

Sebastian Sentinel



STEM Edition

Dear Eagle Families,

Here at Sebastian Middle School, we have the awesome responsibility — and privilege — of helping students discover their future careers. Through our STEM and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) classes, we introduce students to a wide array of career-focused topics. These lessons don't just teach skills, they ignite sparks of curiosity and passion that can lead to lifelong career paths. And we don't stop at the classroom door—we keep the excitement going with career fairs, school visits, field trips, and inspiring guest speakers.

We know the best way to capture students' attention is by connecting lessons to what they love—like pop culture. In 3D design, students unleash their creativity by designing skate parks, sneaker stores, or even their dream houses. In audio engineering, they compose their own music, which doubles as a custom ringtone or a wake-up alarm for their parents (talk about an upgrade!). And in Mr. Huffman's coding class, they bring their ideas to life by creating their own video games.

We see the magic happen when students dive into projects without being asked, excitedly call us over to show their latest creations, or tell us they want to pursue careers inspired by what they've learned. Just recently, we teamed up with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to bring aerospace engineering to our 8th graders. The grand finale? Students designed and launched rockets right outside our STEM Lab!



As a Cognia STEM-certified school, Sebastian continues to pave the way for future innovators, building the foundation for career success today and for generations to come. We couldn't do it without the incredible support of our community and the STEM advisory board, whose guidance keeps Sebastian an inspiring and dynamic place to learn. The future is bright—and we're lighting the way!

Frankie Portelos, *STEM Coach*



Sebastian Middle School

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St. Augustine, FL 32084

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Principal

Melinda Bogart

Assistant Principal

Larry Igleheart

Dean

Recia Smith

Instructional Literacy Coach

Frankie Portelos

STEM Coach

Eric Smith

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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Volume 9

Issue 1

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 2025, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

Sebastian Sentinel

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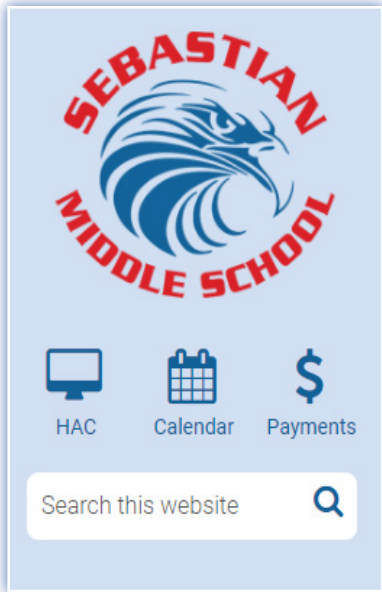
Issue 1

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/>



24-25 Yearbook

Congratulations to Olivia Goll – this year’s Yearbook Cover Contest Winner!



Yearbooks are on sale! Go to buytheyearbook.com and find Sebastian.

Click on “YEARBOOKS & PERSONALIZATION” and enter student information.

Make product selections and add to cart. 8th grade ads can also be purchased until March.

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STEM Fair Project

Birds flying into windows can be a big problem, especially at schools like Sebastian Middle School, where the school district has installed UV reflected film to reduce energy consumption. This can confuse birds and cause them to fly into the windows. This happens during class and staff and students witness this. Three Sebastian students decided to do something about it - design a solution, and make it their STEM Fair project.

Their project tested whether using 3D-printed models of birds of prey could help stop this from happening. The models were made to look like predators, such as hawks and falcons, and were placed on the window sills. For a month, we tracked how many birds hit the windows and compared it to the number of collisions reported before the project started.

The results showed that bird collisions dropped by 100% at the windows with the 3D printed predators. In other words, the teachers and students of the classes where we placed the 3D birds of prey did not report any birds hitting into those windows. The students left some windows unguarded by faux 3D printed birds as a control group and those were the only windows that continued to be struck by the poor birds.

At first we had the schools purchase eagle models, and those worked on deterring. However, that was more expensive, so we decided to create and 3D print models and that was a lot cheaper.

This project shows that simple and affordable ideas, like 3D-printed models, can work to protect wildlife. It also helps raise awareness about how schools and other places can help birds and the environment.



Chili Cook-Off

The Media Center hosted its 4th Annual Chili Cook-Off. Seven participants brought a variety of chilis, from Texas style to Ohio style, to treat the teachers and staff of Sebastian. Mr. Clouse won 3rd place with his first try at making chili. Ms. Barnard's brisket chili won 2nd place. Mr. Steven's Smokin' Aces chili won 1st place. In addition to a "Chili Master" apron, Mr. Stevens also received a gift card to a locally owned restaurant, Black Molly. The Chili Cook-Off is a great way for teachers and staff to get together and enjoy an afternoon with good company and good food.

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ESE Team

Lettuce entertain you with a unique way of growing vegetables. The Access Unit is growing many vegetables and flowers in their garden. However, they are also growing lettuce in old coffee containers – in their classroom...WHAT? The learners are using a technique called Hydroponics. Hydroponics derives from the ancient Greek words “hydro,” meaning water, and “ponics,” meaning labor. The process involves using a coffee container and cutting a hole in the lid. Next, taking a cup and cutting a hole in the bottom and placing the lettuce in the cup, allowing the roots to hang out of the hole. Finally, they placed the cup in the hole in the lid and filled the can with a water-based nutrient solution, enough to hit the root of the lettuce. Hydroponics has several advantages over traditional soil-based farming, including faster growth, stronger yields, and superior quality. With the help from the Garden Ladies from the Agricultural Center Master Gardener Program, the Unit had enough lettuce by break time to prepare a giant salad.



