



OMES at-a-Glance



News for Otis A. Mason Families
April 2026

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Mrs. Monique Keaton, Principal
Mrs. Julie Hudson, Assistant Principal
Mrs. Lisa Bielefeldt Assistant Principal

Manatee Highlight: Our OMES Volunteers of the Year!



We would LOVE to recognize our 2025-2026 Outstanding School Volunteers. Congratulations to middle school student (and former Manatee) Kalina Buening. Kalina comes to OMES after school each day to volunteer with younger students in our Extended Day program. Her mentorship to younger students is so meaningful and impactful. We are so proud of her willingness to spend her afternoons with us. We have to show some love to Laura Strauss, former OMES teacher who still shows up and spends her time enriching Kindergarten. We appreciate her time and devotion to our school (even in retirement). You know what they say, “you can take a teacher out of the classroom, but you can’t take the classroom out of the teacher!” Lastly, we are so proud to announce that our very own PTO President, Kim Edwards won 3rd place overall in the St. John’s County School District Outstanding School Volunteer. Mrs. Edwards is first place in our hearts. Her tireless dedication to our school over the past, present (and I am sure in the future) is simply astounding. This Manatee mom volunteers everywhere, all of the time (and with a smile). If you have participated in ANY PTO event this year, then you know and love our incredible Kim Edwards! If you are inspired by these incredible people, consider volunteering in our school. Upcoming events include:

[Test Proctoring Sign-Ups \(April 23-May 19\)](#) (Highest need)

[Book Fair Sign-up \(March 30-April 7\)](#)

[Field Day Sign-Up \(April 10th\)](#)

[AR Party Sign-Up \(April 17th\)-Carnival themed!](#)

Character Highlight: How can I instill good character in my child?

We will be reviewing **ALL of the pillars of character** in your child’s classroom. We here at Otis A. Mason Elementary believe that every member of our community should **strive to have good character**.

- **Citizenship** Is your child old enough to learn how to care for your American flag or a community space? Are they ready to explore age-appropriate news and community events? Could your family participate in a community cleanup?
- **Responsibility** Post a chore list on the fridge and give your child the power to complete those chores as a responsible member of the family. Consider a family game night as a reward!
- **Fairness** Help your child create fair rules for play and for the household. What is a fair way to share family decision making? Who will pick the restaurant this time? Who decides which book the family will read together?
- **Caring** Show gratitude at the dinner table. Take turns sharing what you are grateful for.
- **Trustworthiness** Show your child good examples of honesty. Highlight courageous acts of truth, especially when someone made a mistake. It is truly brave to atone for a mistake.
- **Respect** Discuss what is respectful in various settings: the movie theater, the car, the classroom, the park. What is respectful when dealing with different people: a friend, a teacher, a waiter, a grandparent, a public servant?

We are always available to support you with character education. Click here for our [guide to character education](#).

OMES Competes at the Character Cup



Congratulations to our Character Cup team! These students were selected to represent our school at this Olympic-style event. It is an athletic competition that highlights the importance of good character. Every school in the district competed at Toco High School. We are so proud of our team!

Attention Manatee Senior Class of 2026: Grad Walk is May 20th



Are you a senior in high school graduating in 2026? Did you attend Otis A. Mason Elementary School as a 5th grader in 2018-2019? You are invited to an incredible event to celebrate YOU! Come to Otis A. Mason on May 20th and meet in the Media Center in your cap and gown. See our website for more information and Spread the word! RSVP by calling 904-547-8440.



OMES Wins 2nd Place in the 2025-2026 Battle of the Books



We are so proud of our hardworking Battle of the Books team led by our very own Mrs. Syner and Mrs. Leonard! A special shout-out to Mrs. Waler and Mrs. Buening for assisting with Battle of the Books practices! Thank you for exploring the SSYRA books for this school year with us. To check out this year's SSYRA books or to review next year's list, please see our website's Media Center page!

Readers are Leaders! GO MANATEES!

Now Enrolling: New Manatees!

YOUR seat school choice



CONTROLLED OPEN ENROLLMENT
APPLICATION WINDOW IS
MARCH 30-APRIL 17, 2026!

APPLY NOW



[Controlled open enrollment](#) is open now! Families, do you have a Pre-K through 5th grader that you need to enroll at Otis A. Mason Elementary? DON'T WAIT! Complete your registration and upload your forms NOW. Please call 904-547-8436 with questions or to schedule a tour.

[Click here to register your student with our school.](#)

[Click to renew a hardship waiver for next school year.](#)

[Click to renew a Transportation Waiver for next school year.](#)

Plan to join us next year? Let us know with the [INTENT TO JOIN FORM](#) so we can prepare for your arrival 😊

Don't Miss It! Important Dates:

April & May: Testing: [Test Proctoring Sign-Ups \(April 23-May 19\)](#) (Highest need)

March 30-April 7: Book Fair: [Book Fair Sign-up](#)

April 3: No School-Good Friday

April 9: SAC Meeting in the Media Center at 3:15pm.

April 10thField Day for all grades: [Field Day Sign-Up](#)

April 16: PTO Meeting in the Media Center at 3:15pm.

