or go to [jacksonvilleicemen.com/accountmanager](https://jacksonvilleicemen.com/accountmanager)
2. Sign into your account - If issues logging in, click 'Forgot Password'.
3. Click **Manage Tickets**.
4. Select your game.
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## Field Trips

On November 6th graders in STEM and ICT were treated to a STEM in Sports field trip to see the Jacksonville Icemen at the Vystar Arena. Before attending, students learned about the STEM in sports, such as how the Zamboni works, the science behind the slapshot and the engineering of the equipment, in addition to all that, students had a lot of fun. The school is planning a fundraiser trip to see a night game on Saturday March 23, 2024. A

link will be

sent out to the school community. \$5 from every ticket sold will go back to the school.

Sebastian Middle School students recently attended The Classic, BCU vs. FAMU football game in Orlando. Mr. Stevens and Ms. Moody chaperoned. Students enjoyed the fieldtrip because it gave them a taste of college life. Several St. Johns County Schools attended the game. Funding for attending the game was provided by federal grants.



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