

Meet the Staff at SWMA

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Important Dates to remember:

September 25: Primary Class Social

October 2: Toddler Class Social

October 14: Parent Ed at 5:30PM

October 16: Halloween Committee Meeting after morning drop off (8:25)

October 17: Professional Day/No School

October 20: Testing Week LE & older

Date TBD: Halloween Party at SWMA

November 10 & 11: No School

Welcome SWMA Friends!

It's the start of what will undoubtedly be another spectacular year at South Walton Montessori Academy! For those who are new to the SWMA Family, welcome! We are thrilled that you are here! We hope that you will quickly find your place within this amazing family and that you are comfortable asking for help along the way when you need it. For all of our returning families, we would like to say "Welcome Back" and "keep up the good work" because we know that your active support is part of what makes this school such a very special place.

The SWMA staff members are eager to help bring some great things to fruition this year. We are excited to work with both new and returning families to make our social events, fundraisers and parent communications as strong as we possibly can. One way we can strengthen our effectiveness is through constructive feedback from our families. If you have questions, suggestions or available resources to offer, please do not hesitate to bring them to our attention.

We collect box tops! Bring them to school anytime!

PO Dues- Each Year the Parent's Organization collects funds to be used for holiday parties, pizza for Parent Ed nights, etc. Please turn in \$50 per child, or \$75 for families with 2 or more children.

Annual Fund- In November, a parent will be passing out information about our Annual Fund at SWMA. The Annual Fund enables SWMA to provide the additional resources that allow us to continue to enhance the quality of the school. These funds go directly into the operating budget and are used to help create, enhance, and sustain our commitment to excellence at every age level of the school. Thank you for your support!

A Message from Ms. Tammy and Ms. Debbie in Toddler

The new school year is off to a great start! Our community has been focusing on learning the three basic lessons: respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment.

We learn about respecting ourselves through lessons on safety in the classroom and on the playground. We practice walking feet, and sitting in chairs or on the floor in the classroom so we are safe. On the playground, we learn about special relations, watching where we are running and playing so not to bump and run into others, or get bumped by the swing.

We learn about respecting others through lessons on “giving messages” to our friends in a kind and peaceful manner, and listening to others when they give a message to us. We offer support by giving them the words to give a kind message and we support the children by giving gentle reminders such as “What kind words could you use to give that message?”

We learn about respecting the environment through lessons on using materials appropriately. Learning to work with others and learning positive communication skills is an important life lesson that will be useful as they grow and mature.

The toddler community is the place where we begin to build the foundation of learning how to get along in a group, and our community is working very hard!

Consistency is a key to teaching these skills. First, we offer consistency in routine, so the children feel safe and secure in knowing what to expect. There is also consistency between Debbie and I in our guiding the children, to the point of using the same phrases. So, they know that if Ms. Tammy says, “walking feet in the classroom.” Ms. Debbie is also going to say “Walking feet in the classroom.” This has enabled the children to quickly become comfortable in the classroom and with us.

It is also important that parents be consistent when establishing boundaries for their child. It is important to follow through when giving a message to a child. This stands true to children of any age, but especially to toddlers. Trying to give messages that are consistent with the language used at school can also be helpful. If you have a question on the language that we use, we will be glad to help.

We are looking forward to the coming months of learning with our toddler friends and we know they are too.

Quote of the month: *Following some inner guide, they occupied themselves in work different for each that gave them joy and peace; and then something else appeared that had never before been known among children, a spontaneous discipline.* (Maria Montessori, Education For a New World)

A Message from Ms. Cynthia, Ms. Julia and Ms. Laura in Primary

We have had an amazing year so far! I wanted to start by congratulating Miss Laura for beginning her Montessori training! Congrats Miss Laura!

The beginning of the year is a very important time in the primary classroom. We begin the year with grace and courtesy lessons. These lessons include things like how to walk in the classroom, how to open/close a door, how to resolve issues with friends and many others. This is a huge part of the curriculum.

Maria Montessori introduced Exercises in Grace and Courtesy in reaction to the young child’s need for order. The child has a need to know and to absorb the social structures in order to be more at ease in his environment. Grace and Courtesy lessons give the child the vocabulary, actions, and steps required for

him to build his awareness and responsiveness of those around him. This in turn gives the child a better sense of orientation in his social structure.

The Primary Class is the perfect place to begin these Exercises in Grace and Courtesy because the child at the end of the First Plane of Development is not yet self-conscious. The child is therefore willing to try anything new and will then incorporate it more easily into his person.

