



October 2024

South Middle

The mission of South Middle School is to provide a high quality education for all students in a safe, equitable learning environment. This mission is best accomplished through a partnership including students, family, community, teachers and staff, preparing students to become life-long learners in an ever-changing world.

Principal Message

Cougar Families,

Happy October! It's hard to believe we're already a few months into the school year, and I'm incredibly proud of the progress our students have made so far. October is a month filled with energy, excitement, and learning. As the weather begins to change, it's a great time for us to reflect on the importance of adaptability and growth, both inside and outside the classroom.

This month, we are focusing on community building and ensuring that every student feels supported, seen and valued. With upcoming events like spirit week, the Cultural Crawl, and fall extra-curricular activities, we hope to foster strong connections between students, teachers and families. I encourage all our students and families to take part in opportunities to engage with our school community.

October is also an important time for safety awareness. With Halloween around the corner, we want our students to stay safe while trick-or-treating or participating in any other fall activities. Please remind your children to be cautious, especially as the days get shorter and there is less daylight after school.

I want to thank all our families for their continued partnership in making our school a place where every child can thrive. Your involvement and support make a huge difference!

Dustin Dooley - Principal

School Fundraiser

SMS kicked off our annual school fundraiser on Wednesday, September 18. Once again we will be partnering with World's Finest Chocolates to sell chocolate bars to families. Students began selling on Thursday, September 19 and will sell through Friday, October 4. For each box of chocolates sold, students will earn prizes. A parent signature is required to checkout a box of chocolate. Each box of chocolates contain 30 bars and students will sell each bar for \$2.00 a piece. Students will turn in money and collect their next box when they arrive at school and the check-out process will be in our old concession stand in the commons.

Orchestra

My name is Jacob Andres and I am the “new” Orchestra teacher! Many of you may know, but I was the assistant band director for five years and decided to make the big switch to Orchestra this year! It has been a huge undertaking but your kids have been absolutely awesome with me!

I want to take a quick minute to remind everyone how important practice is to your student's development in class. There is no substitute to practicing an instrument. If you haven't heard your student practice lately, encourage them to bring their instrument home.

- Listen to them practice.
- Give them positive words of encouragement.
- Don't worry about if it sounds “good” or “bad,” instead ask them if they are applying everything that we are doing in class to their practice.

Talking with your child about applying what they are learning will help your student think about how their practice is connecting to what we are working on class. If you need anything, please do not hesitate to reach out!

Band

My name is Gavin Blehm and I am excited to be the new Band Director here at SMS! I can't imagine a better place to be undertaking my first year of teaching. While I know that I have a lot to learn, the support of the parents, administration and other staff has made me feel very welcome; not to mention the incredibly hard working and talented students!

All the groups are off to a great start, working on some new topics and reinforcing the good habits that will carry us moving forward! One of the best things that you can do to ensure your student's growth is to encourage at-home practice.

While I will do my absolute best to give them help and pointers in class, at-home practice is where they make these changes permanent. I inform students *what to practice* and *how to practice* the instrument. Then, it is up to the students to put the rubber to the road.

If you haven't seen or heard your student practicing, I would highly encourage you to ask them about it and encourage them to do so. This support makes students feel much more comfortable practicing and supports their growth as a musician.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you for helping make the SMS Band Program the best it can be!

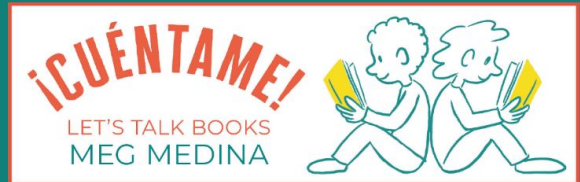
Special Best-Selling Author Talk

You're invited to visit Salina Public Library on October 22, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. to hear Meg Medina read and join in conversation and questions with her. Meg is the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature 2023-24 and best-selling author. The event is offered through partnership with the Salina Public Library. You can find more details here:



[Information Here](#)

**The National Ambassador
for Young People's Literature
is coming to our community!**



Dillons Rewards

SMS families can support the South Middle School PTO by using their Dillons Plus shopper's card. A percentage of all purchases are allotted to our PTO. Here's how to enroll in the Dillons Community Rewards program:



[Visit Dillons Community Rewards](#)

- sign in to your existing online account or create an account
- find and select South Middle School PTO or organization #VN011 and click save
- Shop at Dillons and scan your existing Plus shopper's card

School Attendance

Do you need to call in your student's attendance or let us know of an upcoming absence or tardy? If so, please call the Attendance Office directly at 785-309-3904.

