

# Spring Branch Academic Institute



March 9, 2020

Issue 25



## SAVE THE DATES

<b>STAAR Testing</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Writing 5 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	<b>04/07/2020</b>
<b>STAAR Testing</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	<b>04/08/2020</b>
<b>Student/Staff Holiday</b>	<b>04/10/2020</b>
<b>Student/Staff Holiday</b>	<b>04/13/2020</b>
<b>Family Library Night</b> Thornwood Library 4:00-5:30 pm	<b>04/27/2020</b>
<b>State of the School for SBAI Parents</b> Thornwood Library 8:00-9:00 am	<b>05/05/2020</b>
<b>STAAR Testing</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Math 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Math	<b>05/12/2020</b>
<b>STAAR Testing</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Reading 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Reading	<b>05/13/2020</b>
<b>STAAR Testing</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Science	<b>05/14/2020</b>

### SBAI Elementary Emails

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### Upcoming Events

**PLEASE NOTE** – SBAI Elementary follows the Thornwood Elementary campus calendar for early dismissals.

<b>Donuts with Directors</b> SFMS MPR Room 8:30 am	<b>03/12/2020</b>
<b>TWE/SBAI Track Meet</b> SHS Track 5:00 pm	<b>03/12/2020</b>
<b>SPRING BREAK – ENJOY!</b>	<b>03/16-20/2020</b>
<b>SBAI Middle School 101 &amp; High</b> School 101 Meetings TWE Library 5:00-7:00 pm	<b>03/25/2020</b>

## A Message From the Director

I'm pleased to announce the members of the **2020-2021 SBAI Campus Improvement Team (CIT)**. Our school is a wonderful amalgam of people from various backgrounds and experiences, coming together under a common mission of serving the children that call SBAI home.

**Our School's Mission:** "The mission of the Spring Branch Academic Institute is to provide highly gifted children tailored educational opportunities in **academics**, as well as **social-emotional learning**, matched to their individual **abilities, strengths, and interests.**"

On behalf of the SBAI community, thanks to all our CIT members for raising their hands and offering to serve our children. I look forward to working with each member and leveraging everyone's, talents, insights, and solutions to continually improve the school our children call home. **Please be sure to read the names and bios of each member that are included in this newsletter.**

## SBAI Middle School 101 and SBAI High School 101 Meetings

Families that are interested in learning more about the transition to middle school and high school at SBAI are invited to attend either or both of these meetings. These meetings will be held on **Wednesday, March 25 from 5-7pm**. A panel of SBAI students and parents will be part of the meeting.

## SBAI Dragons Roared at Odyssey of the Mind Competition!

SBAI Dragons did a phenomenal job at the Odyssey of the Mind Regionals competition this weekend! Congratulations to our **SBAI Middle School** team for placing first in their problem/division. We are so proud of **Tyler Fargason, Saige Jurek, Vincent McGuire, Maddox Ottis, Lucy Thomas, and Valerie Warren**. We also congratulate **Rhea Chidambaram** and the Wilchester team for placing first in their problem/division. Congratulations as well to **Liam Czelusta** and **Aditya Mandke** and their team from Rummel Creek. They placed fifth in their problem/division.

Kudos to all these creative Dragons! All of our SBAI students are going to the Texas State Tournament on April 4 at West Briar Middle School. A special thanks to all the Odyssey of the Mind coaches for their support and guidance. We appreciate you, **Susan Fargason, Maria Quesada, Janice Teske, and Anju Divakaram**. As Coach Teske noted, our students listened to, helped, and collaborated with each other in proposing solutions. Although the competition day was crowded, rushed, and stressful, all our Dragons rose to the occasion and performed well under pressure, which is a great skill in life. We wish them all continued success in the next stage of competition.



