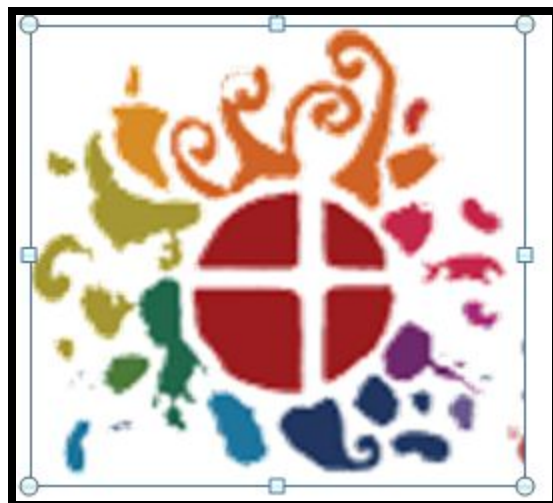


St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School



School Handbook
Effective August, 2020

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.

NOTE: The STA Reopening Plan supersedes some sections of this Handbook as long as we are in a pandemic situation (See Addendum)

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Admissions/Tuition and Fees

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 admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. STA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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:

- Preschool - 10 - 12
- Kindergarten – 24 (locked)
- First -third grades – 25
- 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 new/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. 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 Tuition to collect, record, and deposit tuition payments. Tuition payments may be made annually, by semester or over ten (10) months (July - April). Note: Preschool tuition is paid August- May.

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 and the Shors Endowment.

Applications for financial assistance will be done on-line through Smart Aid (smartaidforschools.com).

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. **Chronic Absenteeism is defined as a student missing 10% (18 days) or more of instructional days.** Students who are chronically absent are to be referred to social services and/or juvenile court, depending on age. The Indiana Department of Education flags a student's record when their absences reach 10 days for the school year.

Prior to 9:00 a.m., parents are required to call or email the school office to report an absence. On the email, 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 school work early from your child's teacher. It is the responsibility of the students and parents to confer with their homeroom teacher (or teachers) 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 email.

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 *(Please see the Addendum- page 33 - for August 2020 Drop off and Dismissal procedures.)*

Arrival: School begins at **7:45 a.m. with morning assembly**. Students may arrive at school no earlier than 7:30 a.m. Students are considered **tardy if not in their classrooms by 7:55.a.m.** Consequences for more than 5 tardies may be assessed. Classes start promptly at 8:00 a.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 instructions 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.

Drop-off Procedure

- Safely enter the parking lot through the Illinois Street gate and head to the drop off zone. **NO** entrance is allowed into the school parking lot through the 46th Street gate. Head either to the car line drop off zone or to a parking spot to walk your student into school.
- The car line drop off zone is from the "Drop Off Here" sign at the end of the sidewalk and the school entrance steps. Please pull all the way forward so that four (4) cars can drop off at a time. This is the **ONLY** area students may exit their vehicle if being dropped off in car line.
- All students when exiting their vehicle **MUST** do so on the **PASSENGER SIDE ONLY**. If your student(s) cannot exit on the passenger side of the vehicle, please park and walk your student(s) into school.
- **There is NO** drop off behind the sign stating, "No Drop Off Behind This Point".
- All students that get walked in by a parent **MUST** cross at the "Drop Off Here" sign.

- Once your student(s) has been dropped off in car line, safely exit the parking lot through the 46th Street gate making a **RIGHT TURN ONLY**.
- Please see the car line drop off diagram at the end of the school handbook on Page 33 if the STA Handbook.
- Please remember that the volunteers assisting with car line drop off are doing so because they care about the safety of every student, teacher, and parent at St. Thomas. If a volunteer informs you that you have not followed the guidelines stated in the School Handbook, which you as a parent have attested acknowledgment of, please do not argue with the volunteer, just follow the guidance given. Any constant and/or direct violations of the car line drop off guidelines will be passed on to the school principal for handling.

Walkers and Bikers: If your child walks or rides a bike to school, you must sign the Agreement Form (waiver of liability), which includes Internet Usage, Walker and Photo release. Please sign the appropriate places. This form may be found on our website under Parents > Online Payments and Forms. Bikes are parked on the west side of the school in the bike rack. Please make sure your child has a lock for his/her bike.