✉ Email our attendance secretary

The attendance office hours are 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Please communicate with the school if your child will be absent.

Parent Teacher Conferences

We would like to thank all of our families who attended parent teacher conferences. Of our 779 students, we had 80% attendance. A reminder that the first quarter of the school year concludes Thursday, October 10. Students will not have school Friday, October 11 or Monday, October 14 because of teacher in-service.

Library Policies

Parents have access to the library materials currently check out by their student(s). For access, parents will have their student log into Destiny, the library card catalog. Library media specialists should be contacted directly if parents would like to provide expressed permission before the student checks out any book. In middle and high school, the student will provide their parent with the title of the book they wish to check out. The parent will contact the library media specialist by email or phone to give permission. Middle school students may check out three books for a three week checkout period.

Cross Country

Our cross country squad has had an amazing season so far. The weather has finally held out for the team to be able to go on some decent runs outdoors. The team has some amazing athletes who are putting in hard work and being successful with 3 mile runs at practice. Thanks for all the continue support as the squad finishes up their season in October.

Guitar

Guitar class is off to a great start this semester! Keep encouraging your student to practice, practice, practice. I would like to remind you about three things: practice sheets, tests and our concert below. – Mr. Gerry

- Practice Sheets and Logs: Practice sheets are due every **Friday** on Google classroom. The practice sheet is a worksheet reviewing what we learned in class for the week. It's worth five points. The practice log is used to record days a student practices at home. They put an "X" down for every day they practice. Four days of practicing at home are required for full credit, for five points.

The practice sheets and logs account for roughly 10%-15% of a student's overall grade. Nearly every student who ended up with a grade lower than an A was due to practice sheets not being turned in. Please remember, they are due every Friday.

- Tests: There are tests every week in guitar class over the skills we are learning. Tests have been great this year!

Don't forget that students can retake any guitar test as many times as they would like by making a video on Google classroom that I will watch and adjust their scores accordingly. If your student is not happy with their grade in class, please encourage them to take advantage of retakes to raise their grade. I truly don't care how long it takes a student to learn – as long as they learn it.

- Concert: December 12 , 7:15 p.m.

Our winter concert for guitar is December 12 at 7:15 p.m. in GYM #1 at SMS. Four level one guitar classes will perform, and our advanced guitar class will conclude the program. Students are required to attend with the concert being 25% of their grade. Everyone is invited to come watch! We are excited to show you what we've been working so hard on this semester.

Advanced Guitar

Advanced Guitar is a class for eighth grade students only who completed level 1 guitar in seventh grade and excelled. Sixty students (30 each semester) make the cut to be in this advanced class.

Aside from learning much more difficult material, advanced guitar students perform for various local and civic organizations and conclude each semester with a bus tour taking them back to their elementary schools to play for the elementary school students.

Seventh grade students who are interested in being in advanced guitar next year need to do everything they can to get their grade as high as they possibly can including turning in practice sheets and retaking tests. The students with the 60 highest grades in level one will be in next year's advanced classes.

Social Media: Please follow our guitar classes on social media. I will post videos and pictures of our adventures in learning guitar.

Facebook -

 Salina South Middle Guitar

Instagram -

 @gerrysguitars

Twitter/X -

 @gerrysguitars

If you have any questions about guitar class -



Contact Mr. Gerry

Visible Learning in Action at SPS

As educational partners with parents and guardians, we want to update you about classroom strategies. You may have heard about Visible Learning at Salina Public Schools – and if so, you're probably curious what this means. Through Visible Learning:

- Students see themselves as more than just pupils. They see themselves as active learners who are eager to explore and grow.
- Each of our schools have chosen learning dispositions that support development of critical thinking, communication and social-emotional skills.

These learning dispositions are attitudes or habits that help students become better learners.

Examples in action could include:

- Self-motivation: taking charge of your own learning by setting goals
- Curiosity: asking lots of questions
- Resilience: keep trying even when something is hard

Your child's school will be sharing the learning dispositions with you. When you read or hear about them, they're a great way to connect and reinforce the critical, lifelong skills your child is learning. We encourage you to use them as a conversation point with your child. These discussions will strengthen your bond with your child and support them on their educational journey.

