St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

School Handbook
Effective August, 2016
St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Vision Statement

With the combined efforts of the church, school families, and faculty, Saint Thomas Aquinas School will guide a diverse student body toward becoming responsible, faith-filled, caring citizens and independent learners.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Mission Statement

At Saint Thomas Aquinas School, our mission is to create opportunities for students to grow spiritually, academically, socially and physically in a safe environment.

Students will grow spiritually. At Saint Thomas Aquinas School, the church, school families and faculty will provide an understanding of the basic tenets of our Catholic Faith which encourages students to participate in the sacraments, embrace Christian values, and serve others.

Students will grow academically. At Saint Thomas Aquinas School, faculty will provide a rich curriculum utilizing technology, and other differentiated teaching techniques which accommodates all styles of learning, encourages critical thinking, and fosters a love of learning.

Students will grow socially. At Saint Thomas Aquinas School, the church, school families and faculty will provide opportunities for students to interact with a diverse community of people in an environment which encourages tolerance, empathy, respect, and a sense of belonging.

Students will grow physically. At Saint Thomas Aquinas School, the church, school families and faculty will provide guidance to students in making lifestyle choices that promote physical well-being.
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Admissions

Enrollment/Re-Enrollment
Following Archdiocesan policies, the School Commission has established the following Admissions Policies (Archdiocese Policies 5210 and 5410).

St. Thomas Aquinas School welcomes students of all races, religions, or national origins. St. Thomas is a Catholic, parochial school, however, and children of registered parishioners with children already in school will be given priority in terms of admission. Non-parishioners with siblings already enrolled at St. Thomas Aquinas will be admitted next, followed by parishioners with first children starting in the school. Consideration will be given to the length of time in the Parish when compiling waiting lists.

Non-parishioners with no siblings will be admitted to available spaces with consideration given to the following:

1. They are attending another Christian church or other religious community whose values are consistent with Christian values, and they are seeking an education that stresses Christian values within a Catholic structure.
2. They understand that their child/children will participate in all religion classes or services and attend weekly Mass.
3. Parents of prospective transfer students (grades 1 and above) start the enrollment process by meeting with the principal to review admission policies and visit classrooms.
4. Prospective students for grades 2 and above are required to visit for a day before admission to St. Thomas Aquinas School. If after meeting with the principal it is decided that St. Thomas is a potential match for the student, he/she may be asked to return to take placement tests in core subjects. Parents or guardians agree to finance the full cost of their child(ren)’s education as determined by the School Commission and administration.
5. Each family must complete a registration form and admission questionnaire for each child seeking admission and return them to the school office along with the non-refundable Registration/Book/Technology Fee.
6. Admission will be complete upon the receipt of school report cards, standardized test results, and immunization records. Complete disclosure of previous testing results and/or established Individual Education Plan/Individual Catholic Education Plan is mandatory.
7. New Junior High (Gr. 7 & 8) students are generally not accepted. Exceptions may be made at the principal’s discretion.

Re-enrollment for families continuing in the school begins in February. Families will be asked to pay a non refundable Registration/Book/Technology Fee for each child registered. (See Tuition and Fees.)

St. Thomas Aquinas frequently experiences “waiting lists” so timely re-enrollment (a deadline will be set) is important as a courtesy to new families looking for school placement.
for their children. Children must have the appropriate immunizations and meet other requirements (such as age) prior to acceptance as a student. (See also Academic Expectations - Promotions and Retentions.)

For pedagogical and space reasons, preferred class sizes are, but not limited to:

- Kindergarten—24 (locked)
- First–third grades—25 - 26
- Fourth–eighth grades—25 - 27

**Tuition and Fees**

**Registration/Book/Technology Fee**

Saint Thomas Aquinas school families pay an annual non-refundable Registration/Book/Technology Fee. This fee entitles students to the use of textbooks for their appropriate grade levels. Hard-covered books (and some soft-covered) are returned at the end of the school year. Workbooks become the property of the students. This fee also includes an “enrichment” fee to cover the cost of field trips and assemblies. The Parents’ Association administers the enrichment fees and pays the rest of the associated costs. (See General Information - Parents’ Association.)

The School Commission recommends the non-refundable fee annually based on projected technology, book, and supply costs. The fee must be approved by the Parish Finance Commission. The fee is due each spring for the following school year. This information helps school staff plan for class size and to know the number of available places for new students. (A transfer student’s registration fee is payable upon admittance to the school.)

In order to keep books in good condition and reduce costs, students are asked to carry their books in a book bag or backpack. All hard-covered books are to be covered. (Please no adhesive book covers.) Lost or damaged books are to be replaced and paid for at the student’s expense. Students are not permitted to write on or in their textbooks or some workbooks. Fines may be assessed for damaged books.

**Tuition**

Tuition for the following year is set by the principal and pastor with consultation of the Finance Committee and the School Commission. A tuition schedule is sent to each home when the Finance Commission approves it. Because the school is a ministry of the Parish, the tuition paid by Parishioners is supplemented by the Parish when the school budget is created. This sharing of costs assists parents.

*Active participation in St. Thomas Aquinas Parish for a minimum of six (6) months prior to July 1 is necessary to be eligible for parishioner scholarship. The six-month period may be waived if a family has transferred from another Catholic church and were registered, contributing and active in their former parish. A verification letter from the former pastor is required.*

The school contracts with SMART to collect, record, and deposit tuition payments. Tuition payments may be made annually, by semester or over ten (10) months (July - April).
Families are expected to remain current on their tuition obligation. As a caring Christian community, St. Thomas wants to support families who have endured a financial setback or other difficulties that make tuition payments difficult. The administration will work with families to make special arrangements for payment. When a family falls in arrears without contacting the principal first, the principal and/or the Business Manager will contact the family about the obligation and will work with the family to find a solution.

Church Support
Contributing members of St. Thomas Aquinas parish are given a special tuition scholarship because they also support the church’s other ministries. In order to be considered for parishioner scholarship, families contribute their time, talent and treasure to the church. The special tuition scholarship also requires that at least one parent in the family be a practicing Catholic and that the child or children who are students in the school be baptized and participating in the sacramental life of the parish.

Financial Aid
Funding for financial aid comes from a variety of sources at STA. Students may qualify for the Indiana Choice Scholarship (voucher), STA SGO scholarship, active parishioner scholarship or additional financial assistance. Funding for the additional assistance comes from the Alma Mocas Endowment, the Shors Endowment and from a special collection taken at the beginning of Catholic Schools Week each year.