Dismissal: Preschool-4th grade students are dismissed at 3:00 p.m., and Grades 5-8 are dismissed at 3:05 p.m. Walkers should leave for home promptly after dismissal and no later than 3:15 p.m. Students may **NOT loiter** on the porch or ramp blocking foot traffic. Students not picked up by 3:15 p.m. will be sent to St. Thomas After Care and parents will be charged accordingly.

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.

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.

Rainy Day Dismissal: On rainy days, parents are asked to pick up their students in the gym by entering the North gym doors and exiting the South doors.. Please DO NOT wait in the hall outside the school office and in front of the doors because it blocks traffic - students and teachers attempting to follow dismissal procedures AND parents trying to leave the gym with students already collected. Walkers should leave the grounds immediately, not loitering on the porch or ramp. For the safety of our students, students may NOT walk through the parking lot unattended looking for their rides.

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 or as determined by emergency personnel.

Immunizations and Vaccinations

State law requires that children entering Kindergarten be immunized for a number of diseases. Please consult your healthcare 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 your 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 supervise self-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 detention may also be served during lunch and/or recess periods. A conduct detention may impact the cooperation grade /Successful Learner Traits on the Report Card.

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

NOTE: All behavior infractions and resulting consequences will be logged in Jupiter grades.

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 for Grades K-4 and up to 60 minutes for Grades 5-8. 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 extracurricular 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 may 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 taken 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 consideration 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 any staff member by calling 255-6244 and leaving a message with the office. Parents may also contact staff by email. Email addresses are comprised of the first initial of the first name, last name, and "staindy.org." For example, Rod Smith's email is rsmith@staindy.org. Parents may also leave notes in the school office 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/Technology

St. Thomas has invested heavily in classroom and mobile learning technologies. Understandably, technology is key to 21st century education and as such, leveraging digital technologies to improve student learning experiences is a key part in fulfilling the mission of St. Thomas. These learning opportunities allow students to learn by doing and to have ownership in their education.

A variety of technology (laptops, iPads, e-readers, interactive whiteboards, etc.) is available in each classroom. In addition, there is a Computer Lab on the second floor. Grades K-8 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 online on the website). Students who violate the Internet User Agreement (signed at the beginning of the school year) will forfeit their computer privileges.

Students in Grades 5-8 will have use of and be assigned St. Thomas owned Chromebooks on a 1:1 basis. These computers may not be taken home. Chromebooks assigned to students in Grades 5, 6 and 7 will be used through the students' 8th grade year. Students will be responsible for their computers and accept the costs of repairing the Chromebooks if damaged.

Other personally owned technology may be used only at the discretion of the classroom teachers/staff and should remain in students' backpacks. Again, the school is not liable for the loss, damage, misuse or theft of personally owned devices brought to school.

STA Repair/Replacement Policy

Digital Technologies such as laptops, tablets, etc. go through normal wear and tear in the process of daily use and sometimes need repair.

STA owned - student assigned Chromebooks (Grades 5-7). If the device is St. Thomas-owned and needs repair, students will consult with STA's IT representative/Tech Instructor. In conjunction with our outside consultant, a repair assessment will be made.

- If the Chromebook is still under warranty, STA will be responsible for the repair costs.
- If the Chromebook is not under warranty and is repairable, St. Thomas will make arrangements for the repair and assess the student a \$50 repair fee through Smart Tuition.
- If the Chromebook is damaged beyond repair, and it is determined by the student's teacher and Principal that the damage was preventable, the student must cover the cost of replacement (or loss). The student will be assessed a \$250 replacement fee through Smart Tuition.

If needed, loaner computers will be available to "check-out" in the Computer Lab.

The Internet/Technology User Agreement found on the **STA School Agreement form** must be signed before students are issued their computers.

Curriculum, Academics, and Grades

Curriculum

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.

Foreign Language

Spanish is part of the standard curriculum in Grades PreK-8.

Special Classes

Saint Thomas School provides several classes designed to enhance the curriculum for its students. Art, music, physical education, library, technology and foreign language are considered "specials." In general, specials are not offered every day to each student, but

meet one 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. Each classroom is frequently visited by the pastor. 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.