School Absenteeism

We would like to encourage our students and parents / guardians to reach out to their teachers, via email, if they are absent or know they will be absent.

- Classwork can be accessed via Google Classroom and paper and pencil copy of assignments can be provided.
- We would also like to remind our parents and guardians to call in their student, if he or she is absent, to avoid truancy notifications.

Each year we track chronic absenteeism in our school, chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, for any reason. Chronically absent students fall behind their peers in both math computation as well as reading comprehension, sometimes up to a whole year. Please make school attendance a priority!

Teacher of the Month

Congratulations to SMS Grade 7 Social Studies Teacher, Lisa Parker for earning October Teacher of the Month. Mrs. Parker does a fantastic job facilitating a structured and organized classroom while making students feel valued and respected.

Students of the Week

Week #1: Paige Ohlde

Paige is a sixth grader at South Middle School. Her favorite subject is math because she enjoys challenging herself to do her best. Paige also enjoys her English class because of her teacher, Mrs. Pommer. Paige is a member of the student council and outside of school she enjoys going to church and playing volleyball. Her interests include becoming more involved with her church, pursuing photography, being active and going on bike rides, watching movies with her sister and spending time with her family members.



Week #2: Derek Cortez

Derek is a seventh grader at South Middle School. Derek loves social studies with Mr. Willer because Mr. Wiler makes the class enjoyable and engaging. At school he is also involved in advanced reading and math classes. Outside of school Derek plays soccer, likes playing video games, being outside and enjoys spending time with his family. His future plans include going to college and studying astronomy.



Week #3: Lindsey Reyes

Lindsey is an eighth grader at South Middle School. Lindsey's favorite part of school is interacting with her teachers and fellow classmates. At school, she is an office aide, and outside of school, she is involved with her church and enjoys spending time with friends. Lindsey's future plans include going to college after high school and studying biology. Fun facts about Lindsey include that she has a dog named Luna and, in her spare time, she loves playing the guitar.



Students of the Week (Cont.)

Week #4: Journi Hill

Journi is a sixth grader at South Middle School. Her favorite subject is math, and she enjoys Mrs. Boyles' class. Outside of school, Journi plays softball out of Kansas City and spends a lot of her free time traveling to different states for softball. Journi's future plans include attending the University of Oklahoma to study sports nutrition and become an athletic dietician. Journi spends her free time with her dog, Chase, and riding her bike.



Halloween Policies

Halloween will be observed Thursday, October 31. We want to remind all of our students and families that costumes and face painting are not allowed during the school day. We hope all of our students and families have a safe Halloween.

Student Council

September ended with all of our STUCO members going to a conference in Ellsworth. It is an event they look forward to every year! Also in September, STUCO did their first welcoming committee, greeting everyone when they walked up to the doors. They also did the "Woot Wagon," walking around with a snack cart handing out snacks to the teachers.

Our first Spirit Week will be October 7 through October 10.

- October 7 is Hawaiian Day
- October 8 is Twin Day
- October 9 is Pink Out Day
- October 10 is Green and Gold Day. We hope everyone will participate!

Girls Tennis

The Lady Cougar tennis team is having a superb season and peaking at just the right time. With wins over Lakewood (twice), Hutch, Derby and placing first at the Hutchinson Invitational with 37 points out of a possible 40 points the girls are rolling. Leading the way for the Lady Cougars is 7th grader Sophia Li, who is nearly unblemished with a 9-1 record in number one singles. As of the end of September, the squad has a road dual with Maize South and home dual with Newton before our League Tournament at Maize South.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Important Dates in October

10 - 2:00 p.m. (Pep Rally)

11 - No School (Teacher In-Service)

14 - No School (Teacher In-Service)

16 - 12:00 p.m. (PTO Meeting)

16 - Seventh Grade Cultural Crawl

22 - 7:00 p.m. (Orchestra Concert @ SSHS)

31 - Halloween

Contact Us

Dustin Dooley

Principal

Tina Akers

Assistant Principal

Curt Exline

Assistant Principal

Jamie Jackson

Secretary

Main Office Phone Number: 785-309-3900

#SMSCougars
#305GrowsGreatness



f South Middle

@USD305

➔ School Website

305 District Website

Unified School District #305 does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Any person having inquiries concerning Unified School District #305 compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, ADA, Title IX, or Section 504 is directed to contact the Unified School District #305 Executive Director of Human Resources, P.O. Box 797, Salina, Kansas 67402, 785-309-4726.