Applications for financial assistance will be done on-line through Smart Tuition.

Attendance

Attendance
Regular attendance is essential to a student’s success in school. Most subjects are taught in sequence, requiring the understanding of each concept in the order of its presentation. Frequent absenteeism creates a genuine hardship for a student and is regarded as a very serious problem.

According to Indiana State Law, children may not be absent from school except in cases of illness or emergency. Prior to 9:00 a.m., parents are required to call or e-mail the school office to report an absence. On the e-mail, copying to the classroom teacher is also appropriate.

A vacation day during the school year is strongly discouraged. However, if this occurs, no assignments will be given prior to the trip. Please do not request schoolwork early from your child’s teacher. It is the responsibility of the students and parents to confer with the homeroom teacher upon return to obtain the required work. A reasonable length of time will be given for make-up work (see individual classroom rules for specifics). Please notify the principal, the school office, and homeroom teacher one week prior to the absence by note or by e-mail.
Doctor and Dentist Appointments
Please make every effort to schedule doctor and dentist appointments outside of school hours. When this is not possible, students will be excused for these special appointments. The parent must sign the child out in the office and the student must sign him/herself back in upon returning.

Arrival and Dismissal
School begins at 7:55 a.m. K-4 students are dismissed at 3:00 p.m., and Grades 5-8 are dismissed at 3:05 p.m. Students should arrive in the school building by 7:45 to join morning assembly. Students may arrive at school no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and should leave for home by 3:15 p.m.

In respect of the teachers’ preparation time, parents are discouraged from making unannounced visits to their child(ren)’s classroom(s) before and after school. If parents are delivering lunches left at home, please leave them in the school office with the school secretary so classroom activities are not interrupted.

Parents are asked to follow these guidelines when arriving at school:

THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT IS A NO CELL-PHONE-ZONE. PLEASE DO NOT EVER USE YOUR CELLPHONE WHILE DRIVING IN THE PARKING LOT.

Enter the parking lot through the Illinois Street gate. The first car should stop three (3) car lengths past the main school door where marked on the pavement. Please be ready to let your child(ren) out immediately. Exit the parking lot through the 46th Street gate by making a right turn only.

In the afternoon, the gates will be locked and the parking lot closed - park on the street or in the parking lot at the northeast corner of Illinois and 46th Streets. DO NOT BLOCK EITHER PARKING LOT EXITS. THESE ARE THE ONLY ACCESS POINTS TO THE SCHOOL IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

All students will be dismissed from the main Illinois Street school entrance only. (Exiting the school through the Kenwood Street exits is not allowed.) Walkers are to leave the school grounds promptly following dismissal. For safety reasons, children may cross only at the corner, and parents are asked to not cross the street in the middle of the block.

Clinical/Medication Administration
Illness or Injury
Parents will be contacted in case of illness or injury. School staff will temporarily care for a student pending a return to class or a release to home.

If emergency medical treatment is necessary, the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted per the emergency information on file in the school office. If those listed to contact are not available, the student will be taken to the emergency room at the hospital of choice listed in the emergency information.
Immunizations and Vaccinations
State law requires that children entering Kindergarten be immunized for a number of diseases. Please consult your health care provider for the appropriate immunization and provide a copy of your child’s immunizations to the school office.

Students transferring into the school in Grades 1 through 8 must provide proof of immunization. This immunization record must be on file in the school office before the transferring student may start classes at the school. When your child receives an update on immunizations, please request a Doctor’s note that should be given to the school so you child’s cumulative file can be brought up to date.

Non-prescription Medications
Non-prescription Medications can be self administered with adult supervision. Medicine must be sent from home with clear instructions and must be stored in the school office until needed. STA staff are not allowed to provide medication to students.

Prescription Medications
1. Parent/Guardian Release for Self-Administration of Medication form must accompany medications that are sent to school. This form gives the information needed to administer medications and is sent home during the first week of school or may be found on our Website.
2. Students in Grades 5 through 8 with an acute chronic health condition (such as asthma, diabetes or seizures), who are allowed by their parent(s) or guardian(s) to self-medicate, will be allowed to carry and self-administer medication prescribed by the student’s physician.
3. All other medications must be kept in the school office. The medication will be refrigerated if necessary. The school secretary or principal will self-supervise administration of these medications as instructed.
4. Prescription medications must carry a prescription label with the child’s name, drug identity, dosage instructions, doctor’s name and current prescription date.
5. All medications must be in the original containers.

Public Health Nurse
A public health nurse provided through the Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County is scheduled to contact the school weekly. He/she will arrange for annual vision and hearing tests in the appropriate grades. The nurse will be the school’s consultant when there is a question about immunization requirements, head lice, first aid procedures and other medical matters. Messages may be left for the nurse in the school office.

Code of Conduct
Archdiocese of Indianapolis Guideline for Catholic Schools on Respecting Persons
The good name, reputation and personal safety of each student, faculty and staff member is vitally important. In order to protect students, employees and the school itself, each student is expected to treat the good name and reputation of other students, school employees and the school with dignity and respect. Students may not engage in any activity
or conduct, either on campus or off campus, that is in opposition to this policy and/or inconsistent with the Catholic Christian principles of the school as determined by the school in its discretion. Any derogatory, slanderous, hostile or threatening remarks or actions directed toward any of the above by a student will be seen as a violation of this policy and will be viewed as an extremely serious matter, whether it is done physically, verbally or electronically through the use of home or school computer or by remote access during school time or after hours. Some examples include, but are not limited to, text messages, sexting, pornographic or sexual images, blogging, etc. Any individual found to have made or participated with others in making, repeating or forwarding any such remarks or actions will be subject to disciplinary action by the school up to and including expulsion/dismissal.

Disciplinary Policy of the St. Thomas School Commission

All St. Thomas students should expect to be treated with Christian kindness and forgiveness. Discipline is a tool for learning, not punishment. Students are expected to exhibit increasing self-discipline as they mature and parents and teachers should assist students in developing self-discipline. The Code of Conduct in the Handbook defines school-wide procedures designed to support and achieve the goals of the Vision and Mission Statements. The Code of Conduct should lay out a pattern of progressive discipline that will assist school staff and parents to work together to assist a child to moderate his or her behavior. While no comprehensive list of behavioral problems can be identified, the Code of Conduct should have sufficient examples to guide the principal in maintaining a productive learning environment.