## 5th Grade Track Team

### **Information from Amber Reynolds – Health and Fitness Coach**

Our AMAZING 5<sup>th</sup> grade track team will be representing Thornwood and SBAI this year. The track meet will be on **March 12<sup>th</sup>** at Stratford High School. We will leave TWE at 4:00 and walk over to Stratford together. The meet starts at 5:00. I hope to have you all there cheering on our TRAGON athletes. Representing SBAI will be:

#### **GIRLS 200M**

Abbey San Lucas

Esme Bohan

#### **BOYS 100M**

Roman Fitzgerald

#### **BOYS 4X100M RELAY**

Kitt Taylor

#### **DISCUS**

Kellen Wang



## SBAI CIT 2020-2021 Member Bios

	<p><b>Jon Larrabee</b>, Parent K-12 <span style="float: right;"><b>jrlarrabee@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>The Larrabees love SBAI! And I'm happy to be returning for another term on the CIT. I first became involved with what is now SBAI in late-2008 when I found it as a proposal program inside SBISD's five-year plan. We were really struggling to find a fit for our then four-year old, so I reached out to the former director of Advanced Academics to offer help to bring the proposal to life. After a couple of near misses in getting Board approval and funding, it finally happened in 2013. And we have been here ever since. All four of our children (currently 10<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup>) attend SBAI. Having experienced the landscape of options before, we remain incredibly grateful for the wonderful staff and community that is enabled by SBAI. And we are excited about the next steps in the journey.</p>
	<p><b>Sanya Aliota</b>, Parent-Elementary <span style="float: right;"><b>saliota@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>The Aliotas feel honored to be part of the SBAI family (and SBISD as a whole) with Shray in 2nd grade at SBAI and Tej in 6th grade at SFMS. Sanya is grateful for the dedicated team of teachers, staff, and administrators that make SBAI such a unique learning environment. Sanya is passionate about gifted education, engaging enrichment, and developing the whole child so they can flourish into successful contributing social citizens. Aside from the joy she gets from raising her two bright and talented boys, Sanya stays engaged as a marketing consultant and active community member. She loves to cook, travel, read, practice yoga, and play board games.</p>
	<p><b>Anju Divakaran</b>, Parent-Elementary <span style="float: right;"><b>anjudevakaran@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>Anju is building an APP (VCYNATA) that aims at connecting homeowners to maintenance and care service providers. She also advises companies on their data analytics and digital strategy as an independent consultant. Prior to that she has worked in different executive positions at Nabors Drilling, Dell, Accenture and TCS focused on analytics, business process transformation, growth strategy, and cost optimization. She has lived in Houston for thirteen years and in Spring Branch for four years. She loves to travel and read and is the mother of a SBAI 4th grade daughter.</p>
	<p><b>Wendy Dalton</b>, Parent-Secondary <span style="float: right;"><b>mwdalton4@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>The Dalton family has been blessed to be part of SBAI since its inception in 2013. Wendy is eternally grateful to the teachers, staff and administration that have made this opportunity a reality and is enjoying her second round of serving on the CIT. She has been thankful to see first-hand how the school has continued to evolve, handle new students and plan for the high school years. Wendy is passionate about gifted education and looks forward to the continued success from SBAI in preparing these kids academically, socially and emotionally as they grow and get ready for higher education opportunities.</p>
	<p><b>Amanda Davison</b>, Parent-Secondary <span style="float: right;"><b>davisonaf@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>Amanda has two children in SBISD. Ella is a freshman at MHS, and Will is a 6th grader in SBAI. Will has been in SBAI since the first year as a Kindergartner. Amanda and her husband, Brian, are so thankful for what SBAI offers to the children of SBISD. Amanda has chaired and served on many PTA committees and truly believes parent and community involvement is key to the success of any school.</p>