Resource Program - As needed, learning specialists work with IPS to create educational plans for students based upon psycho-educational testing, observations, and parent/teacher conferences (IEP/ICEP plans).

In addition, St. Thomas School employs teachers who provide instruction for learning differences, academic challenges and emotional needs. These teachers also serve as advisors to the classroom teachers and the parents.

Students in grades K - 4 have an opportunity to work with other licensed teachers in their classrooms, in addition to the homeroom teacher. During various language arts and math lessons throughout the week, students are placed in groups according to their abilities. This allows students to receive additional support as needed or enhancement of skills.

Students in Grades 7-8 are placed in Math classes appropriate to their ability concentrating on the grade level standards. As these standards are mastered, students are challenged to stretch and achieve higher standards.

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)
- 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 middle school 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 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 the 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. 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 are 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.

Grades/Report Cards

Jupiter Grades is the reporting system used to communicate student progress/achievement.

Students in **Kindergarten - 3rd Grades** will receive a standards-based report card with the following achievement scale:

E - Exemplary Demonstrates a deep and meaningful understanding of key concepts and consistently applies them at 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

X - Standards not assessed

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

Students in **4th and 5th Grades** 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.

Grading Scale and Index (4th - 8th Grade)

Students are graded based upon a 4.0 index system.

Grades are earned for their work and efforts as follows:

Grade	Minimum
A+	100%
A	97%
A-	93%
B+	92%
B	89%
B-	85%
C+	84%
C	79%
C-	76%
D+	75%
D	72%
D-	70%
F	69 - 0%

Any requests for grade clarifications must be made in writing to the teacher within one week of it 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 may include, but are not limited to: athletics, after school social activities, Student Council, Musicals, Speech contests, etc.

If a student is absent from school, the student may **not** participate in extracurricular activities on the day of the absence including practices (athletic, musical, etc).

The principal checks grades every two weeks. Any St. Thomas student who has an “F” in any class or more than one “D” is ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities including practices. The principal will contact the Athletic Director who will communicate with coaches. A student may earn their way back to being eligible by bringing 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 Fall 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 grades 2-8 write their homework in assignment notebooks provided by the school or a student provided book. Teachers in Grades 5-8 post Homework on Google Docs that are shared with parents and students.

Missing work: Missing homework assignments may result in losing the privilege of attending field trips or participating in other school activities. For Grades 6-8, a missing work list will be compiled every Sunday night. More than one missing assignment will result in the student being required to attend Homework Club during recess on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of that week from 11:25-12:00 PM. Students’ attendance at Homework Club will be logged in Jupiter, and frequent attendance may impact students’ performance on Successful Learning Traits (on the Report Card). Students can earn their way out of Homework Club early by completing missing work.

If a student receives an **Incomplete** in any subject on their report card, he/she will attend Homework Club until the missing work is turned in and the Incomplete is changed to a grade in Jupiter.

Students who are not required to attend, may optionally use Homework Club as a study hall.

Late Work

In an attempt to develop responsibility and pride in their work, it is expected that students 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 the 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 (ILearn) 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 closings. **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.***

eLearning

eLearning days provide schools with an option for continuing an instructional day away from traditional time limits and brick and mortar setting. This program has evolved into an engaging instructional model used in many Indiana schools to keep the sequence of learning going in spite of weather and other challenges.

eLearning days are considered part of our required 180 days of school. They may be scheduled (election days) or used in the rare event of school cancellations. Students will be expected to complete assignments that will be provided by their teachers.

Financial/Fund Raising

School Fundraisers

St. Thomas offers a number of curricular enhancements which are supported financially through fundraising activities. The Parents' Association conducts the fund-raisers. All fund-raisers must be approved by the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Finance Committee.

The required Trash Bag Sales takes place each fall. The Parents' Association (PA) manages the proceeds for "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.