April 17 AR Party-Welcome to the Carnival: [AR Party Sign-Up-Carnival themed!](#)

April 22: Earth Day



Voluntary Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Schools

A letter was recently shared by the Florida Department of Education in your Parent Square Account regarding voluntary prayer and religious expression in public schools. There is a [copy of this letter on our website](#). It is very important to us that all faiths feel welcome on our campus. Please talk to your child about how to best utilize the “Morning Moment” during announcements. Whether for prayer, meditation, or another secular habit, we ask that students are quiet and respectful of one another. Please guide your child with what is most appropriate for your family.



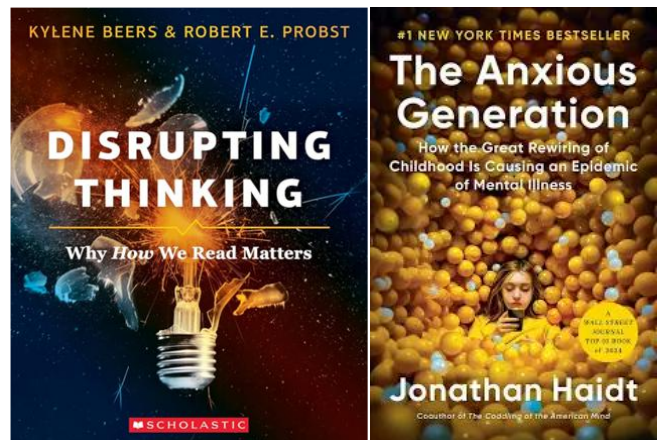
OMES Book Club: Disrupting Thinking:

Why How We Read Matters, Part 3

Our team regularly reads the latest in engagement strategies. We would like to share what we have learned! Authors Kylene Beers and Robert Probst are classroom teachers and researchers in the field of reading engagement, strategies, instruction, and analysis.

Disrupting Thinking Part 3: BEST PRACTICES. Here is a summary of best practices by these educators and researchers:

- **Give Choice:** Let kids pick what they want to read. This will build excitement and motivate them to read and to connect.
- **Increase volume:** One of the greatest predictors of school success is the amount of independent reading a child does regularly. In short, get them reading, ANYTHING ALL OF THE TIME. Even menus, road signs, and items at the grocery store all add up!
- **Read aloud:** Read out loud or listen to audio books often!
- **Teach Strategies:** Walk a child through pronouncing a difficult word or what you do when you come across a word you don't know.
- **Model Thinking:** Teaching a pattern of thought is important for young children. The best learning happens when we “chunk” information. How do you connect with a character, story, or author? Share with your child!
- **Encourage conversation:** Include others in your conversations to create a love of reading and to develop higher order thinking skills. What did grandma think of that book? What about a younger sibling? Sharing different points of view is valuable!



Our next book will be *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* by Jonathan Haidt. Pick up your copy from the local library and join the conversation about how social media and smartphones affect our children.

Otis A. Mason Elementary

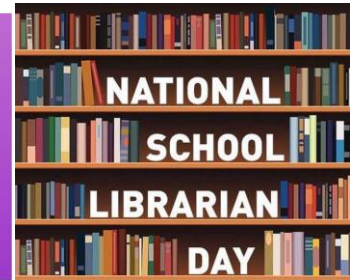
PM 3 Testing Dates

	<u>PreK</u>	<u>Kindergarten</u>	<u>First Grade</u>	<u>Second Grade</u>
PM3 ELA	Star Literacy TBD	April 23, Th	April 29, W	April 30, Th
PM3 Math	NA	May 5, T	May 6, W	May 13, W
	<u>Third Grade</u>	<u>Fourth Grade</u>	<u>Fifth Grade</u>	<u>MASC</u>
BEST Writing	NA	March 31, T (1:1 March 30)	March 31, T (1:1 April 1, Small Groups April 2)	March 9-April 24
PM3 ELA	May 1, F	May 5, T	May 8, F	
PM3 Math	May 7, Th	May 12, T	May 15, F	
Science	NA	NA	May 19, T	

Be sure to review the results of your child's 1st and 2nd Progress monitoring which are available using the code and link to the Family Portal on Home Access Center. The test results will have overall results, category results, sample test questions, progress throughout the year, and specific resources to help your student in the areas that they need assistance. Please see above for testing dates by grade and to the right for the Achievement Levels. [See the Testing Page of our website for more information.](#) Would you like to proctor? Proctor training and sign-ups on the testing page as well. Thank you for your support.



In April, We Appreciate our APs, Paraprofessionals, Librarians, and Office Staff



Paraprofessional and Tutor appreciation Day is April 1. Paras are the pillars of our school! Thank you to our plethora of professionals who go the extra mile for our school:

MASC/ESE: Ms. Charles, Mrs. Manchester, Ms. Newberry, Mrs. Lebon

Pre-K: Mrs. Hale, Ms. Sartain, Ms. McKenna

Kindergarten: Mrs. Jansen

1st Grade: Ms. Donohue

4th Grade: Ms. Davis

5th Grade: Ms. Steves

Resource: Ms. Grossholz, Ms. Kaminaris, Mrs. Leonard

Behavior: Mr. Walker

Assistant Principals Week is April 6-10. Our Assistant Principals, Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Bielefeldt, help lead our school to greatness.

Librarian Day is April 16th and we would love for you to join us in celebrating the incredible: Mrs. Syner and Mrs. Leonard!

Administrative Professionals Day is April 22! Mrs. Labello, Mrs. McManus, Mrs. Waler, and Ms. Roberts run the Front Office and support families and classes as they go through their school day.