St. Thomas Aquinas Code of Conduct

Introduction
While it is expected that the vast majority of interactions in our school community will be positive, the Code of Conduct is established to provide direction for teachers and parents when self-discipline fails. As directed by the disciplinary policy, the Code lays out a pattern of progressive discipline designed to assist school staff and parents to work together to assist a child to moderate his or her behavior. Each member of the school community (including administrator, staff, faculty, parents and students) is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and to the development of self-discipline in each child. The Code has sufficient examples to guide the principal in maintaining a productive learning environment. The principal may take action that is reasonably necessary to carry out school purposes, as outlined below.

The Role of the School Commission
The School Commission sets policy for the operation of the school and acts in an advisory capacity to the school principal. It does not take a role in the daily disciplinary actions of the school. The Commission Chair may serve in an advisory capacity for the principal on a confidential basis.
Definitions
1. Bullying can be, but is not limited to:
   - Emotional: Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting e.g. hiding books or threatening gestures.
   - Physical: Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
   - Racist: Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
   - Sexual: Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments or gestures.
   - Homophobic: Because of or focusing on the issue of sexuality
   - Verbal: Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors or teasing.
   - Cyber: All areas of Internet such as email or other social media misuse, mobile threats, text messaging or calls and misuse of associated technology e.g. camera and video facilities.

Objective of the St. Thomas anti-bullying policy:
Bullying means to ostracize a single person and push them to the fringe. It is wrong, dangerous, and it is the opposite from the teachings of Jesus. Children learn what they live so at St. Thomas we will do all we can to prevent it and address it if it does occur. A key element to bullying is a silent witness. All St. Thomas students are expected to stand up for victims of bullying and report bullying behavior immediately.

- St. Thomas does not allow bullying. Students are to show respect to all persons at all times.
- Bullying/harassment in any form is strictly prohibited. All reports of unwelcome, offensive or inappropriate behavior will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Students found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate corrective or disciplinary action which may include required assessment and counseling (at parents’ expense), detention, suspension or expulsion.
- Students are expected to report incidents at school or at a school related event to a teacher, staff member, coach, chaperone or administrator. Any incident should be reported promptly.

St. Thomas is committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment free from bullying and harassment. We are a place for all to learn, grow and lead.

2. Conduct Detention: A disciplinary action whereby the student is required to remain in school after regular school hours to do additional school or service work or for counseling. A conduct detention may impact the cooperation grade.

3. Suspension: Any disciplinary action that does not constitute an expulsion whereby a student is separated from school attendance for a period of not more than 10 school days. (This designation does not apply to forced absences due to illness, communicable diseases or parasites; or failure to comply with immunization requirements.)
4. **Exclusion:** A situation whereby the student is asked to temporarily or permanently leave the school voluntarily due to a deterioration of the relationship between the student and school personnel when the educational opportunities or safety of other students is jeopardized.

5. **Expulsion:** A disciplinary or other action whereby a student:
   a. Is separated from school attendance for a period exceeding 10 school days;
   b. Is separated from school attendance for the balance of the current semester or current year.

At the discretion of the principal, a student who has been expelled may be permitted to complete required examinations in order to receive credit for courses taken in the current semester or current year.

**Application of the Standard Discipline Rules**

The discipline rules, processes and consequences of the Code apply when a student is:
- On school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours, or at any other time when school is being used by a school group;
- Off school grounds at a school activity, function or event;
- Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function or event;
- Using property or equipment provided by the school;
- Using software technology or network that is ‘owned’ by St. Thomas.

**Standard Discipline Rules**

Disciplinary rules include provisions concerning education, parental involvement, reporting, investigation and intervention. Students are expected to:

- Follow responsible directions of school personnel in all educational settings;
- Refrain from disruptive behavior that interferes with the educational environment, including passing notes and talking in class;
- Arrive on time, including at the beginning of the day, after recess breaks and between classes;
- Adhere to the school dress code;
- Treat other people and their personal property with respect;
- Not engage in bullying, violence, fighting, or intimidation;
- Make an effort to complete all school assignments; and
- Perform assigned classroom chores.

**Classroom rules**

Prior to the start of the fall semester, each teacher will prepare a document describing his or her classroom rules. The principal will review and approve the document to ensure a general consistency across the school and that classroom rules fall within the school standards, including the dress code. The age of students and the preferences of individual teachers may impact the classroom rules. Both parents and students will receive a copy of the document during the first week of school, and any
changes to these rules by a teacher will be shared immediately with the principal, parents and students. Some classrooms may give a regular conduct grade. In these instances, the grade will be communicated to the parents along with an indication of what behaviors caused a lower grade. In any situation, parents are encouraged to discuss school behavior with their children.

Consequences and Process for violations of standard or classroom rules
A teacher or other school staff member who has students under his or her charge may take any reasonable action necessary to carry out educational functions. Consequences for violating standard and/or classroom rules are generally limited to loss of recess time, extra homework, seat reassignment, extra classroom chores or loss of privileges as well as reduction in the conduct grade. Point-, checkmark-, and reward systems may be used at the discretion of the classroom teachers as part of their standard classroom rules.

Repetitive negative behavior may require incremental consequences. In general, repeated violations of classroom rules, and violations of the school dress code can be expected to result in a conduct detention after school for 30 minutes. Bullying, fighting and property damage are generally considered to be more serious behavior problems and will start with more serious consequences.

More Serious Behavior Problems
More serious behavior problems are those which disrupt a student’s ability to learn, prevent other students from learning, exhibit disrespect for people and property or raise safety concerns within the school environment. Violations of classroom rules may rise to the level of more serious behavior problems when the behavior is repetitive and begins to interfere with students’ ability to learn or undermines a teacher’s ability to teach. When dealing with more serious behavior problems, teachers will notify the school principal and engage with the student’s parents.

Described below are sample offenses which may result in more serious disciplinary actions. Parents should always be promptly notified when this type of behaviors occur.

- Disrespect or bullying of others including written bullying, touching and intimidation;
- Lying and dishonest behavior;
- Cheating or plagiarism on a test or assignment (may result in loss of credit for the work plus a minimum of a conduct detention);
- Mistreatment or destruction of school books, classroom or school property or that of another;
- Fighting or physical assault;
- Stealing school property or the property of another student or of a teacher or staff person;
- Leaving school grounds without permission during the school day; and,
- Similar offenses.

Consequences and Process—Teacher Assessed
After first notifying the principal, the teacher will inform the student and the student’s parents that his or her conduct constitutes a more serious behavioral problem and that consequences will be assessed. The teacher will have 24 hours from the offense to assess a consequence and notify the student and the student’s parents of the consequence. If the consequence includes a conduct detention, the notification must include a proposed date for the consequence. The notification to the parent will include a return slip to the teacher acknowledging receipt of the information. If requested by the parents, a conference will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. If the teacher prefers to call the parents directly, he or she may do so, but only after the principal is informed of the intended call.