After Care

St. Thomas Aquinas After Care is available until 5:30 p.m. on the days that school is in session. Preschool through 8th grade students are welcome to attend for an additional fee, billed through Smart Tuition. Supervision is provided by Mr. Arnold and 1-2 additional workers (based on number of children). All After Care employees have background checks, Safe & Sacred certifications and have attended STA training. Register at www.staindy.org/after-school-care Please check the Google Calendar for days that After Care is unavailable.

Athletics

St. Thomas Aquinas School 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 Aquinas School regulations. See Extracurricular Activity Eligibility for more information.

St. Thomas Aquinas School 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-6 who bring cell phones 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 exited school property. Phones may be confiscated by staff if used inappropriately.

7th and 8th Graders will place their cell phones in the designated location in their classrooms.

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 - polo style
- Long or short sleeve

NOTE: Shirts must not be oversized or tight

Pants:

- Uniform style navy blue pants
- Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix (no denim)

NOTE: Cargo pants, jean style, baggy, saggy, skintight pants, leggings/jeggings are never allowed. Torn pants are not acceptable and may not be worn to school.

Shorts (1st day of school - November 1; April 1 - end of school year)

- Uniform style navy blue shorts
- Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix
- Walking length (finger tip length with arms extended straight at sides)

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 of shorts/skirts must not be shorter than finger tips when arms are straight at the side. 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 shorts/skirts must not be shorter than finger tips when arms are straight at the side. 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 (finger tip length with arms extended straight at sides)
 - (1st day of school - Nov. 1; Apr. 1 - end of school year)
- NOTE: Cargo pants, jean style, baggy, saggy, skintight pants, leggings/jeggings and torn pants are never allowed. Shirts must not be oversized (or tight).

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". NOTE: Torn sweatshirts (including cuffs, pockets) may not be worn.

4th Quarter - 8th Graders may wear the uniform (official, non athletic) sweatshirt of the high school they have chosen to attend.

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

Socks/tights/leggings:

Socks must be worn at all times. 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 uniform 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 (gray St. Thomas t-shirt - only) must be worn (Grades 1-8). They must be purchased at Schoolbelles or Lands End. Gym shoes without black marking soles and socks with visible cuffs are required. When shorts are not allowed, sweatpants 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/shorts and shirt. NOTE: Torn PE clothing is not allowed.

Non-Uniform Days:

This is a privilege. Students should enjoy these days and 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. If leggings are worn, **the shirt worn must be fingertip length (mid thigh) or longer when arms are straight at the side.** Out of Uniform days are a privilege and may be lost if students choose not to follow the Uniform policy. Inappropriate clothes include running and short-shorts, cut-offs, spaghetti strap/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. Only one pair of moderately sized earrings (no dangling earrings) may be worn.

Hair:

Hair should be clean, well groomed and kept out of the student’s eyes at all times. Hats and head coverings/scarves are not allowed at any time.

Fingernails:

Fingernails should be well groomed, and at an appropriate length as to not be a safety hazard.

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.

Library

Our library is located on the second floor. Grades PreK-6 have a weekly Library period. Students in Grades 7 and 8 have the opportunity to visit the Library to check out books. 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.

If a student loses a Library book, the cost to replace the book is the responsibility of the student. The replacement cost may be paid for directly to the Librarian or will be billed in Smart tuition.

No food or drink is allowed 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.

Parents' Association (PA)

The Parents' Association provides support to the principal and teachers, communication between home and school, enrichment opportunities for parents and children, and financial assistance to the school as deemed necessary by the association and the principal.

The Annual Trash Bag Sale is our only mandatory fundraising endeavor and endows the majority of PA's budget. The PA funds enrichment programs (eg., field trips, assemblies), family/classroom support activities (eg., Room Parent activities, Grandparents' Day, Art School) and school needs (eg., innovative classroom supplies and Teacher Appreciation).

All school families are members of the PA and are encouraged to get actively involved. The PA conducts three (3) general meetings a year. Meetings are open to all and are advertised in *School Scoops* and on Jupiter. Committees are: Ways and Means, Teacher Appreciation, Enrichment, Family Support, Hospitality, and Marketing. Volunteer opportunities are always available.

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 during instruction times. 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 8:15 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 may be moved to that day and celebrated at 8:15 a.m. with the parish community.

