

Sebastian Sentinel



Principal's Message

Dear Eagle Families,

Welcome! This has been a wonderful start to the school year, and it has moved quickly! We have been creating opportunities for student learning and engagement in class and out. Clubs are running Tuesdays and Thursdays and our students have a wide variety of experience open to them including Jazz 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 were also excited to have our first "Fall into School Festival". Over 500 Students attended and enjoyed time together to socialize, play spike ball, craft with pumpkins and eat a slice of pizza (or two). Much Gratitude to our amazing parent volunteers who along with our faculty made this possible. Stay tuned for information about "Snow place like Sebastian", our winter Festival, coming soon.

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.

This year we are "FULL STEAM AHEAD!" and we took this theme into Red Ribbon week. We looked at how steam engines work with steam pressure and discussed how forces within and around us can also create pressure - for both good and bad. We emphasize good character and healthy relationships during this nationally recognized week, and have some fun too!

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. Here's to a great year!

It is my honor and privilege to continue to serve as your Principal,
Kirstie Gabaldon

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

Alexandra Pillay

Assistant Principal

Kevin Hayes

Dean

Recia Smith

Instructional Literacy Coach

Frankie Portelos

STEM Coach

Ellen Morfit

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.

OCTOBER 2022

Volume 6

Issue 4

Sebastian Sentinel

October 2022

Published Four Times Per Year

2955 Lewis Speedway

St. Augustine, FL 32084

Issue 4

*Please watch for our next newsletter in January 2023, 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:

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





HAC



Calendar



Payments





New Teachers/Staff

Brandon Becker – Theatre/Dance

I moved to Florida with my family from the Illinois/Wisconsin border the week before school started. I taught at a private school in Chicago [love those commutes!] and spent most of Covid learning how to make movies - which reminded me why I prefer live performance! Before Illinois I taught in Colorado (9 years) and Virginia (5 years) at performing arts school, and before that I spent many years acting, singing, dancing, choreographing, directing, and teaching professionally coast to coast. I love spending time at the baseball field when my son is playing or at the gym when my daughter is training. I also enjoy writing plays, helping my wife with marketing her physical therapy business, and hopefully sharing things I've learned with students that make a difference in their lives; even if it's just to be kind and approach life with humor and grace.



Adam Burkhardt – Science

I grew up in the small coastal town of Old Saybrook, Connecticut. Growing up I knew I had a passion for science and the natural processes of the world and especially the coastline. I would spend my days climbing along the rocky Connecticut shoreline, kayaking through the marshes, and hiking in the town woods or the Appalachian mountains of greater New England. I moved to Saint Augustine, Florida in the fall of 2015 to pursue my degree in coastal environmental science and biology at Flagler College. While attending Flagler I fell in love with the surrounding area and grew my passion for science education giving ecotours in the town of marineland. I am absolutely thrilled to be working here at Sebastian middle school, teaching science, and leading our biodiversity club. I cannot wait to see what lies ahead.



Chris Clouse - STEAM

My name is Christopher Clouse. You can call me Chris. I moved from Winter Haven, Florida with my son Keegan to St. Augustine this summer after accepting a position at Sebastian Middle School. My son attends Otis Mason. This year, I am teaching STEM/STEAM for the first time. Before that, I taught middle school and high school U.S. History and World History. I've also taught middle and high school Reading.



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Steven Crites – Science

I am originally from Colorado but I have lived all over the world, settling in Saint Augustine about 18 years ago. I teach 6th Grade science and I love working with the kiddos to help them see how much fun science can be. Interesting things about me include I was able to work on the Hubble telescope as an 18-yr old recent high school grad, I was a nuclear engineer in the Navy, and my great-great uncle (John Crites) was a favorite high school chemistry & physics teacher for Neal Armstrong (yes – that Neal Armstrong). Teaching runs in my family, I guess. I am excited that I get to share my love of science with the next generation of kids, and who knows – maybe 1 of them will end up on Mars.



Meghan Friberg – Math

Hello! I was born and raised in New York-- Long Island specifically. I recently moved here in July of this year; however I am no stranger to the Northeast area of Florida! I have family members who live not too far from the area. I was a competitive swimmer from 5th to 12th grade. Backstroke was my favorite stroke! I attended the State University of New York at (SUNY) Cortland, located in the upstate region of the New York for teaching in mathematics education grades 7-12. I am currently a graduate student at Mississippi State for my graduate degree. I am a big New York Rangers hockey fan and look forward to attending some Jacksonville Iceman games this upcoming season. I am also a huge food lover and am excited to explore all the local favorite restaurants and coffee shops! I am so grateful for this opportunity to be a part of this community and have a wonderful school year!