Teacher-assessed consequences for violation of these more serious behavioral problems may include detention, grade reduction, extra work assignments and participation limits for field trips and extra-curricular activities. Repeated violations should result in a parent, teacher and principal conference and additional consequences. If the teacher feels the situation warrants a more severe consequence, she/he will review the situation with the principal.

Consequences and Process—Principal Assessed
Regarding any incident involving a more serious behavior problem or repeated negative behavior, the principal may review the situation and determine, after consultation with the teacher, whether a less or more severe consequence is warranted. Again, the parents are to be notified within 24 hours of the offense and the principal shall include a written statement to the parent or guardian of the student describing the student’s misconduct and the action planned by the principal. Parents may be given time to plan for detentions or out of school suspensions upon request to the principal. A conference with the parents is strongly recommended.

Principal assessed consequences include:
- Detention (1-5 days)
- In-school suspension
- Out of School suspension (1-3 days)

Situations Leading to Longer Suspensions, Expulsion or Exclusion
A fifth detention in a quarter may result in an in-school suspension. Repeated disruptive behavior or extreme behavior which prevents the educational mission of the school from being carried out may require suspension. Suspensions will result in an automatic conduct grade reduction for the quarter and may result in a reduction of credit for any homework due during the suspension. However, homework assignments must still be completed. Tests scheduled during a suspension will be ‘made up’ following the rules for ordinary absences. If suspensions have resulted from repeated offenses, a behavior contract and family meeting with the social worker should be strongly considered.

In general, the approach to discipline will be one of progressive action and incremental consequences with regular communication with parents and will afford all parties an opportunity to assist the student in moderating his or her behavior. When useful, the principal will take advantage of the Office of Catholic Schools for
advice. Extreme behavior and progressive discipline may lead to longer suspensions or even expulsion. Suspension, exclusion, or expulsion from the school are to be used rarely and preferably only after progressive discipline with parental involvement has been utilized.

Before making a decision about a suspension longer than 3 days, the consultation process should be followed and a Fair Process meeting should be afforded to the family. After that, the principal may take the following disciplinary actions:

- Suspension (4-10 school days)
- Exclusion
- Expulsion

**Emergency/Safety Situations**

In an emergency or for the safety of the school and/or its students, a student may be temporarily removed from the school without consulting parents or pastor. If needed, police, fire and medical assistance will be sought. Being sent home under these circumstances does not automatically qualify as a suspension. As soon as possible after an emergency removal, the pastor must be informed and consulted about the circumstances under which the student may be allowed to return to school. The Archdiocese Office of Catholic Schools may be informed by the Principal and consulted about the best approach to resolving the student’s situation. In cases where an emergency caused a student to be sent home, progressive discipline may not have been possible; however, a Fair Process meeting with the student and parents should be held as soon as possible to discuss the issues and appropriate actions and/or consequences. (See Fair Process.)

The following are examples of behavior which might lead to an emergency removal:

- Endangering oneself or another;
- Bringing a firearm, deadly weapon or other destructive device to school;
- Setting a fire; or
- Using, selling or bring illegal drugs to school
- Similar disruptive behaviors

**Fair Process**

There are three times when a Fair Process meeting must occur: a) Any time a student is removed from school on an emergency basis; b) before a student is suspended for more than 3 days; c) before an expulsion or exclusion. In addition, if a family chooses, they may request such a meeting because a suspension of 1-3 days has been assessed.

Any time the principal is considering consequences which require a fair process hearing, the principal should consult the pastor and/or the Office of Catholic Schools (OCS). It is expected that such situations will arise very rarely.

A Fair Process meeting must provide the student a written or oral statement of the allegations against the student. If the student denies the allegations, a summary of
the evidence is to be provided to the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). The student must be allowed an opportunity to explain his or her conduct. This is normally followed by written notice of the decision to suspend or expel the student or the announcement of an alternate decision. The written notice indicates that the student or parent may request the opportunity to have the decision reviewed by the pastor.

If the student was removed under emergency circumstances any conditions for return to school must be presented. When an emergency removal has take place, the Fair Process meeting must be scheduled as soon as reasonably possible after the student’s removal from school.

No matter the circumstances which lead to such a meeting, the primary considerations should be the best ways to help a student improve behavior balanced by the needs of other students and the school’s mission to educate. If a family is offered such a meeting and declines to schedule it, the family forfeits all rights administratively to contest and appeal the suspension or expulsion.

Communications/Internet

Communications
Parents and guardians are encouraged to communicate with teachers and other staff. Parents may speak with or leave voice mail for any staff member by calling 255-6244. Voice mailboxes are checked daily. Parents may also contact staff by email. Email addresses are comprised of the first initial of the first name, the last name, and “staindy.org.” For example, Rod Smith’s email is rsmith@staindy.org. Parents may also leave notes for any staff member.

On Friday or the last school day of most weeks the school newsletter, School Scoops, will be published. The newsletter is the primary method of keeping parents informed of upcoming events and other items of interest and importance. It is available on the website: www.staindy.org/school-scoops-2

Computers
A variety of technology (laptops, iPads, e-readers, interactive white boards, etc.) is available in each classroom as well as multiple computers in the science lab. In addition, there is a computer lab on the second floor. Grades K-5 have assigned times in the computer lab and receive instruction in computer technology. Internet access is given only to students whose parents have signed the Technology/Internet Agreement (form sent home the first week of school or is available on the website). Students who violate the Internet User Agreement (signed at the beginning of the school year) will forfeit their computer privileges.

Bring Your Own Device
The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy allows students in Grades 7 & 8 to bring many of their own technology devices to school for use in our classrooms. STA strongly encourages 7th & 8th graders to purchase Chromebooks for the purpose of classroom integration. However, laptops, iPads, netbooks and cell phones with browsing capabilities for educational
purposes only are allowed for incorporation into classroom activities. There is limited tech
support for devices other than Chromebooks. Similar to other personally owned items, the
school is not liable for the loss, damage, misuse, or theft of personally owned devices
brought to school.

Please note that students are not required to bring outside technology to school. Students
will be able to utilize some school equipment.

For students in grades K-7: Ipods, cell phones and other personal technology devices
must remain in backpacks and may only be used with the permission of a member of the
staff.