Please remember that this weekday Mass does not fulfill your Sunday obligation to attend 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 | Spring Musical, Grades 5-8 |
| Art Show | Variety Show |
| Camp Tecumseh, Grades 7, 8 | 8 th Grade Trip |
| Catholic Schools Week | P.E. Dance Program |
| Earth Week activities | Speech Contests, Grades 7, 8 |
| Engineering Challenge, Grade 8 | Science Fair - Grade 7 |
| Junior Achievement BizTown, Grades 5, 6 | Robotics |
| Faith partners, matching students in
higher grades with those in lower grades | Various food drives |
| Field Day | May Ceremony/Crowning of Mary |
| Helping families and organizations through service | 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.

STA conducts fire, tornado, earthquake and lockdown drills at various times throughout the year in compliance with State law.

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.

Right to Amend

STA reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents through electronic communication.

ADDENDUM to St. Thomas Aquinas Student Handbook (8/2020)

STA REOPENING PLAN AUGUST 2020 (8/13/2020)

The purpose of this document is to outline the reopening plan of St. Thomas Aquinas School in August 2020. We continue to be a strong community. Our mode of learning will be a bit different, but you can expect our dedicated teachers to work to ensure that every student is successful.

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.

Preventative Measures

Self Screening

Each morning parents must assess their child's health before dropping them off at school for COVID-19 symptoms. ([Symptoms of COVID-19](#)). Students will have their temperatures taken prior to entering the building.

- If your child is not feeling well, they may not come to school.
- If your child has a temperature of 100.4 or greater, they may not return to school until fever free for 72 hours.
- For every absence or late arrival, parents must complete the **Absence Form** that is found under the Parent tab on the STA website by 9am. (coming soon)

- If a child is sent home with a fever, STA will document that temperature and do a followup temperature check upon their return to school.
- A doctor's note is required if a student returns to school prior to the 72 hour timeline mentioned above.
- If there is a positive case of COVID-19 within a family, parents are expected to contact STA immediately. The Marion County Health Department (MCHD) will be contacted,
and STA will follow MCHD recommendations. (Confidentiality will be maintained.)

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis Student Health and Safety Plan must be signed and dated prior to the start of school.

All STA Staff is required to assess their health each morning including the taking of temperatures. Documentation will be maintained recording teachers' daily health.

Staying Home When Sick

It is essential that the STA Community work together to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 at school while still providing a quality education. St. Thomas has the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure (IC 20-34-3-9). In addition, the MCHD may exclude students and/or order them to quarantine. (IC 16-41-9-9-1.6). STA will make every effort to identify symptoms of COVID-19 and respond appropriately.

Medical Inquiries

Federal law typically limits the type of medical inquiries that can be made, but because of the pandemic, schools have permission to make inquiries that otherwise would not be allowed.

- If a student is reported ill, STA may ask the parent if the student is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
- If an employee is ill, they may also be asked about signs of COVID-19.
- If a person is obviously ill with symptoms of COVID-19, STA may exclude the person from school property.

Even without symptoms, if a student or employee has recently had contact with a person with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, has someone in their home being tested for COVID-19, or has recently traveled from somewhere considered to be a "hot spot" by the CDC, STA may exclude such person from the school building and recommend they self-quarantine for 14 days.

Exposure/Test Positive

Students and employees will be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact (*defined as being within 6 feet of a person for more than 15 minutes unmasked*) with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, or, in some cases, after returning from travel in certain places.

Please note: A student or employee should quarantine if someone in their home tests positive for COVID-19.

If a student/staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the principal (nvaldiserri@staindy.org) must immediately be notified (even if it's the weekend). The principal will utilize seating charts and teacher advice to determine "close contacts". The principal will contact the Marion County Health Department, the Archdiocese and the parents of the close contacts and advise them of the contact and that the Marion county Health Department will be contacting them. Marion County Health Department will guide further action.

Return to School after Exclusion

Once a student or employee is excluded from school, they may return if they satisfy the recommendations of the CDC.

As of 8/1/20, those guidelines are:

Untested - persons who have not received a test proving or disproving the presence of COVID-19 but experience symptoms may return if the following conditions are met:

- They have not has a fever for at least 72 hours (that is 3 full days of no fever without the use of medication that reduces fevers); and
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when coughing or shortness of breath have improved); and
- At least 10 calendar days have passed since one's symptoms first appeared.