Grace and Courtesy lessons are given to each child in the environment and usually in a group. This allows the child to have a clear understanding as well as a place to perfect himself with others. It is the Directress's role to give the children the correct words, and the precise movements and steps. The child then fully absorbs the how, the when, and the vocabulary used in his environment to make life more pleasant for others and for him.

In the end, the child will have incorporated these graces and courtesies into his everyday life, which will allow for a more pleasant classroom as well as a more pleasant environment wherever the child may go.

A Message from Ms. Catherine in Lower Elementary

Welcome back! We are off to a great start in Lower El. We are so excited that Ms. Carol completed the academic phase of her Montessori training this summer. She is bringing in so many new ideas and lessons.

In the Montessori curriculum, we move from the whole to the parts to the whole. This means we start our school year with our study of the entire universe! We will start zooming in to our galaxy, solar system, and planet soon, but for now, we are exploring our universe. We are experimenting with gravity and Newton's three laws. We are exploring stellar nucleosynthesis and constellations.

We have also completed our Five Great Lessons by learning about the origins of the universe, life, humans, language, math and science. We will touch back on these lessons all year long, as they form the foundation for all of our work.

We are enjoying several large group lessons and specialists this year. Monday is Music class with Mr. Cam. Tuesday afternoons are usually filled with fun science experiments in our classroom. Wednesday and Friday afternoons are Spanish with Ms. Julia and art. We are focusing on history on Thursdays and really enjoying Ms. Keri in PE on Fridays.

Next month (October 20 - 24), we will be administering the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to the lower elementary students. This is a test commonly used in Montessori schools to assess the basic skill level of our students. We have not and will not "teach to the test" as it is testing basic skills. We will let the students know that we will be doing something different. We will explain to them that we want to see how much they have learned. They will not be able to work with their friends on this new work, but it will still be fun.

Due to the nature of these assessments, each level will be tested independently. The students not being tested at a particular time will be resting, playing, and working on projects outside with a teacher. They may play on the playground, go on walks, read, or do other activities to rest between assessment modules. Each student will take approximately two modules per day, in the morning and in the afternoon for five days. Each module lasts around 30-45 minutes.

We are administering these assessments in accordance with our philosophy in order to ensure that there is no undue stress placed upon any child. The results will be used as a discussion base between parents and

teachers and for teachers to adjust curriculum if need be. The results will not be shared with the children.

Please ensure that, as always, your child has a healthy and adequate breakfast the mornings of the assessments and gets plenty of sleep the nights before. Perhaps consider a high protein breakfast for extra energy. Expect that your child may be a bit more tired on these days, but we will do our best to ensure plenty of down time between modules. In fact, one of our alumni students loved this testing week so much that he named it "Heaven Week!"

Thank you in advance for your support of this process. We are looking forward to making this a fun and stress-free experience for our students, just as it has been every year!

A Message from Mr. David in Upper Elementary

Upper El is a very busy place this year. These students, the most Upper El has ever had, are filling the classroom! They are literally filling the classroom with ideas. They are also filling the classroom with proposals. This group of young people understands, better than any I've had before, that they have the ability to direct their own learning. Proposals are coming in fast and furiously. To coincide with our universe study, one student proposed "Constellation Day" where each student researched their favorite constellation and created a costume that represented that group of stars. This past Friday, we had D.E.A.R. Day, which stands for Drop Everything And Read. It's wonderful to see these kids so enthusiastic about reading that they would want to devote four solid hours to it. There is a proposal in the works to go to the Space Science Center in Fort Walton Beach. We picked up almost one hundred pounds of trash on our service walk around our community. We raised two hundred dollars during our bake sale to help support our local Food for Thought, an organization that helps local children who don't have enough to eat. Thanks to all the parents who helped to make our first bake sale a tremendous success! We've also started a carnivorous plant garden and are making plans to start an edible garden. And all of this, they've done in the first month of school. I can't wait to see what they come up with for the rest of the year!

A Message from Ms. Kelly in Middle School

Welcome back! It is so good to see everyone's smiling faces! This year has been an amazing start for the Middle School! The students have jumped right into their theme of "Connections;" exploring their place in the academic and social societies of our world. One of their chosen "connections" includes the Independent Research topics of "Graffiti: For Better or For Worse" and Endangered Species: The Results of Poaching. Look for more information on this topic in January, as their information will be available to all parents. Thanks to all for your support! If you have any extra magazines and/or newspapers that you aren't using, would you consider donating them to the MS? We are in need of these materials for collages, etc.