	<p><b>Aisling Haddon</b>, Community Rep <span style="float: right;"><b>ais.haddon@gmail.com</b></span></p> <p>Since moving to Houston in 2010, Aisling Haddon's three sons have been part of the SBISD GT program and attended 7 different campuses spanning PreK to 12th grade. She has served on many PTA and district level committees particularly the District School Health Advisory Council and as a PAC rep on the GT advisory committee. She also served on the district's Course Weighting Task Force, and on the Bendwood Elementary CIT for two years.</p>
	<p><b>Sally Craddock</b>, Teacher Elementary <span style="float: right;"><b>Sally.Craddock@springbranchisd.com</b></span></p> <p>Ms. Craddock has taught in Spring Branch ISD elementary schools for over twenty years, and was part of SBAI's original staff when the school started in 2013. Over the past six years, she has taught language arts, social studies, and science to Kindergarteners through 5th graders. She is a life-long learner who graduated from Texas A&amp;M University and once considered being a marine biologist. Who knows? Maybe after retirement!</p>
	<p><b>Kayman McIver</b>, Teacher-Elementary <span style="float: right;"><b>Kayman.McIver@springbranchisd.com</b></span></p> <p>Kayman McIver has been teaching for 13 years, 5 of which are with SBAI. She began as the secondary science teacher at SBAI and now teaches our elementary students in the same role. She enjoys running, calligraphy, and spending time with her 2 daughters and husband.</p>
	<p><b>Julie Sirianni</b>, Teacher Elementary <span style="float: right;"><b>Julie.Sirianni@springbranchisd.com</b></span></p> <p>Julie Sirianni's education started in San Antonio, Texas where she attended K-12 in North East ISD schools. She then graduated from Texas A&amp;M University with a degree in Education for Middle School Math &amp; Science. Her first few years of teaching middle school math occurred at Spring Oaks MS and Spring Woods MS here in SBISD. From there, her career with SBAI began. Julie has been a teacher at SBAI since day one, and is grateful for every day that she has with these incredible students. In her free time she enjoys crafting and spending quality time with family and friends.</p>
	<p><b>Linda Alexander</b>, Teacher-Secondary <span style="float: right;"><b>Linda.Alexander@springbranchisd.com</b></span></p> <p>Linda Alexander has 6 years of experience in education, two of which have been with SBAI as a secondary mathematics teacher. Linda enjoys spending time with her family, great seafood, and a good book.</p>



**Katie Wood-Sponsel, Teacher-Secondary Catherine.Wood-Sponsel@springbranchisd.com**

Katie Wood-Sponsel is a social studies and English teacher with 17 years of experience in education. She is also a wife to Ty, a mom to Brooke, Reed and Tyler, a dog mom to Bo the elderly Beagle, a history nerd, a book lover, a tennis player, a hater of wearing shoes and sitting in chairs, a yogi, and a fan of the great outdoors. A graduate of San Diego State University with a degree in Communications & Political Science, Katie began her teaching career in 2003 as an 8th grade social studies teacher at Cornerstone Academy where she stayed for 16 years. This is her first year at SBAI and she's loving it!



**Kristin Graham, District Liaison Kristin.Graham@springbranchisd.com**

Kristin Graham has worked in education for 12 years with teaching experience in rural, suburban, and urban schools in Texas and China. She also has 3 years of experience managing district-wide gifted and talented services. She cares deeply about helping create equitable environments where all students can know and develop their potential. She is also very involved with the Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented, she currently holds a leadership role in the organization and is a member of their Task Force charged with helping Texas districts implement new policy changes from HB3 and the new GT State Plan.



**Jim Lefeber, Assistant Director James.Lefeber@springbranchisd.com**

Jim grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin with four brothers and a sister. He graduated with a degree in secondary education with an emphasis in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He moved to Houston in 1991 where he taught in HISD at Waltrip and Sam Houston for seven years. He moved to New York and taught in Bushwick Brooklyn while getting his masters in math from St. John's University. He moved back to Houston in 2000 and started working in SBISD in 2001. He has been a teacher at Stratford, math and science specialist at Stratford and Spring Woods HS, lead secondary social studies coach for the district, and now assistant director of SBAI. 2019-20 is his fifth year with SBAI, joining when the secondary campus was opened.



**Patricia Kassir, Director Patricia.Kassir@springbranchisd.com**

As the lead learner at SBAI, Patricia is a product of her diverse experiences, and uses those experiences to shape the work she leads. Along with nearly three decades of shaping the minds of children of all ages and from all backgrounds, her experiences in strategic planning, research and design, and innovation in education provide her with multiple lenses through which she views her work at SBAI, both short-term and long-term. Patricia is a passionate advocate for the gifted and believes a strong home-school partnership enhances a child's educational trajectory. She is most proud of her marriage of 31 years, and her four adult children, who are all gainfully employed. She enjoys her family, national parks, road trips, cooking, and tending to her garden.



ADVANCED  
ACADEMIC  
STUDIES  
SPRING BRANCH ISD

PRESENTS

# SHOWCASE 2020

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE  
Featuring PGP, SPIRAL, and SBAI students

April 29 5:00-6:00  
Don Coleman Coliseum

Student work from each program will be featured. All are welcome to come and enjoy:

- Student presentations
- Learning more about G/T services
- A family night out supporting SBISD

**Contact:**

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