Curriculum, Academics, and Grades

Curriculum Standards
St. Thomas Aquinas School is an accredited school by the Indiana Department of Education
and Advanced Ed. As such, STA incorporates the Indiana Academic Standards for instruction
at each grade level. Teachers have a wide-range of strategies, methods and resources to
meet and exceed these standards. In addition, we offer diverse and challenging enrichment
activities.

Middle School (6th, 7th & 8th Grades)
Students move from classroom to classroom throughout the day in middle school. Their
classes may be divided into sections to allow instructors to work with smaller groups in the
basic classes and to allow for multiple levels of instruction in math and English/writing.
Middle school students operate under a block schedule with longer classes meeting every
other day.

Various assessments as well as teacher recommendation will determine initial academic
groups. Teachers may recommend that students move into a different group at the end of
any grading period in order to provide the most suitable instruction for each child. Teachers
will confer with parents about changes in academic groups.

Foreign Language
Spanish is part of the standard curriculum in Grades K-8.

Special Classes
Saint Thomas School provides several classes designed to enhance the curriculum for its
students. Art, music, physical education, library, computers and foreign language are
considered “specials.” In general, specials are not offered every day to each student, but
meet two to three times weekly. The schedule for offering these classes is determined at
the beginning of each school year, and parents will be notified of the schedule.

Religion
All Saint Thomas students (including non-Parishioners & non-Catholics) receive regular
instruction in religion and attend Mass weekly and on Holy Days. Each grade has several
opportunities each year to assist in planning the Mass, and teachers encourage each child to participate. Please check the STA Google Calendar for the specific Masses for each grade. Instruction for First Communion is handled by the Religious Education Coordinator and a designated teacher. Students participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least twice per year during school hours. It is the responsibility of the parents to see that their children regularly attend Sunday Mass.

**Differentiated Learning Program (DLP)**
St. Thomas School employs learning specialists whose expertise includes providing instruction for learners who have accelerated academic talents, learning differences, academic challenges and emotional needs. The learning specialists also serve as advisors to the classroom teachers and the parents.

Students in grades K-4 have a unique opportunity to work with a variety of instructors in the classroom. In various skill blocks throughout the week, students are challenged at their level (support, grade-level or advanced). This occurs during small group instruction and center activities. These groups are flexible to allow students to move at their own pace as assessed by the educators.

Students in grades 5-8 are assigned to their literature, English and mathematics classes based on their needs. There are support, grade-level and advanced groups available.

**Resource Program** - An educational plan is created for each student in Resource based upon psycho-educational testing, observations, and parent/teacher conferences (IEP/ICEP plans). This plan is then used to devise an educational program for small group instruction that best fits the student’s needs.

**Special Programs**
The curriculum at Saint Thomas is enhanced in many ways. Some parts of the curriculum require participation in programs that take place outside of the normal school hours. These include, but are not limited to:
- Advent Program (Music)
- Dance Program (PE)
- Speech competitions (English)
- Music Programs (Spring Musical)
- Ruth Lilly Life Begins (Health - grade 5)
- Camp Tecumseh (Religion - grade 7; Social Studies - grade 8))

Saint Thomas faculty expects that families will make every effort to ensure their children attend these traditional activities. The Faculty may include these activities in their grades for the courses indicated and not attending may impact a student’s grade.

**Speech**
St. Thomas develops strong speech and oral communication skills, which culminate in junior high with speech competitions and an original oration, presented as part of eighth-grade graduation requirements. Our speech team has a history of successful competition.

**Enrichment**
During school hours, St. Thomas students at every grade level may expect to have many opportunities for learning outside the classroom through field trips and other enrichment activities. Trips to the theater, Indianapolis Zoo/White River Gardens, Children’s Museum, and Indiana State Museum are among the ways curricular work is enhanced. Artists and guests also visit the school.

The costs of a majority of these programs are supported by the Parents’ Association Enrichment Committee. (See Tuition and Fees or Parents’ Association)

Field Trips
Field trips within the city and to nearby points of interest are scheduled by classroom teachers throughout the school year. These trips are designed to supplement different aspects of the classroom curriculum and to introduce students to community resources. Parents will receive notices of field trips in advance of the scheduled trip date. No child may attend a field trip without a signed field trip permission form on file in the office. For the safety of the children, telephone calls and handwritten permission notes will not be accepted. A copy of the official field trip form may be found on the school website or is available in the school office. Faxed permission forms will be accepted.

Parents are invited to attend field trips with their children as drivers and helpers. Siblings may NOT attend because their presence would invalidate our school insurance. Proof of automobile insurance, a valid driver’s license, completion of the Archdiocesan Safe and Sacred program as well as a background check are required and must be on record in the school office for all field trip drivers. You may access the Safe and Sacred training site by going to https://safeandsacred-archindy.org/login/index.php. Volunteers are assets at St. Thomas Aquinas and always welcome. In order to make the most of our opportunities to include parents in school activities, we have developed guidelines for adults who volunteer on field trips. (Please see the Volunteer section of this handbook.) Drivers may NOT make stops between STA and the field trip destination for any reason other than an emergency. Chartered buses may be used for distant field trips.

Participation in field trips is a privilege for St. Thomas students. Students may lose the privilege of attending a field trip if they fail to meet academic (including having missing assignments) and/or behavioral requirements (see Code of Conduct). Parents have the right to refuse to allow their children to participate in a field trip.

NOTE: Teachers are not allowed to transport students in their own vehicle at any time.

Academics

Academic Expectations
St. Thomas School, in keeping with our Catholic/Christian beliefs, expects all students to use their God-given gifts and talents to the best of their ability.

Report Cards
Students in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd Grades will receive a standards-based report card with the following achievement scale:

- **E** - Exemplary Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts and consistently applies and extends them above grade level.
M - Mastery Demonstrates an understanding of key concepts and consistently applies them at grade level.

P - Partial Mastery Demonstrates partial understanding of key concepts and/or inconsistently applies them at grade level.

N - Non-mastery Demonstrates little understanding of key concepts and/or rarely applies them at grade level without support

**It is important to know that this scale does not translate to the traditional A-F scale.**

Students in 3rd Grade through 5th Grade will receive a standards-based report card with the traditional percentage grading scale as shown below.

Students in 6th Grade through 8th Grade will receive a traditional report card with the traditional percentage grading scale as shown below.

**Grades**

**Grading Scale and Index (3rd - 8th Grade)**

Students are graded based upon a 4.0 index system.

Grades are earned for their work and efforts as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any requests for grade clarifications must be made in writing to the teacher within one week of the grade being posted in the Jupiter on-line grade reporting.