A Message from Mr. Cam in Music

It is hard to believe that we are already well into the new school year! As always, it is awesome to see all the returning friends as well as the many new faces! We have jumped right into music and are quickly picking up where we left off last year. It is always great to see how quickly the kids grasp the music concepts. In Primary, we have been working on steady beat and rhythms. We will do a lot of call and response and will be introducing a wide variety of instruments at this level. In Lower Elementary, we are not only clapping or playing rhythms on various percussions instruments, but reading and writing music notation. In the months to come, we will have various live guests artists and other fun musical projects that I will be sharing. For Upper Elementary and Middle School music, instead of having an afternoon "Jam Band" this year, I am incorporating the music ideas and curriculum in a band format. The friends will form several different groups, which will change instrumentally and personnel-wise throughout the school year. Each "band" will use the music lessons and apply them to their specific group. We may have a pop group, a drum circle, a country band, or anything in between. A lot of this will be up to the

individuals making up the bands, but obviously with a certain degree of guidance on my part! We will be covering various styles of music as well as the many different aspects that are involved with being in a band. While this will hopefully be a fun experience for the kids, they will also be learning a lot about working in groups and working towards a shared goal. Also, I always like to encourage parents to expose their kids to live music as much as possible, as well as a wide variety of music. I can already tell that this year is going to be an incredible one for the school, both academically *and* musically!

A Message from Ms. Carol in Art

The art curriculum for Lower El, Upper El and Middle School is somewhat different this year. Part of my training for Montessori certification includes creating follow-up art projects that correspond to the academic lessons we are giving, so this year most of our art projects will be connected in some way to other works being studied in the classroom. For example, in Lower El, after we had some really interesting and fun lessons and discussions about the creation of the universe, we made pictures, using sequins glued on paper, of what we imagined the early universe looked like. In Upper El, while the students were researching and studying the constellations, they created a picture of the constellation they were researching, using sequins, glitter and colored pencils. My goals with these projects is to help each student to make connections with their lessons, to foster a deeper understanding of themselves and their own style, and to discover how art can be an effective tool for communication. We are continuing to study celebrated artists and artworks throughout history, as well as discussing the meaning and function of art in our world today.

In Lower El, students still have the opportunity to have weekly "free art" time, when they can use any available materials to create any art they can imagine. This is in addition to art "works" that are available on the shelves during our work cycle. Upper El and Middle School students are in the process of planning individual long-term art projects, which we are hoping to display, gallery style, sometime in the spring. These projects are to explore a particular interest each student may have, whether it is film-making, fashion design, cartooning, mosaics, jewelry design, etc. We are also planning some group projects, including the design and decoration of the children's room in the Wesley house at Eden State Park for Christmas, which Lower El has been invited to do again this year; and a walking labyrinth for our campus, designed and constructed by the Upper El and Middle School students. We are even starting to discuss our class projects for SWMA's Torre Rosa fundraiser in the spring! Finally, students will again participate this year in the annual Music in Pictures project sponsored by Rosemary Beach. This project allows us to examine the relationship between music and visual art, and how musicians and artists can help inspire each other. I will continue to keep you updated as we move past the planning stages and start creating!

A Message from Ms. Julia in Spanish

Noticias

¡Hola y bienvenidos a todas las familias!

We started reviewing basic conversational skills like "what is your name?" and "How are you?" in both the formal and informal forms. ¿Cómo te llamas? ¿Cómo se llama? ¿Cómo estás tú? ¿Cómo está Usted? and studied the numbers (Lower EL 1-20, Upper EL 1-100, Middle school 1-1.000.000).

We took a closer look at various emotions "how do I feel" and "how do other people feel" and studied masculine and feminine articles in singular and plural forms (el-los, la-las) as well as matching the adjectives to the nouns. In order to describe something accurately an adjective must match a noun in gender and number (this is a very basic but very different concept and so vital for further success.)

-> Por ejemplo: La niña está emocionada. El hombre está enojado. Los niños están tranquilos.

(For example: The girl is excited. The man is angry. The children are calm)

We also started using index cards to keep track of our continuously growing vocabulary and begin each

lesson by greeting each other, asking how everyone is doing and writing down the date in Spanish --> Hoy es lunes, el quince de septiembre de dos mil catorce.

