



THE SHOOTING STAR



Sarasota Academy of the Arts

February 10, 2014

Volume 1, Issue 20

Principal's Corner

Isn't it wonderful to see a blue sky today? I suppose I shouldn't complain but I'm tired of gray skies! It's not supposed to be like that in Sarasota, is it?

Thank you to the volunteers who helped out last week, especially the Villagomez family with the carline and Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Pedraza who covered the office for Kathy. I trust everyone who attended the Literacy night event and the PTO meeting last Thursday have signed in to record their volunteer hours.

Deputy Crane, the School Resource Officer at Venice Middle School, presented an informative program on bullying and cyberbullying at the PTO meeting last Thursday. We wish more of you could have been present to hear about this important topic. SAA follows the procedures laid out by the Sarasota County School Board in the Parent and Student Handbook when informed of bullying on campus. Often students come to us reporting bullying, but the incident does not fall under the definition for bullying. In order for it to be labeled and treated as bullying, certain conditions must exist: 1. there must be an imbalance of power, 2. it must be deliberate, and 3. it must occur repeatedly. So often, one student may call another child a name or say something unkind, but it's a one-time thing. This may be hurtful and we try to address kindness and empathy with the students involved, but it is not bullying. In some cases, students just don't get along with one another. We try to explain to them that there will people throughout their lives that are not going to be their "best friend," but they can still be polite. But sometimes it's difficult when there are few students in a class. Allegiances seem to change daily. The official term is "peer conflict." So teachers stress getting along with one another and try to help the students see how their words or actions can be hurtful. The value of the Character Education classes becomes apparent when students and teachers can address these topics and disagreements become resolved before they escalate. We cannot "legislate" empathy, but we can all work towards building a caring community of students, faculty, and families. This is not to say that we don't take bullying very seriously. Every time a student comes to the office or we receive a phone call, we look into the matter. It is so important that students feel safe on campus and feel they come to us. But, as Deputy Crane said, the most important thing - the biggest deterrent to bullying - is for you to know your child and to spend time talking to them. Be aware of what internet sites they are accessing. He gave us quite a few names, but they change in name and popularity continuously. We have some information in the office if you would like it.

Upcoming Dates:

- February 14th: Reenrollment Deadline
- February 14th: Valentine's Parties (K-5)
- February 14th: Middle School Dance from 7:00-10:00pm.
- February 17th: President's Day - No School
- February 18th - Class / Groups / Teams & Panorama Picture Day
- February 20th from 6:00-8:00pm: Family Fun Night at Jump n Fun!
- February 21st: Honor Roll Ice Cream Social
- February 25th: 4th & 8th Grade FCAT Writing
- March 4th -Spring Fling
- March 6th - Play Pictures
- March 6th - PTO Meeting at 6:00pm
- March 7th -Spirit Week
- March 10th-14th: SPRING BREAK!
- March 21st – International Fair



THE SHOOTING STAR

The next PTO Meeting is March 6th. There will be a short business meeting followed by a presentation by the Middle School Drama Class. We hope you will plan to attend. More details will follow.

One topic of discussion at the February SAA Governing Board meeting was the need for more or better communication between the teachers and parents. To facilitate communication, each student was given an agenda book to record homework assignments. Please check it daily because teachers often write comments to you and look for your comments to them. If you don't get an answer, please follow up with an email. It could be that the teacher was absent or the agenda book was not brought to class that day. Also, teachers have a website you can access through the SAA site and the elementary teachers in grade K - 3 will be sending home a weekly letter outlining special events and weekly lesson topics. You receive the "Principal's Letter" via email on Sunday and a hard copy with PTO news on Monday. Each staff member has an email account; the address is the first letter and last name of the teacher@sarasotaacademyofthehearts.com (for example, cblankenship@sarasotaacademyofthehearts.com).

One follow-up comment at the PTO meeting was the frustration with Crosspoint as a source of information about assignments and grades. Several parents were concerned that the grade on Crosspoint was so different from what is shown on the report cards. The discrepancy seems to be related to the dates teachers enter assignment grades. Teachers suggested that you look at the grade on an individual assignment rather than an average. Please call if you have questions. I finally have access to grades so maybe we can figure out what is going on.

Along the same line is the question about the 2nd through 5th grade report cards. The comment designations on the report cards do not match the legend and a number of students received the warning that they may be retained. As to the retention warning, that was there because the district is moving from one computer program to another. Teachers have the option to include that comment or not, but the "computer didn't know that." Anyone who is below level in reading received the warning. It has been promised that this will be fixed. SAA teachers will send a separate notice if you should be concerned about retention. The comments problem is a combination of misunderstandings on the part of teachers as to how the new report cards work and the changeover at the district level from one program to the other. We are trying to get everyone on the same page here and the district is trying to fix all the glitches on their end. We have been assured that the report cards will be correct by third quarter. If you have specific questions, please call us.

Friday is the K - 5 Valentine's Day parties. If you have not received information regarding this, please contact your child's homeroom teacher. The Middle School students will have a Valentine's Day Dance in the Middle School building from 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM. The cost of admission is \$5.00 per person and some food or drink item to share. Students may bring a guest from outside the school as long as the guest is a student between 6th - 9th grades.

Reminders: Don't forget to get your re-enrollment form in by this coming Friday. The 14th is the last day to guarantee a spot before the lottery drawing. Next Monday, Presidents Day, is a holiday and Tuesday is Picture Day. If you do not have an envelope, please let Kathy know. We will take class pictures plus K and 8th grade graduation, basketball teams, Girl Scouts, run club, Student Council and drama group pictures. We will also take a panoramic photo of the whole school. Finally, don't forget to register to vote if you are a Sarasota resident. The last day for registration is February 24th. The referendum issue, which would provide \$191,846 for SAA annually, is on the ballot in March.