

## Meet the Staff at SWMA

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Hello SWMA Parents,  
The **Re-enrollment process** for the 2014/15 school year will begin on February 13, 2014. Once you receive your application, please be sure to return it as quickly as possible. There are some classrooms that we anticipate being well over capacity and we may not have spots for all returning families. The only way it is possible to ensure your spot is to return the application by no later than February 27, 2014.

The **Annual Stakeholders Meeting** is scheduled for February 12 at 5 PM. At least one member of each family is required to attend this important meeting. More info to follow.

### Annual Fund Update:

Thanks to you, we have raised almost \$7000 to date. We have received donations from 29 out of 57 families. It is not too late to give! Any amount is welcomed. We are looking for 100% participation. Thank you for your support.

**Torre Rosa is scheduled for Saturday, April 12, 2014 at Bud and Alleys.** For new families, Torre Rosa is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We count on all families to help us reach our goal of raising \$25,000. You will be receiving an info packet soon so you can start collecting silent auction items. Thank you for your support in making SWMA such a special place!

### Important Dates to remember:

January 16: Parent Ed  
January 20: No School  
January 21: No School  
February 12: Stakeholders Meeting  
February 13: Re-Enrollment Begins  
February 27: Re-Enrollment Applications Due  
February 17: No School

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

Now that the excitement of the holiday season has finished, we have settled back into our peaceful daily routines in the toddler community.

Since returning from the winter break, we have noticed much growth in the children. Not only has there been physical growth, but growth in social skills. Children are becoming empathetic with their friends. On the occasion that someone is crying, you will often observe a child asking the one who is upset what is wrong, and “talking it over”. We have also seen an older child helping a new, younger child with classroom routines, or offering a hand when working on balancing on the log on the play ground. During work time, the community is buzzing with children working with materials or self help skills. We have come to the beautiful stage of the community that Montessori calls “A normalized classroom.”

Soon we will be talking about Valentines, the heart shape, friendship, family and getting ready for spring time!

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

Welcome back! December flew by. Thank you so much for attending the holiday performance. The children loved singing for you! The children talked about holiday traditions and learned about Hanukkah. They enjoyed playing the Dreidel game and lighting the Menorah. They had fun looking for Gelt during the treasure hunt.

They each got to tell their friends about the holiday traditions they have at home. We discussed being grateful and giving.

January has begun with discussions and lessons on weather. The children are learning about seasons and the Earth’s tilt. We have introduced a weather journal where each day we write down the temperature and weather for the day. We did an experiment to discuss freezing temperatures and how water becomes ice when the temperature is below 32 degrees. We discussed the water cycle and introduced the terms solid, liquid and gas.

The children are learning what different cloud formations are called and recreated their own out of cotton balls. We introduced cirrus, stratus, cumulus, and stratocumulus. We will finish January with discussions on migration and hibernation.

Remember to check out the website [signingsavvy.com](http://signingsavvy.com) for help with sign language.

A Message from Ms. Catherine in Elementary

Happy New Year! We’ve had a great start to 2014.

We are continuing our study of the planets and will soon begin our study of the layers of the Earth, continuing on our journey through science as we zoom in from our original universe study. The children love to learn about their world and the way things work. So many great questions are asked and lead to some really amazing discussions. Ms. Carol’s follow up science experiments add so much to our curriculum.

Believe it or not, Valentine’s Day will soon be approaching! Please remember that students are not required to bring in Valentines in Lower EI. However, if they choose to do so, the Valentines must be home made (not just store bought cards) and your child should bring in one for each student in their class. The students will be copying down class lists in early February in order to make sure they don’t forget anyone. I absolutely love watching the students exchange Valentines and acknowledge the thoughtfulness of their friends. More details to follow soon!

As always, I am available for a quick chat during carpool, via phone or email, or scheduled appointments. You have all done a great job of communicating with me so far this year and I thank you for that.

A Message from Mr. David in Upper Elementary

Upper EI loves a group discussion. One of my favorite things to do is to sit in circle, throw out bits of information, then field all the thoughtful questions. Kids want to learn. They are eager to know things. The educator's job is to spark their curiosity.

At the moment we are discussing early hominids (our earliest ancestors). What an unbelievably wonderful and immense topic. What fun it is to look at the 5 million year old fossil record and piece together the human puzzle. 5 Million years of genetic adaptation is a long time. The discussion leads us in a thousand different directions: Why certain animals (humans) may survive certain climates and how genetic adaptation can be helpful or harmful. The mathematics of our ancestry is another fun tangent; The "Power of TWO" makes its way into a history lesson! 2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8 great grandparents and so on... Did you know that just 20 generations in the past, you have 1,048,576 grandparents? Each of those grandparents had TWO parents which makes 2,097,152...get it? We are the product of the millions of ancestors that came before us and gave us their genetic material. We are all related. It is undeniable. Showing elementary children that we are all unique and yet, all related creates a lifetime basis for them to celebrate all people as their human family.