One of our main focuses this year is reading and listening comprehension. Therefore I have brought in many new cds and books, and we have set up a "listening station" which is available any day of the week. Repetition is key, the more you hear a language the easier and more natural it becomes. In Lower EL the students work with Rosetta Stone and in Upper EL with Duolingo in addition to their weekly Spanish class.

Our first read along book is by Alma Flor Ada (who I can highly recommend to anyone) and is titled "la hamaca de la vaca".

Currently the students are working on creating their own copy for the classroom library.

Middle School students have started conjugating verbs and are practicing their knowledge in real life conversations and dialogues.

I use several different textbooks to pull the best from a variety of sources.

Please feel free to contact me about anything concerning your child's Spanish needs, I am happy to give book/cd recommendations and/or answer questions about the material.

I offer a weekly "After school Spanish" class for primary students and up, as well as private tutoring lessons. Please email me if you are interested juliar@southwaltonmontessori.com

>> *A different language is a different vision of life* << Federico Fellini

A Message from Ms. Keri in PE

What an exciting first few weeks of school and my experience of teaching PE to the SWMA students. It's been quite hot and sweaty at PE, and I'm looking forward to cooler weather because these friends love to RUN, run, run!

Toddlers: This has been such a cool learning experience for me. I have taught yoga to preschoolers all the way to teenagers, but besides being a mother to two daughters, I had yet to teach a group of toddlers. I especially want to thank Debbie and Tammy for all their guidance and help - I am learning so much! I feel like a total Celebrity Superstar when I walk up to the toddler playground to get them for PE on the turf. They all look up at me, wave and have the biggest smiles! And it's amazing how independent these little friends are... I especially love how they all put on their shoes themselves - even if they are on the wrong feet. ;) We always start with "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" followed by "the Walking song". All of the children love the "Walking Song." We walk, gallop, tip toe, run, skate and hop - and then go through it all again. Then it's bubbles, bubbles and more bubbles! Lastly we wrap up each PE with the "Hokey Pokey." PE time FLIES with this group. I can't believe how fast it goes by. Some students were a little shy the first few rounds, but now they are all participating and I can tell by the BIG smiles on their face that they are really enjoying it.

Primary: This group is at such a super sweet age(s)! They are all about inviting me to lunch afterwards, LOTS of hugs and sweet, sweet smiles. We love doing bubbles (lots and lots) as well as the "Walking Song" together. And we've been using the parachute as a great way to work together as a team. We throw a bunch of little balls on to the parachute and as much as they have to fight the urge to start shaking the parachute, they know the balls will fall off if we don't all work together. We all crouch down and then on the count of 3, we (all-together) lift the parachute at the same time and "snap" the balls off of the parachute. The balls go super high! And then we pick them back up, repeat to the count of 5

(sometimes in Spanish!) and once more to the count of 10. Thank you Cynthia and Julia for all of your guidance letting me cool off in their classroom between PE classes.

Lower El: After a few sun salutations (yoga stretches) for warm up, we always start with the “Walking Song.” We have played with bubbles, Octopus tag & Amoeba tag, Silent Ball, potato sack races (which they love), parachute games and much more. They like to make up games, and I encourage them to write their games down so we can have an opportunity to learn them before the day of PE. The children in Lower El love to just play games... they really don't care too much about actually winning. For our first potato sack race, we divided the group into groups of 5. When the last person jumped down the lawn, the first person put the sack on and they kept going and going... and going... and going... It gave me such a little chuckle. Had that been Upper El, you would have known which team won, but with this group, they just wanted to keep going. Thank you Ms. Catherine for helping me so much and coming up with good ideas and guidance.

Upper El: We start every session with a few sun salutations (yoga). I like to incorporate some more challenging poses with this group and they are always eager to try them. After a little yoga, these kiddos always know what they want to play! They enjoy soccer, Hunger Games, Capture the Flag, Red light/Green light (and they love it when I trip them up with a new color or command: like “backwards crab crawl”), Yackle ball and so much more. These kids are definitely my most competitive group and we are working on refining soccer skills/drills and good sportsmanship. For example: we are learning skills to kicking the soccer ball low (so not to have anyone get hurt or hit above the waist by a high speed flying soccer ball). We always end with at least 15 minutes of silent ball. This group has so much respect for each other (and me) - when I tell you "silent ball," I mean it, they are silent! They aren't supposed to say anything or make any funny noises - while they throw the ball (usually underhand throw) to each other with making eye contact with each other. If they don't remain silent, drop the ball, or make a bad throw, they are “out.” It's a great way to cool them off after a typically intense and hot PE class.