**Honor Roll**

The Honor Roll is a special recognition for academic achievement. It is based on GPA, which is calculated by averaging each grade received in the core subjects along with a combined average grade of the special area subjects. All specials are averaged into one grade. Then all core subjects plus the overall special grade are averaged together. (A+, A, A- = 4.0; B+, B, B- = 3.0; C+, C, C- = 2.0; D+, D, D- = 1.0)

**Honor Roll** Minimum GPA of 3.0 with no Ds or Fs
High Honors: Minimum GPA of 3.5 with no Ds or Fs
Class Honors: Perfect 4.0

Honor Roll recognition begins in Sixth Grade.

Extracurricular Activity Eligibility
Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to: athletics, after school social activities, Student Council, and Youth Ministry social activities such as dances, ski trips, etc.

If a student is absent from school, the student may not participate in extracurricular activities on the day of the absence.

Any St. Thomas student who has an “F” in any class or more than one “D” during the grading period is ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities until he or she has brought the grade up (or at the principal’s discretion). Additionally, students with excessive missing work may be excluded from extracurricular activities.

Conferences
Parent-teacher conferences are important to establish communication and are scheduled for all students at the end of the first quarter. First Quarter report cards are discussed at the November conference. Parents and teachers may request a teacher conference at any time; parents should contact the individual teacher to arrange the meeting.

Homework
Homework is important. It provides practice and drills that reinforce classroom learning and provides opportunities for independent study, research and creative thinking. Parents can help their children by arranging a set time and quiet place for them to work and by seeing that assignments are completed. Praise and encouragement from parents are valuable. Students in grade 2-8 write their homework in assignment notebooks provided by the school.

Missing homework assignments may result in losing the privilege of attending field trips or participating in other school activities. Homework Club (Grades 6-8) meets three time per week after school from 3:00-4:00 pm. Students who have four or more missing assignments are required to attend Homework Club for the week, even if they have sports or other extracurricular commitments. During this time, a teacher supervises students working to make up the work they are missing.

Late Work
In an attempt to develop responsibility and pride in their work, we expect students to complete assignments on time unless there is an acceptable excuse, such as illness. (See individual classroom rules.)

Promotions and Retentions
Promotions and retentions are based on an evaluation of academic, physical, social and emotional growth. The primary reasons for considering retention are:
   a) physical or social immaturity.
b) indifference or lack of involvement on the part of a capable student.  
c) frequent or long absences and  
d) failure to pass core subject curriculum.

For any of the above reasons, retention may be recommended by administration and teachers, for the good of the student.

Testing
St. Thomas School administers the Indiana standardized achievement tests annually. Students in grades 3-7 who fail any portion of the standardized testing (I-STEP+) generally need additional assistance so as to not fall behind. STA highly recommends that these students attend summer school at a public school, or employ a formal tutor on a weekly basis.

Students in 3rd Grade must take the IREAD assessment. If a student does not pass, he/she is required to retake the assessment after a period of remediation. If a student is not successful in passing IREAD, he/she may move to 4th Grade but must work with 3rd Grade Reading curriculum (per Indiana Law).

Other internal assessments may be used as needed.

Emergency/School Cancellations
Delay, Cancellation and Early Close of School
Delay or cancellation of school takes place only during extraordinary circumstances, such as extreme weather conditions or equipment failure in the school, where a significant safety risk exists. Parents will receive an email and/or a text message with information about school closing. Please be sure to keep your contact information updated with the office. The STA Facebook page will also have the information. Local television stations (and their webpages) may provide emergency/cancellation information as well.

In the unusual circumstance when school must be closed before the scheduled end of the school day, parents/guardians will be contacted before students are released from the school.

Change of Emergency Information
It is very important for emergency and administrative reasons that the emergency information on file in the school office for every student is current. Parents/guardians must notify the school immediately of a change in the emergency information during the school year.

Financial/Fund Raising
School Fundraisers
St. Thomas offers a number of curricular enhancements which are supported financially through fund-raising activities. The Parents’ Association conducts the fund-raisers.
The required Trash Bag Sales takes place each fall. The Parents’ Association (PA) manages the proceeds for the “enrichment” programs. The cost of enrichment activities (such as guests to the school, field trips, etc.) are covered through the PA, and the PA matches the cost of field trip enrichment activities. In order to ensure enough funds are available, students are expected to sell at least 20 rolls of trash bags. No family will be required to sell more than 50 rolls.

General School Information

Additional School Services: Speech, Occupational, Physical Therapists; Social Worker
Therapists: St. Thomas does not have its own therapists, but these professionals from Indianapolis Public Schools are available. If any parent feels his or her child may need developmental help, please contact the child’s teacher to initiate the process through Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS).

Social Worker: A school social worker is at St. Thomas two days a week under a contract with Catholic Charities. Students may be seen one time to assess a situation before a parent contact is made.

Middle School students may refer themselves, and a parent contact will not be made unless the Social Worker deems it necessary. If you do not want your child to receive the social worker’s services, please notify the office in writing. Referrals to the social worker can come from teachers, administration, parents, or the students themselves.

The social worker also consults with teachers or parents upon request. On occasion, the social worker meets with small groups of students from each class or may make presentations to the whole class.

Aftercare
After-school care is available until 6 p.m. on the days that school is in session. Miss Johanna’s Child Care Service, an independent agency, provides the after school care at our facility. A signed agreement with Miss Johanna must be in place, and payments are made directly to her. mjccs.llc@gmail.com Information is available at www.staindy.org/after-school-care

Athletics
St. Thomas provides physical education for all students as part of the curriculum. The parish provides a sports program for students in second through eighth-grade. The athletic competitions are sanctioned by the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and are open to all parish children.

The purpose of the athletic program is to provide development for children. This program will be consistent with the goals of the school and provide for the development of physical skills, teamwork and leadership in a caring atmosphere.
A student participating in a sport must abide by CYO and St. Thomas School regulations. See Extracurricular Activity Eligibility for more information.

St. Thomas currently offers boys and girls basketball, co-ed soccer and track, girls and boys volleyball, and kickball. Students may participate in CYO sports not offered at St. Thomas at a neighboring parish with a signed waiver from the principal.

**Cell Phones**
Students in grades K-7 who bring cell phone to school must turn them off and leave them in their backpacks. Under no circumstances may students remove cell phones from their backpacks during the school day (7:30am-3:05pm) and then only after he/she has left school property.

8th grade students may carry their cell phones (off or silenced) on their person throughout the school day. Phones may be collected at the beginning of a class and are returned at the end. They may be used at the discretion of the teacher on duty and/or during Flex Time.