Test Positive - Symptomatic - Persons who experience symptoms and have tested positive for COVID-19 may return to school if the following conditions are met:

- The individual no longer has a fever (without the use of medication that reduces fevers); and
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved); and
- At least 10 calendar days have passed since your symptoms first appeared; and
- The individual has received 2 negative tests at least 24 hours apart.

Test Positive - Asymptomatic - Persons who have not had symptoms but test positive for COVID-19 may return when they have gone 10 calendar days past their test

without symptoms and have been preferably released by a healthcare provider.

The Indiana State Department of Health [Student Guidance for Return to School](#) document provides information and direction addressing a wide variety of scenarios, including many questions that have been asked in recent days. STA recommends all families review this document.

[Marion County COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)

Other Preventative Measures

Faculty and staff will provide training and constant reminders of safe practices and implement measures including but not limited to:

- Scheduling staggered restroom /handwashing breaks.
- Encouraging frequent handwashing and hand sanitizing at the minimum upon arriving at school, before and after eating, before and after recess, after using the restroom.
- Helping young children make sure they are correctly washing their hands.
- Teaching children not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering coughs or sneezes within their masks and into the crook of their arms. Clean hands with soap and water or hand gel when a tissue is used.
- Requiring social distancing as appropriate

Reinforce 5 rules for Handwashing:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

General Social Distancing Expectations

- Nonessential visitors will not be allowed in the building past the front office. This is determined at the discretion of the Principal, but the goal is to limit visitors during the school day who are nonessential.
- Parents and nonessential visitors are strongly encouraged to contact the school via email or phone instead of coming in to front offices. All visitors in the school are required to wear a face covering at all times.
- Parents may not join their child(ren) for lunch since lunch will be in the classrooms.
- All essential visitors must sign in at the office and wear a face covering upon entering the facility. Temperatures will be taken.
- For areas of the school where lines may regularly develop such as the front office, please maintain a 6 foot distance between yourself and the person in front of you. Please be patient.

- All convocations, assemblies, and events during the school day that bring non-essential visitors into the school have been cancelled until further notice.
- Parent Teacher Conferences and meetings will be conducted via phone or Google Meet.
- Modifications to classroom space will be made in order to encourage maximum physical distance between students.
 - Students will be assigned permanent seats.
 - Desk divider barriers will be used in all classrooms.
 - Classroom seating will be spread out as much as possible. Pulling groups of students together will be limited.
- Elimination of the use of pods or table style seating in classrooms.
- Restroom breaks will be scheduled so classes will not inter mingle.
- Teachers will maintain the maximum distance from students.
- Move some classes outside if possible.
- Cohort students as homerooms; grade levels will remain together and rotate during the day as needed. Teachers will rotate to classrooms to teach whenever possible.
- Ensure each student's belongings is separated from all others and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, and/or designated areas.
- All field/study trips during the school day have been cancelled until further notice.
- All Faith Partner and House activities have been cancelled until further notice.
- The staff lounge will be closed for eating due to confined space and inability to wear a face covering while eating. The staff lounge may be used for non-eating activities implementing social distancing, and face coverings will be worn at all times.
- The current nurse's room has been designated as the isolation area for a person exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms awaiting pick-up by parents. General first aid and other non COVID-19 illnesses will be treated at a location to be determined or in the classroom.
- Small group instruction is permitted but must be limited to less than 15 minutes with any given group of students. (Teachers and students will wear face coverings during this time).
- Staff meetings, training, professional development, etc. will be held virtually whenever possible. When not possible, face coverings will be worn and meetings should occur in spaces large enough to meet social distancing recommendations.
- Special Areas:
 1. For Specials classes, students may travel to their teachers if social distancing protocols can be maintained. Most Specials will be in the classrooms.
 2. Physical Education will take place outdoors whenever possible.
 3. Special area teachers will clean high-touch areas and materials between classes as needed.
 4. There will be no indoor group or ensemble singing - weather permitting this should take place exclusively outdoors.
 5. Students will continue to go to the library and check out books.

