

Meet the Staff at SWMA

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Important Dates to remember:

January 19: No School

February 2: Applications emailed

February 11: Parent Ed 5 PM

February 16: No School

February 17: Returning Family Apps Due

Hello SWMA Parents,
As our school continues to grow and thrive, we are excited to offer returning students first priority in securing a classroom placement at SWMA for Fall 2015.

The **Re-enrollment process** for the 2015/16 school year will begin on February 2, 2015. 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 17, 2015.

Annual Fund Update:

We have raised almost \$8525 to date. We have only received donations from 24 out of 59 families. It is not too late to give! Any amount is welcomed. We are looking for 100% participation. Thank you for your support.

Wish Tree Update:

WOW! Thanks to you, we raised \$9800 for supplies to enhance your child's classroom in our Annual Wish Tree event this year! WOW!

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.

We have been talking about transportation, vehicles that take us places and where they take us. We have many works out with different types of vehicles. At circle we have been singing "The wheels on the Bus", "The Car Song" and "Little Red Caboose." One of the favorite books we're reading is Freight Train by Donald Crews.

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 playground. 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 springtime!

"The greatest sign of success for a teacher ...is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as though I do not exist.' " M. Montessori

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

The end of 2014 was unbelievably fun in the Primary classroom. Our curriculum during the last two months was based upon many of the traditional concepts that are found in each holiday.

Throughout November, the Primary students learned and discussed the history of Thanksgiving. We then talked about what it means to be and act thankful. As the children's understanding of thankfulness grew, we loved listening to them share what they were thankful for! (It varied from families to ice cream!) Talking about turkey traditions allowed us to introduce the animal family of Aves (Birds). Talking about feast traditions allowed us to have the children practice 'setting a table' for their feasts. The three teachers have never been invited to so many sweet, miniature feasts! We finished our time in November by making butter to bring to the SWMA Thanksgiving Feast. The children were so proud to make something so delicious to bring to their very own Feast. We hope everybody got a chance to taste it!

After the Thanksgiving Break, we were excited to discuss many different December holidays and their traditions: Christmas around the world (a variety of different countries' unique Christmas traditions), Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. Throughout the month, the children loved lighting candles, playing traditional games, and making ornaments and/or gifts. Experiencing and participating in a variety of traditions really maximized their fun in learning! During this time, we used the tradition of Santa's reindeer to introduce the animal family of Mammals. Then, our class spontaneously showed an incredible interest in sewing. As a result, many of the children sewed their own hearts which were worn during our Christmas performance of "Can't Buy Me Love." We simply love

supporting and incorporating our students' abilities and interests into our classroom activities and curriculum!

Now, we can't believe it's already January! Happy 2015! We have begun the new year with a discussion about how some mammals are now hibernating. We then used the hibernation concept to bridge into the animal families of Amphibians and Reptiles (many of whom are also now hibernating). Just this last week the children measured and painted a 19.2 ft. alligator (the longest alligator ever found in Louisiana!). The children are amazed at the huge size of our artful alligator! The topic of Reptiles will soon lead into a discussion of dinosaurs. Then, February will bring an opportunity to talk about love, kind messages and being thoughtful. If you have any children's books or science books about these current or upcoming themes (reptiles, amphibians, dinosaurs, Valentine's Day), please feel free to let your child bring them into our classroom. The children are so proud to share their own books for all the friends to enjoy in our class library. As always, please ensure their name is written inside to help us make sure the books are returned in a timely manner!

We enjoyed meeting with all of our parents in December. It is such a pleasure to partner with you all in support of your children. And remember, we love it when you have a chance to observe these amazing children in action – please schedule an observation with Beth! Lastly, thank you for your generous Wish Tree donations. We received just the perfect amount to purchase the new Community Playthings Outdoor Block Set. We can't wait to see the children's unique designs and creations!

A Message from Ms. Catherine in Lower Elementary

Happy New Year! It's been nice to jump right back in to our work. We had a great time once again decorating the children's room at the Wesley House next door at Eden Gardens State Park for the holidays. The volunteers and visitors all complimented our students on their beautiful decorations and their lovely manners!

We have completed our study of the planets and have jumped into our study of the states of matter. We learned how some scientists believed the Earth cooled down and the oceans formed. We will soon practice making solids, liquids, and gases with our bodies acting as molecules. We will also begin our states of matter experiments which culminate in a liquid race to see which liquid is the most fluid and which is the most viscous. 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.

With Valentine's Day fast approaching, please remember that students are not required to bring in Valentines in Lower El. 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 soon 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. Happy Friday!

A Message from Mr. David in Upper Elementary

Upper EI has been studying early civilizations. We've had discussions about where our species comes from. Last month, we built a "Tree of Life" which begins with prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells and follows the Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and Species of any organism to its specific classification. This work helps the students understand where *they* are on the tree and the origin of their lineage.