Personal technology being used at inappropriate times may be confiscated. Parents may be notified to retrieve the device from the Principal or School Office after a period of time.

**Dress Code and Uniforms**
A standardized dress code, using traditional school uniforms, fosters an atmosphere of school identity and pride, enhances neatness and decreases competition. Our uniform policy applies to all students in grades kindergarten through 8. Parents upon enrolling their child agree to support the rules and policies stated below.

All uniform clothing should be marked clearly with the student’s name to prevent lost items.

In order to reduce costs of uniform purchases, Parents’ Association collects used uniforms and provides an annual resale each fall.

**Grade K through 6 (both boys and girls)**

**Shirts:**
- Collar or turtleneck - no cowl necks or Under Armour®
- Knit material, plain - no logo allowed
- Red or white
- Long or short sleeve
**NOTE:** Shirts must not be oversized (or tight).

**Pants:**
- Uniform style navy blue pant
- Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix (no denim)
**NOTE:** Cargo pants, jean style, baggy, saggy, skintight pants, leggings/jeggings are never allowed.
Shorts (1\textsuperscript{st} day of school - November 1; April 1 - end of school year)
- Uniform style navy blue shorts
- Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix
- Walking length

**NOTE:** Cargo or jean style, baggy, saggy, or tight shorts are not allowed on uniform days.

Jumpers (may be worn by girls in Grades K through 4):
- STA plaid
- Appropriate length is at the knee. If a student is wearing a jumper that is too short, a parent contact will be made. If the infraction occurs again, the student may not be allowed to wear a jumper for the rest of the school year. Girls are encouraged to wear shorts under their jumpers for the sake of modesty.

Skirts and/or skorts (may be worn by girls in Grades 5 through 8):
- STA plaid
- Appropriate length; skirts cannot be rolled at waist. The acceptable length is at the knee. If a student is wearing a skirt that is deemed improper by a faculty member, then that student may be given a written warning. If the infraction occurs again, the student will not be allowed to wear a skirt for the rest of the school year. Girls are encouraged to wear shorts under their skirts for the sake of modesty.

**Middle School - Grades 7 - 8 only**
- White or royal blue STA logo collared shirt
- Long or short sleeved polo style
- Uniform khaki pants
- Uniform khaki walking shorts (1\textsuperscript{st} day of school - Nov. 1; Apr. 1 - end of school year)

**NOTE:** Cargo pants, jean style, baggy, saggy, skintight pants, leggings/jeggings are never allowed. Shirts must not be oversized (or tight).

**Belts:**
Belts in solid, dark colors may be worn with pants and shorts.

**Grades K through 8 (both boys and girls)**

**Sweaters:**
Solid navy or red only in crew neck or cardigan style may be worn.

**Sweatshirts:** Only the cobalt/royal blue with the red logo OR the navy fleece with the red logo will be allowed during the school day (including PE days). Both of these items are available through Schoolbelles and Lands End. Please reserve any other STA sweatshirts as spirit wear to be worn to athletic events, extra-curricular activities or specific “spirit days”.
4th Quarter - 8th Graders may wear the uniform (official, non athletic) sweatshirt of the high school they have chosen to attend.

**Socks/tights/leggings:**
Socks must be worn at all times and must be crew, anklet or knee-length in red, navy, black, or white SOLID colors. Soccer socks are NOT acceptable uniform socks. Girls may wear plain navy, red or black tights or ankle length leggings (with no lace) under their jumpers or skirts.

**Shoes:**
Shoes must be neat, clean *athletic style rubber soled* shoes. Boots may not be worn during school hours.

**Undershirts:**
A plain, white T-shirt may be worn as long as the sleeves do not extend below the sleeve of the uniform shirt or the bottom of the T-shirt does not hang below the hem of the shirt. Girls may also wear plain white (no lace) camisoles that do not show below the hem of the uniform shirt, and the uniform shirt is buttoned appropriately. Colored camisoles, T-shirts and shirts with printing on them may NOT be worn underneath the uniform shirt.

**P.E. Class:**
The regulation physical education short and shirt (gold St. Thomas t-shirt - only) must be worn (Grades 1-8). They must be purchased at Schoolbelles. Gym shoes without black marking soles and socks with visible cuffs are required. When shorts are not allowed, sweat pants must be worn. Please label your child’s clothing so that it can be returned if it is lost. If for some reason the PE uniform is not available, students must wear their *regular uniform pants and shirt*.

**Non-Uniform Days:**
This is a privilege. Students should enjoy these days but they should always dress appropriately for school. Unless it is designated as a “Dress-Up Day”, students may wear jeans, shorts (1st day of school - Nov. 1; Apr. 1 - end of school year), skirts/culottes, dresses or slacks. Leggings/jeggings are only allowed if worn with a mid-thigh or longer top. Inappropriate clothes include running and short-shorts, cut-offs, tank tops, mini skirts, torn clothing, or clothing with inappropriate graphics or words.

**Students Council Non-Uniform Days:**
The Student Council may also sponsor non-uniform days for $1 to raise money for various charities and all school activities. Appropriate clothing for these days is described in Non-Uniform Days.

**Jewelry:**
Jewelry if worn should not be valuable and must be appropriate to the school uniform. Girls may wear only one pair of moderately sized earrings (no dangling earrings). Boys may not wear earrings.

**Hair:**
Hair should be clean and well groomed at all times. Boys’ hair length may not be longer than collar length. Hats and head coverings are not allowed at any time.

**Fingernails:**
Fingernails should be well groomed, and at an appropriate length as to not be a safety hazard. Only natural or neutral colored nail polish is permitted at school.

**Make-up:**
Students may not wear or bring make-up to school.

**Body Painting/Piercing:**
Tattoos and body piercing are not permitted. Drawing and painting on bodies are also not permitted.

**Parents’ Association (PA)**
According to the Parents’ Association by-laws, the purpose of the organization shall be to provide support to the principal and teachers, to provide communication between home and school, to provide enrichment opportunities for parents and children, to provide family support in times of crisis, and to provide financial assistance to St. Thomas Aquinas School as deemed necessary by the association and the principal.

In less formal language, PA is a way for parents to work with each other and the school to enhance the school for the students, teachers and families who use it. The Annual Trash Bag Sale is our only mandatory fundraising endeavor and endows the majority of PA’s budget. The Parents’ Association not only funds enrichment programs (field trips, assemblies, etc.) but also provides funds for a wide range of school needs (classroom supplies, media needs, science lab supplies and Teacher Appreciation). PA also provides emergency tuition support (applications are conducted through the principal and are confidential). PA supports many capital improvements within the school (renovation of the library, schoolyard Habitat Garden and acoustic upgrades within the gym). All school families are members of the Parents’ Association.