Justus Hudgins – Art

Hello, my name is Justus P Hudgins. I am the new art teacher at Sebastian Middle School. I am originally from the Space Coast of Florida which is about two hours south of here. I was inspired at a young age by the shuttle launches and my other interests and began drawing. I have drawn my whole life and art continues to be a very therapeutic activity for me. I moved to the mountains of North Carolina in 2012 and completed my bachelor's degree in Art education from Appalachian State University. My concentration was painting and mixed media works. I taught a few years in North Carolina and most recently lived on the Outer Banks with my wife and son. I am very thankful to move back to Florida and settle in a community like this. Some of my hobbies include playing guitar and surfing. I also am interested in meteorology and gardening. I am excited to push our students in expression and creativity!



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Sean McCormick - VE / LA Support

Hi! I was born and raised in Miami. My wife and I have 5 kids, all grown up! I love the outdoors, I enjoy camping, and white-water rafting. I attended Nova Southeastern University where I received my degree in Special Education. I recently moved to the St. Augustine area to enjoy all that this area has to offer. I love my experience here at Sebastian Middle School. The faculty and staff have been awesome!



Ellen Morfit – Testing Coordinator

Hello I'm Ms. Morfit and I am the new Testing Coordinator at Sebastian Middle School. In recent years, I have taught World History at Nease High School and St. Johns Virtual School. When not working, I like to travel, visit museums, hike, and read. I am originally from Idaho, but my husband and I have called Florida home for the past six years. We have a daughter who currently attends Florida State University. I'm excited to be here and part of the Sebastian family.



Lisa Morris – Social Studies

My name is Lisa Morris. I have lived my entire life in Florida, having grown up in Gainesville, the home of the gators. I started my teaching career in Gainesville but recently moved to St. Augustine with my husband, who is also a teacher. I am enjoying being near the beach and exploring the area. I am also grateful to be teaching here at Sebastian Middle School.

When I am not teaching, I spend a lot of time outside. In particular, I love to dive, snorkel, hike, swim, and take my dog on long walks down the beach. When I lived in the Gainesville area, I spent a lot of time visiting the Florida springs and exploring its underwater caves. Other activities I enjoy include: yoga, traveling, sports, reading, and spending time with friends and family.



Frankie Portelos – STEM Coach

Frankie Portelos is our new STEM Coach. He is a career educator with 15 years in STEM education, and 7 years in the environmental engineering industry. He brings to us ideas and curriculum that prepare our students for the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, and related career paths, while enjoying learning.



Pamela Propst – Math

Hello, I am Pamela Propst. I was born in the Raleigh, North Carolina area. I lived in the Carolinas until I was fourteen years old. From there I moved to Memphis, Tennessee and lived in that area until last year when I moved to Orlando, FL. This past spring, I relocated to the St. Augustine area and love how beautiful it is. I am currently teaching 6th grade accelerated, 6th Grade, and 7th grade accelerated mathematics here at SMS. This year is my tenth year of teaching and I have loved teaching math since the beginning of my career as an educator. One of my favorite things about teaching is seeing students who struggle with math realizing that they CAN DO math and become more successful. I am so glad to be a part of the SMS team.



Alexandria Pillay – Assistant Principal

Hello Sebastian Family! I am so exciting to be joining the Eagles as your Assistant Principal this year. I am starting my 13th year in education, and my 6th as an assistant principal. Prior to coming to St. Johns County, I was in Seminole County, serving at Chiles Middle School and Millennium Middle School as assistant principal and teaching U.S. History, Civics and Language Arts before joining the administration team at Milwee Middle School.

I love spending time with my family, I love sports – I am originally from Massachusetts, so I love all my New England and Boston sports teams. I also love to travel – my husband and I just took a trip to the Bahamas this summer, I love Disney – my kids and I are annual passholders and go any chance we can! I am looking forward to a great year at Sebastian as I get to know all our students and our families!



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David Schreck – Science

Hello. I have just recently moved to Florida from North Carolina. My wife and I raised our 2 children there. I grew up in Ohio. Here at Sebastian, I teach Biology, Physical Science and Comprehensive (8th Grade) Science. In my spare time, I enjoy being with my children and dogs.