Cleaning Protocol

STA has and will be implementing the following facility cleaning procedures:

- Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms and entrances.
- Surfaces will be cleaned frequently throughout the day and extensively each evening by STA's contracted cleaning vendor.
- An electrostatic sanitizing spray will be used each Friday by STA's contracted cleaning vendor.
- A sanitizing mist sprayer will be available in each classroom for use by the teacher throughout the day.
- Bathroom breaks will be extended to allow for appropriate social distancing and adequate handwashing.
- STA will clean and disinfect playground equipment daily.
- Playgrounds will remain closed for public use due to cleaning capacity.
- Staff and students may be asked to support additional cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas and shared/personal use materials throughout the day.
- Windows may not be opened in any classroom. The STA HVAC consists of stand alone units in each classroom. Therefore the air is NOT circulated throughout the building, only within that room. The system is designed so that when outside humid air enters through an open window, the heat kicks on to rid a room of humid air. This results in the temperature in the room becoming uncomfortably warm, which then turns on the air conditioning and causes the system to work over time.
- Monitor air quality and replace air filters as appropriate. NOTE: HEPA filters are not compatible with the STA HVAC system. (This has been verified by Mr. Morgan and the HVAC manufacturer.)

Face Masks

- Masks will be worn at all times by both students and staff subject to the following exceptions:
 - PE classes will be physically distanced enough that masks may be removed.
 - Masks may also be removed when classes are meeting outside and students are sitting 6 feet apart.
 - Any staff or student with a health condition that makes the wearing of a face covering a risk to their health. In this case, a face shield will be worn.
 - When staff or students are performing tasks that cannot be completed while wearing a face covering: eating, drinking, etc.
 - When the wearing of a face covering by a teacher may impede the student's learning (for example, preK-2, etc.).
 - A student who is unable to remove a face covering on his/her own.
- Please make sure students have 2 masks at all times. **(Label please)**
- Face shields may be worn in some cases by students and staff.
- School staff will teach and emphasize wearing a face covering. Parents are also strongly encouraged to speak with their students in age-appropriate language regarding why face coverings are important for their health as well as others.
- For more information on face coverings go to [Back to School Face Coverings for Families](#)
- If a student refuses to wear a mask, the student will be immediately removed for the classroom.

- Parents will be asked to meet with the principal to discuss solutions
- If this remains an issue, the student will be asked to attend school virtually.

Please practice wearing masks for extended periods of time with your children.

Hydration

Water fountains have been disconnected. Two water stations have been installed - one upstairs and one downstairs. (16 - 20 oz water bottles)

Students should arrive at school with a full water bottle and will have scheduled times to refill during the day.

Arrival/Dismissal

Arrival -

- Formation of car line drop off - no change.
- Walkers (Grades 1-4) may walk up the ramp using social distancing protocols following the direction of the in-charge adult.
- Parents need to remain in their cars and may not walk their child(ren) into the School building.
- Grades 1-5 - enter through the main doors.
- Grades 6-8 - enter through the southernmost entrance on the Kenwood side of the building.
- Kindergarten parents will park on Illinois Street and walk their Kindergarteners to the Church doors where they will be met by one of their teachers, or parents may park on the lot and cross traffic to the Church doors.
- Preschool parents will park on the small playground lot and walk their preschoolers to Door #14 adjacent to the parking lot.
 - Note: if families have older children, parents may walk them to the main entrance (but not enter the building).
- Students will have their temperatures taken before exiting their cars at drop off or walking up the ramp into school. Students who may have an elevated temp due to being anxious etc. may park and then reenter the car line when the parent thinks they might have cooled off. If your child normally has an elevated temp for some reason, please contact STA. The STA Parents Association may be asking for volunteers to work the “temperature line” at drop off.
- Students will go directly to their classrooms

Dismissal

- Student dismissal will be staggered. Grades will be called in small groups at specific times to leave the building then gather (while social distancing) on the Illinois Street parking lot.
 - PreK - 4 will begin dismissal at 2:55pm.
 - Grades 5-8 will begin dismissal at 3:05.