PA operates through a Board composed of its officers and committee chairs. The Board meets monthly. Meetings are open to all and are advertised in School Scoops and on the website. The Parents’ Association also conducts three (3) general meetings a year and strongly encourages everyone to attend. Family involvement at all levels is encouraged. Committees are: Ways and Means, Teacher Appreciation, Enrichment, Family Support, Hospitality, and Public Relations. Volunteer opportunities are always available.

**Library**
Our library is located on the second floor. Grades K-6 have a weekly library period. The librarian coordinates reading incentive programs throughout the year.

The library collection is regularly updated and expanded. Books are chosen either for their educational or recreational value. A variety of audio-visual materials are available for teachers to use in the classrooms. The annual book fair, conducted by the Parents’ Association, is the main fund-raiser for the library.

There may not be any food or drink in the Library.
**Off-Limit Areas**
The Little Playground and the Parish Center/facilities are off limits to unsupervised students before and after school.

The phone in the Parish kitchen may **not** be used by students.

**Parties/Social Activities**
All classroom celebrations require prior approval of the teacher who will check with the principal. Students who wish to bring a simple treat on their birthday should provide enough for everyone in the class. The treat will be distributed at a time designated by the teacher. Students may not take treats to teachers or students in other classrooms. Please check in advance to avoid days with special activities.

Since feelings are easily hurt, we ask families to be considerate when it is impossible to invite all classmates to an event at your home. Invitations for such parties **may not** be distributed at school, and we ask that your child not discuss such party plans at school.

**Pictures**
School pictures are taken in the fall. Parents may choose to purchase a fall package, which will include a class composite. School uniforms must be worn for fall school pictures.

**Religion, Service Hours and Mass**
Being a Catholic school adds a spiritual dimension to all that we do. We seek to instill a love for God and each other, as well as to show respect for all by our actions and model how Jesus asked us to live. Our religion curriculum is provided by the Office of Catholic Schools for each grade. All students will participate in Religion classes, but only Catholic students will celebrate the Sacraments. St. Thomas School may offer retreat programs to students in connection with the Religion curriculum and spiritual development.

Helping others is a valued part of Christian life. We attempt to develop this generosity of spirit throughout the school and require our junior high students to perform service hours.

The school Mass is celebrated weekly on Wednesday at 8:05 a.m. in the church. We invite you to worship with us every week, but especially when your child’s class plans the liturgy and is participating in a special way. You are invited to sit with your child’s class when you come.

On Holy Days that occur during the school year, Mass will be moved to that day and celebrated at 8:05 a.m. with the parish community.

Please remember that this weekday Mass does not fulfill your Sunday obligation to go to Mass. It is presumed, according to Catholic faith, that every student will attend Mass each weekend with his or her family.

**Sacramental Preparation**
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish follows a family-centered approach to the sacraments, believing that parents should be the primary educators of their children. With the guidance of the
pastoral staff, Baptism, Eucharist and Reconciliation preparations are held at scheduled times, involving parents and children. Traditionally, Baptism is received as an infant and first Reconciliation and first Eucharist during second grade. Confirmation preparation is offered in high school. Parents of students new to St. Thomas who have not received these Sacraments are encouraged to call the Parish Office to make arrangements for their child.

**School Colors and Mascot**
St. Thomas' school colors are blue and gold, and our mascot is the tiger.

**Student Council**
The purpose of Student Council is to promote good citizenship, encourage a high standard of scholarship, develop a spirit of pride within our school, and contribute to the general welfare of the school and community. Members of Student Council (Grades 5-8) coordinate activities for St. Thomas throughout the school year.

**Traditions**
A number of traditions are observed each year. They may include:

- Advent Program, Grades K-6
- Art Show
- Camp Tecumseh, Grade 7, 8
- Catholic Schools Week
- Earth Week activities
- Engineering Challenge, Grade 8
- Junior Achievement BizTown, Grades 5, 6
- Faith partners, matching students in higher grades with those in lower grades
- Field Day
- Helping families and organizations through service
- May Ceremony and Crowning of Mary
- Partnering with our sister parish in Haiti

**Safety and Security**

**Emergency Information**
For each student, the following emergency information must be on file in the school office. Emergency Information forms are sent home at the start of each school year. Please complete the form and return it promptly to the school office.

*Parents/guardians must notify the school immediately of a change in the emergency information during the school year.*

**Emergency Drills**
Each classroom has a Safe School Handbook, a safety bag and a detailed escape plan posted inside the door.

A fire drill is conducted once a month. During a fire drill, each class has an escape route to a designated area that is a safe distance from the building. Tornado drills are conducted two
times a year. During a tornado drill, each class goes to a designated area within the building away from windows. All children kneel with their heads covered. A lock-down drill is conducted annually.

School/Classroom Visits
Any person visiting the school is required to report to the school office to sign in and obtain a visitor’s pass.

A parent is welcome to visit his/her child(ren)’s classroom(s) during the school year. To do so, a parent must call the school office and make an appointment so a visit does not conflict with testing or special area classes.

Other students visiting STA (such as from high school or another elementary/middle school) must have prior permission to visit and be with an adult supervisor. No “drop in” visits will be allowed.

Volunteers
Volunteers are necessary to accomplish some of the work undertaken by the school. In order to identify volunteers, a form is sent home at the beginning of every school year.

Volunteers are required to complete the Archdiocesan Safe and Sacred program which includes a background check, and sign a Code of Conduct form before volunteering. These must be on record in the school office. You may access the Safe and Sacred training site by going to https://safeandsacred-archindy.org/login/index.php. The training builds awareness of how to recognize and report physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child sexual abuse. The training is available in English and Spanish 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. It takes about 45 minutes to complete and can be done in parts. Each Safe and Sacred training certificate will bear a 3 year expiration date. Every 3 years, individuals will receive an email notification to retake the course in order to provide a refresher on what they have learned as well as additional information on how to keep children safe.

Upon completion of the Safe and Sacred program, a copy of the Certificate of Completion should be forwarded to the School Office.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis requires a background check on all volunteers who come in contact with the children of our parish and school. After the initial background check, one will be completed every three years.

The STA Business Manager receives the results of your background check. We will verify that the background check as well as the Safe and Sacred Certificate of Completion are in our possession before your volunteer duties begin.