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Media Center

On November 22, 2024, four of Sebastian's 6th grade students placed 3rd in their division at the Jim Harbin Student Media Festival. These students are Leon Jones, Taniyah Jones, Sophie Barcomb, and Ruby Jepson. The Jim Harbin Student Media Festival is a student-driven program where participants create media presentations from concept to production. Students from across Florida compete at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, designing and producing media. The festival culminates in a red-carpet event at FAME's Annual Conference, in Orlando, Florida, offering one of the most rewarding experiences of their academic careers. These students produced their news report in the 5th grade and are pictured with their Ketterlinus media specialist, Kimberly Hinman, who sponsored them.

The Scholastic Book Fair is coming! SAVE THE DATE for January 27th-31st and get ready to empower your reader with book choice. Start exploring together: <https://www.scholastic.com/bf/sebastianmiddleschool1> and set up an e-wallet for easier check-outs.

Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! will be held on January 27th-31st. We will have several fun activities at Sebastian to celebrate literacy. STEM classes will be making book trailers. The Guidance Department is working with 8th-grade students to create a "Building Blocks to my Dreams" wall. Each student will design a brick that reflects their future career goals and the high school academies they plan to apply to. Homerooms can decorate their door in the annual Door Wars to win a doughnut breakfast. Voting will be held through the Media Center Schoology Group. There will be a daily mystery reader who will read a passage from a book and 5 random winners who guess the reader and the book will be able to "Play the Plinko". Also, the Media Center will host a Wawa catered breakfast at the Breakfast of Champions on January 31st. Students who read 6 Sunshine State Young Readers Award books and take the quizzes are automatically awarded. Also, students can be placed in the lottery if they play genre bingo. See Ms. Barnard if you have any questions about the Breakfast of Champions.



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T-Dap Requirement for Rising 7th Graders 2025

Rising 7th graders are required by Florida law to obtain a Tdap vaccination before entering 7th grade. An updated DH 680 form to include Tdap, must be obtained for submission to the school before your student can start on the first day of school in St. Johns County School District. If you have a religious exemption filed through the DH, please notify the school and/or provide us a copy of the exemption. The Tdap vaccination can be scheduled at no cost through the St. Johns County Department of Health. You can also schedule for this immunization at your pediatrician's office.



Spelling BEE

On November 16, 2024, Sebastian Middle School hosted its annual spelling bee, showcasing the talent and determination of 35 participants from grades 6 through 8. The event, held in the school's auditorium, brought together students, staff, and families for an engaging celebration of academic excellence and perseverance.

After several rounds of fierce competition, 8th-grade student Maleah Isreal emerged as the school's spelling bee champion. Maleah demonstrated exceptional poise and skill, earning her the title and the opportunity to represent Sebastian Middle School at the district spelling bee on January 8, 2025.

The spelling bee was judged by Kristen Logan, an ESE program specialist from the district office, and Jacob Salmond, a SAC member and parent. Their careful oversight ensured a fair and accurate competition. Amy Borie, program specialist from human resources and former Sebastian Eagle, served as both pronouncer and emcee, adding professionalism and enthusiasm to the event.

Congratulations to all participants for their hard work and dedication, and best of luck to Maleah Isreal as she advances to the next level of competition. Sebastian Middle School is proud of its students and their commitment to academic achievement.

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- Sebastian Middle School Auditorium

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Sebastian Middle School Hosts Successful Career Fair

On December 12, 2024, Sebastian Middle School buzzed with excitement as 240 eighth graders participated in the highly anticipated Career Fair. The event provided students with a unique opportunity to explore a wide variety of industries and learn about potential career paths.

Students had 40 minutes to visit various booths set up by professionals from diverse fields. Armed with their Career Fair Passports, they were encouraged to gather as many signatures as possible while asking questions and collecting information about different careers.

Sebastian's STEM Coach and Career Fair organizer Frankie Portelos highlighted the range of industries represented at the event. "The industries that attended included engineering, legal, veterinary, colleges, sheriff's office, aerospace, agriculture, real estate, photography, and much more," said Portelos.

The fair allowed students to interact directly with professionals, who shared their experiences, career advice, and the education required for success in their fields. From meeting engineers who build cutting-edge technology to speaking with veterinarians about animal care, the event showcased the exciting opportunities that await students in the future.

Many students found the fair both informative and inspiring. "I didn't know there were so many different jobs out there," one student said. "It made me think about what I want to do when I grow up."

The Career Fair was not only a chance to learn about jobs but also an opportunity to practice communication skills and make meaningful connections. Students left with their passports full of signatures—and their heads full of new ideas about their futures.

Sebastian Middle School continues to prioritize exposing students to STEM opportunities and diverse career paths. With events like the Career Fair, students are empowered to dream big and plan for bright futures.





EAGLE CHARACTER

All Pillars




Lilly Dempsey
Charlie Farrow
Marcus Figueroa
Reagan Gibson
Angel Miller
Aniya Petty



Macy Rice
Blake Robshaw
Wyatt Robshaw
Lauren Siari
Guilianna Tagliarini
Samuel Wilson
Daniel Wooldridge

In December we celebrated our students who encompass all of the Pillars of Character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. Congratulations to the following students!





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