A Message from Ms. Kelly in Middle School

**Parent Education** is scheduled for this Thursday (1/16) from 5-6pm, in the Upper Elementary classroom. This night will focus on Adolescence and our Middle School Program. This will be a great meeting of informative statistics, suggestions, & explanations as to "why SWMA Middle School does what it does" and why pre-teens/teens "do what they do." :)

Middle School is off to a fantastic New Year. We are beginning our new Cycle with the interdisciplinary theme of "Power." This theme is carried from Science to Math (calculating power) to Technology (creating podcasts).

I am also very excited to share of our Service Learning with you. Our students chose to spend their time with the residents of Crystal Bay Assisted Living in Sandestin. They sang songs, shared/listened to stories, and assisted to whomever was around. The students and myself were probably blessed more than the residents were. I am extremely proud of their generosity, gentle demeanor, and willingness to step out of their comfort zone. They were warmly received and I am happy to announce that they decided to return this week.

A Message from Mr. Cam in Music

Happy New Year! It's great to be back in the swing of things, and I'm excited about continuing our music studies.

This month, our upper elementary and middle school friends will be taking a field trip to be a part of Sinfonia Gulf Coast Orchestra's "Bernstein Beat." The daughter of Leonard Bernstein (American composer, conductor, author, music lecturer, and pianist), Jamie Bernstein, and violinist Mari Thomas will present and perform, along with the Orchestra, famous compositions from Bernstein, including selections from "West Side Story."

Hearing, seeing, and experiencing quality live music is always the very best way to bring alive the lessons we discuss in class.

In our elementary and middle school classes, we are moving into reading and writing music, which is always awesome to see how creative and uniquely talented each child is. Music is fun, and while reading music notes can seem tedious at first, once it starts to click for the classes, the possibilities are endless!

For the primary friends, we are continuing recognizing beats and rhythms as well as the sounds and names of various percussion instruments. We are also moving into pitch, using bells and various pitched instruments that will lead into an introduction of reading music.

I look forward to this second half of the school year, and how everything we've introduced starts to come together. As always, I encourage parents to expose your kids to live music as often as possible!

A Message from Ms. Carol in Art

We've started out the new year by studying... Doodles! Yes, believe it or not, we've been talking about and exploring the concept of doodling, and how it affects our brains and ability to concentrate. Studies are showing that the process of doodling actually helps our brains to focus while listening, and improves our ability to recall information learned while doodling. They are trying out different styles of doodling, and even practicing listening while doodling, during our daily reading and weekly art history lessons. It's been a lot of fun for all of us to explore, and is a great introduction to our next segment of lessons - drawing. Over the next few weeks we will be learning about drawing, sketching, figure studies, still lifes, perspective, dimension, shading and value, and studying different styles of drawing, including, for the first time (for me) Manga... It is a fun time of year for us, and don't be surprised if you catch your child doodling or sketching at home!

A Message from Ms. Julia in Spanish

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

Thanks to your generous wish tree donations I was able to purchase a lot of new exciting Spanish materials, including 2 dictionaries, a thesaurus, and 2 new books. I can't wait to start a new year of Spanish.

We continue to expand our vocabulary and researching words using short stories and dialogues.

In December we sang Christmas songs, such as "feliz navidad" and "rodolfo el reno" and studied the parts of the body.

In Upper EL and Middle school we are currently reading Dr. Seuss' "huevos verdes con jamón" ("green eggs and ham") and are talking about what we like and don't like, using the phrase "me gusta" and "no me gusta".

In Lower EL we are reading "Benny" which is a story about a dog who loses his sense of smell, and are talking about scents "huele bien" and "huele mal" (it smells good/bad), using our all-time-favorite game "smellory", which is like memory but incorporating scents.

In After School Spanish we keep working on our colors, serving and ordering food, Christmas vocabulary and the days of the week.

Starting this week we will take a closer look at the seasons of the year and will start to

talk about the weather.

The students enjoy reading and singing more than anything, so we have been reading several Eric Carle books like "Oso pardo, Oso pardo, ¿que ves ahí?" ("Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?"),

"De la cabeza a los pies" ("from head to toe") and "el camaleón camaléonico" ("the mixed-up chameleon").

It is fun to see the students feeling comfortable and enjoying listening to the stories that they grew up with while learning a foreign language.

I still have openings for Monday 3:30-4:30pm after school Spanish.

The Tuesday group is full.

Please see or email me if you would like to borrow a copy of a book, or have any questions about maximizing your child's exposure. I am available for private tutoring (all ages).

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.

Chinese Proverb