Our earliest, upright walking ancestors can be traced back about 4.5 million years. They were called the Australopithecus Africanus. A lot has changed over the last four million years. We have developed a great deal. It took most of that four million years to finally bring about a creature called Homo sapien sapien; our specific "type" on the tree of life. Our type, you and me, not our closest extinct relative Neandertalis, have only been around for about two hundred thousand years.

All of this leads us to the last ten thousand years, give or take a few thousand. People started to settle down. They learned how to use grasses for food. Farming and storage of grain enabled people so stay in one place instead of following herds for food. Family groups became towns, towns became cities and cities became civilizations.

Children love stories. They appreciate a through line and a sequence. It helps them organize and mentally categorize the history of our species. It's pretty cool stuff.

A Message from Ms. Kelly in Middle School

As I type this, our Middle School students are busy preparing their Display Boards and finalizing touches on their speeches for Parent Education in February. We certainly hope that you are able to attend this meeting and view their presentations; if not and you are interested in Middle school information, please do not hesitate to contact me. You are also free to sit in our class any morning (Monday-Thursday) to observe lessons/work plan.

Our current theme is "Identity." Within our curriculum, we bring this theme to life through genetics/probability and statistics (Natural World / Mathematics), personal characteristics & values (Personal World/Health), Waves of Immigration (Social World), and Self/Community expression through Poetry & Prose (Language Arts).

The Middle School and Upper Elementary students are happy to continue to partner with our friends at the community garden in Destin. They have planted the three beds to get the cool weather crops going before it's too warm. Right now they have chard, kale, spinach, beets, carrots, radishes, cabbage, and broccoli. The people at the community garden invited the students back out to do weeding and cleaning up of the general garden area, and see the sprouts as well as learn how to thin them. They are trying to raise enough money to install 10 more beds before this summer's planting season. If you could assist in any way please let Ms. Kelly know or click on the "go fund me" link below.

<http://www.gofundme.com/destingarden>

GOT JUICE ?!?!

Beginning January 26th, the Middle School will kick start their "Got Juice?" fundraiser! We will be selling green juices during morning carline every Monday and Wednesday (Fridays by request only).

For your convenience, we will have the juices in to-go cups. After drop-off, you would simply pull ahead and purchase a drink from the Middle School stand. Each drink will be freshly made and waiting for you! If you are interested in purchasing a reusable mason jar, please let us know!

We look forward to serving you!

A Message from Mr. Cam in Music

In music, we have a lot of exciting additions this winter. Many of them are thanks to the generous donations from our families towards the Wish Tree.

In primary, we are combining rhythms with melodies and dynamics, and will continue to introduce new instruments as well. For lower elementary we will begin playing recorders, which they are very excited about, continuing our study of written music. We are also learning about world instruments now, and I hope to continue our collection of those instruments into the coming years. For upper elementary and middle school, we are studying American music, starting with the early 1900's and progressing through each decade to better show how music has slowly evolved into our current music. We are doing a lot of listening, research, and will also be performing as we progress. We will also be viewing several live music performances in the upcoming months as well as finishing the Music in Pictures artwork.

In all of the classes, I am excited to be starting a curriculum with our soon to be here Orff set. I will describe in detail the Orff philosophy and instruments in the next newsletter once we have implemented it into music. Stay tuned!

A Message from Ms. Julia in Spanish

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

2014 has been a successful year and we are ready to move forward by starting with lots of exciting and tangible topics around "MI MUNDO" (my world), such as "mi escuela" (school), "mi familia" (family), "mi cuerpo" (body), "mi país" (country) and "mi cultura" (culture).

After labeling most of the classrooms we will explore our world using all senses. Thanks to your generous donations I was able to purchase everything from the wish tree (!!!) containing a lot of great visual and auditorial materials as well as some more dictionaries for each classroom. There can never be enough dictionaries, the students really embrace the opportunity to look up any new word they come across.

So once again ¡muchísimas gracias por su generosidad!

Upper EL and Middle school are working hard on grammar structures and verb conjugations as well as indefinite and definite articles and personal pronouns. This is no easy task and repetition -as always- is the key!

Our language app "duolingo" supports them greatly so please encourage your child to really make good use of it (2 lessons a week are mandatory and most students get really ambitious and do even more).

In Lower EL we will focus a lot on reading simple fictional and non fictional stories to acquire basic vocabulary and start putting it into practice.

Students use Rosetta Stone once a week as well as their listening station to further support them in developing an ear for the language.

If you are looking for more language exposure please email me for After School Spanish lessons or private tutoring at julia@learnpasoapaso.com

Thank you all for being a huge part of your child's education!

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."□

–Chinese Proverb