- Parents are asked to gather their children as quickly as possible and head home. There will be no throwing footballs, running around, etc. during dismissal.
- Walkers will be released out the Kenwood exit. A Walker Release form must be on file. (see **St. Thomas Aquinas School Agreement Form**)
- Aftercare will be escorted to their designated meeting place.
- Rainy Day pick-up -
 - Walkers will be dismissed from the Kenwood exit as usual. In order for students to walk/bike home, a Walker/Bicycle Rider Release must be signed and on file. See the St. Thomas Aquinas School Agreement Form.
 - Parents picking up should park and remain in their cars. Please follow the directions of the STA staff member. In general:
 - Enter through the Illinois Street gate. Pull forward to the first row of parking spaces. Turn your car off. Put a large sign with your family name in your front window.
 - Once the parking lot is full, the Illinois Street Gate will be closed.
 - A staff member will call for your child(ren) and they will be sent to your car. Please remain in your vehicle until your child comes to you.
 - When all children are in cars and buckled in, the 46th Street gate will be opened by a staff member. Please follow the staff instructions for exiting and remember to only turn right onto 46th Street.
 - Once the lot is empty, the Illinois Street gate will be opened and the process will be repeated.
 - **NOTE: If you have a middle school student, do not enter the STA parking lot before 3:10 so you do not delay dismissal.**
- Please advise your designated pick up person that they may NOT come into the building.

Student Late Arrival or Early Release

- Parents can bring in students who are late or need to be picked up early, but they will not be allowed beyond the front office. Please wear a face covering when entering the building.

Classroom Environment

- Students' desks will be separated four to six feet, facing forward.
- Seats will be assigned.
- Surfaces will be sanitized multiple times per day.
- Each classroom will have bottles of hand sanitizer for student and teacher use.
- Hand washing opportunities will be provided multiple times throughout the day.
- Desk barriers will be used.
- Small groups will be limited to less than 15 minutes.
- Teachers will take students outside for classes, walks, etc as much as possible.
- Restroom/water bottle filling will be scheduled..

Educational Options

Until the return to full in-person classes, the following options will be available:

1. Preschool - in-person only
2. K-5 In-person or virtual
3. Grades 6-8 - Blue/Gold Hybrid - 50% of students in the building at a time.
 - MT - Wednesday eLearning - ThF
 - Teachers will be available for individual meetings and extra help on Wednesdays.
4. The virtual option will be for a 9 week period. At the end of week 7, parents will need to decide if their children will continue the virtual option or return to in-person classes.

Grading/Homework - will remain as described on pages 21, 22. Please work to turn homework in on time. There will be no Homework Club for Middle School students.

Assessment Tool - tracking student progress

We have applied for an assessment grant through the State of Indiana and will move forward with purchasing when funds become available. Until we have a formal tool, we will continue to use STAR and classroom assessments to assess students' progress. Students will take assessments during the first weeks of school.

Food Service

Parents' Association (PA) will continue to offer lunches for purchase. Food items will be individually wrapped. The order form may be found on the STA website.

Birthdays/Snacks

All food must be store bought and individually wrapped. Students may not share snacks.

Mass - Mass will be viewed virtually until the time it is safe to return.

eLearning - If we are compelled by the Governor of Indiana or the Marion County Health Department to return to eLearning for the entire school, the following would apply:

- Grades 5-8 - Chromebooks will be sent home
- If students in K-4 need a device to successfully eLearn, please contact the Homeroom teacher. There are a limited number of devices that may be available to borrow.
- If a student gets behind - Teachers will have office hours to assist students. If your child gets behind, please arrange a conference with the appropriate teacher. Have pertinent info

ready - what subject, a theory of why the child is behind, etc. We will work to provide tutoring with the classroom teachers or one of our differentiated learning teachers.

- Teachers too ill to teach - This is why it is so important to consider the safety of our teachers. All schools are scrambling for subs - we may be looking for parents to come in to sub. Mrs. V, available teachers, aides may all be called in to work with a class whose teacher is unavailable. The regular curriculum will be taught.

Tuition

Regardless of in-person or remote learning, tuition will not change. STA operates on a strict budget, and school expenses do not change.