Jon Staples – Social Studies

I received my History Degree and elementary education certification from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY and student taught at Virginia Road Elementary School in North White Plains, NY. My first teaching job in Durham NC was teaching 5th grade, and ultimately led to accepting a position in Jacksonville FL teaching 4th grade at Beauclerc Elementary. I transitioned into IT by completing a battery of certifications including MCSE, CCNA, and was a grad student at UNF in Information Systems where I learned to code in Cobol and Java. I worked as a network Administrator for Text Retrieval Systems in Ponte Vedra Beach for next 5 years. I come to Sebastian Middle School after working at Washington Mutual Home Loans as a loan officer for 19 years. I'm excited to be teaching again and happy to be here at Sebastian.



Cindy Woosley – Social Studies

Growing up in St. Augustine gave me a passion for history, and the wonderful teachers of SJCSD formed it into a life-long love and career. With my Anthropology degree from UWF, I traveled the country on archaeological digs, worked for the Seminole Tribe, and shared our town's history through tours, reenactments, and local museums. Through all of it, I realized I was most passionate about sharing history with others, and my calling lay in teaching. Years of hard work and test taking has led me to my first year of teaching at Sebastian. I am overjoyed to share my love of history with the students of SMS.



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Attention 8th Grade Parents

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Career Academies are for any high school student. They provide you with interesting, unique, and fun experiences whether you're headed off to college after high school or if you plan to begin employment right away.

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- Make you more competitive for college and careers
- Provide you with valuable mentoring and internship opportunities with partner businesses
- Connect you with key employers
- Help you in choosing your major early!
- Please consider attending the Academy Nights at the schools you are interested in below to learn more. Please call Ms. Fortune at 547-3847 or email leanne.fortune@stjohns.k12.fl.us if you have any questions.

8th Grade - Academy Nights	
Bertram	Tue., Jan. 24, 2023
Nease	Thu., Jan. 19, 2023
Ponte Vedra	Wed., Jan. 25, 2023
Saint Augustine	Thu., Jan. 26, 2023
St Johns Tech	Thu., Jan. 26, 2023
Bartram Trail	Wed., Jan. 11, 2023
Creekside	Thu., Jan. 12, 2023
Pedro Menendez	Tue., Jan. 17, 2023
Tocoi Creek	Tue., Jan. 17, 2023
High School Showcase	Wed., Jan. 14, 2022
SJCCA Auditions	Sat., Jan. 21, 2023
Application Window	1/5 - 1/31

ESE Self Contained Department

The ESE Self Contained department is growing...plants that is. Horticultural therapy involves the use of plants and related activities to promote calmness and healing. With the help from The Garden Ladies (Gloria and Lynda) from the Agricultural Center Master Gardener Program, the department is learning how to plant and take care of vegetables and flowers. The students will learn the process from seed to eat. The students have started with planting, then we will go to the taking care of plants, and then finally eating/cooking what they grow.



Media Center News

Library Media Specialist, Mrs. Barnard, is sponsoring the Sebastian's EarlyAct, the middle school chapter of The Rotary Club. Each month students will participate in a service project. For September, students wrote thank you cards to first responders. In October, students will sell pink ribbons for breast cancer awareness, with proceeds going to Pink Up the Pace. Through the course of the year, homerooms will participate in Can Tab Wars. The winner of the Can Tab Wars will win a period in the Eagle's Nest, with games, popcorn, and sno-cones. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Barnard at rowena.barnard@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

The Media Center hosted their first Scholastic Book Fair of the 2022-2023 school year. Teachers and staff were given a preview of the book fair on September 9th. Students rotated through with their English Language Arts classes the following week and it was also open during Open House on September 13th. Several students were even able to pre-purchase the new Diary of A Wimpy Kid novel that comes out October 25th. Ms. Brewster was able to also get a grant from the PTO to purchase a class set of Free Lunch, a memoir by Rex Ogle, for a novel study with her students. With so much activity, the Media Center was able to go over their goal by 134%. The proceeds from the fair will go to improving the library program at Sebastian. Thank you to our wonderful volunteers and PTO for their help with the book fair.



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Art Corner



We are working on Gouache Portraits. Lesson Link Students in Ms. Hagy and Mr. Hudgins' classes have been exploring different types of portraiture. We used water colors, gouache and other mixed media.



In Art 3 the students just finished a skulls/shoes mixed media still life project focusing on investigating how value and form can show a realistic scene from life.



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Sports



Girls and Boys Volleyball are underway. Check out the schedule and try to catch a game if you can! <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/volleyball/>.



Cross Country

Cross Country Club's first meet is Oct 20th at Gamble Rogers Middle School 4:30pm-5:30pm. Also if you would like to get some exercise and help Sebastian Middle School win a mini-grant join us for the School Team Challenge/ Jail Break 5k – Click for more information: <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Jail-Break-5K-on-October-22.pdf>.

