



St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

School Handbook
Effective August 2023

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Vision Statement

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

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Mission Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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Admissions, Tuition, and Fees

Enrollment/Re-Enrollment

Following Archdiocesan policies, the School Commission has established the following Admissions Policies (Archdiocese Policies 5210 and 5410):

STA admits students of any race, color, and 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, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

STA is a Catholic, parochial school, 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 STA 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 in the school 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 completing an application, touring the school, and meeting with the Administrator to review admission policies.
4. Prospective students for grades 2 and above are required to visit for a day before admission to STA. If after meeting with the Administrator it is decided that STA 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. Admission will be complete upon the receipt of school report cards (if applicable), standardized test results (if applicable), and immunization records. Complete disclosure of previous testing results and/or established Individual Education Plan/Individual Catholic Education Plan is mandatory.
6. New Junior High (Grades 7 and 8) students are generally not accepted. Exceptions may be made at the Administrator's discretion.

Each family must complete a registration form and admission questionnaire for each child seeking admission and return these forms to the School Office along with the non-refundable Registration/Book/Technology Fee and, for new students, a non-refundable deposit of one month's tuition per new student. Please see page 8, Withdrawals, for more information on financial responsibility.

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.)

STA 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 (25 at the discretion of the teacher/Administrator)
1st through 3rd:	25
4th through 8th:	25 - 27

Student Tuition and Fees

Registration/Book/Technology Fee and Maintenance of Materials

Saint Thomas Aquinas school families pay an annual non-refundable Registration/Book/Technology Fee. This fee entitles students to the use of online resources and subscriptions and 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. (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 Administrator 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.

Active participation in the 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 (Blackbaud) 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, STA 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 Administrator first, the Administrator 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 are expected to 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 participate 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), a Tax Credit Scholarship (SGO), 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) or contact the administration.

Withdrawal and Tuition Responsibility

There are a number of excellent schools in our community - both public and private - from which families can choose. Admission to these schools, including St. Thomas, can be competitive. St. Thomas staff, the Administrator, and volunteers spend substantial amounts of time and other resources promoting St. Thomas, giving tours, and facilitating admissions for new students. From time to time, a family will register a student for a spot in a classroom, which removes the availability of the spot for another student, and then, at the last minute, withdraw from STA to attend another (often public) school. St. Thomas understands and supports a family's decision to choose the best option for their family.

However, STA relies heavily on tuition dollars and full classrooms to maintain the school each year. Accordingly, the St. Thomas School Commission has approved the following Tuition Responsibility policy that recognizes the financial challenge that late withdrawals cause the school:

A family who is registered for the school year and then voluntarily withdraws a student or students anytime after August 1st through the first semester of the school year will be responsible for 50% of annual tuition. A family who voluntarily withdraws a student or students during the second semester of the school year will be responsible for 100% of annual tuition.

All withdrawals, emergency, crisis, or transfer issues, and issues involving this policy, should be presented to the Administrator in writing and will be addressed with the Pastor on a case-by-case basis.

School Day Policies and Procedures

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. In 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 Administrator, 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

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 8:00 .a.m.** Consequences for more than 5 tardies may be assessed.

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 the 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 the 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 of 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 acknowledgement 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 Administrator 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 typically includes Internet Usage, Walker, and Photo releases. 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. Bike helmets and safe cycling practices are encouraged.

Dismissal: Preschool through 4th grade students are dismissed at 3:00 p.m., and Grades 5-8 are dismissed at 3:10 p.m. Preschool through 5th grade students will be from the main Illinois Street school entrance only. Grades 6 through 8 will exit via the Kenwood doors.

Walkers and bicycle riders should leave for home promptly after dismissal and no later than 3:15 p.m. (Walkers and bicycle riders must have a “Walker Form” on file.) Students may **NOT loiter** on the porch or ramp blocking foot traffic. Students not picked up by or still on school grounds at 3:15 p.m. will be sent to St. Thomas After Care and parents will be charged accordingly.

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; please 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:

Light rain - dismissal as usual.

Heavier rain or ice - Parents may park in the parking lot. Students (Grades 1-5 and Grades 6-8 who have younger siblings) gather in the gym for pick-up. At 3:05 the main School doors (Door 2) will be opened to allow parents to come in and pick-up their kids in the gym. Please enter the South Gym doors and exit the North Gym doors then down and out the Narthex doors to avoid a bottleneck at the main school doors.

Kindergarten and Preschool - Parents should go directly to their classrooms or the Narthex as directed by your child’s teacher.

Middle School - Grades 6-8 - may exit the Kenwood door as usual.

Student Health and Medications

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 Administrator 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.

Please see Appendix A for the Archdiocesan Health and Safety Plan.

Code of Conduct

STA is committed to creating an environment of love and respect for each student and all members of our community, as well as guests and visitors to our campus. This Code of Conduct specifically prohibits physical and verbal violence, bullying, discrimination, vandalism, theft, instructional disruption, and other similar types of conduct that are harmful to our community and its members.

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. The School Commission, in consultation with the Administrator and the guidance of the Archdiocese, establishes the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct includes a Disciplinary Policy designed to assist school staff and parents to work together to assist a child to moderate his or her behavior. Conduct that is not in keeping with this Code of Conduct, the mission of St. Thomas School, or that otherwise threatens the physical or emotional safety, security, autonomy, or well-being of another person is subject to discipline as outlined in the Disciplinary Policy.

Please see Appendix B: Disciplinary Policy

Each member of the school community (including the Pastor, Administrators (like the school Principal and his or her designees), 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. At all times, teachers, staff, and Administrators shall use their discretion, in keeping with the Code of Conduct, the mission of the school and, and the Disciplinary Policy, to act in the best interest of the child's growth and development.

All members of the school community are expected to conduct themselves responsibly, safely, respectfully, and in keeping with the other rules, policies and procedures outlined in this handbook or as directed by classroom teachers, staff, and Administrators. Any questions regarding these expectations should be directed first to the appropriate teacher or staff member and then to the Administrator. The School Commission may be asked to assist the Administrator on matters related to school policies.

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.

Communications and Technology

Communications

Parents and guardians are encouraged to communicate with teachers and other staff. Parents may speak with any staff member by calling 317-255-6244 and leaving a message with the office. Parents may also contact staff by email. Email addresses are 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: <https://www.staindy.org/school-scoops-2/>

Computers/Technology

Technology is the future and access to technology is key to a complete 21st century education. Leveraging digital technologies to improve student learning experiences is a key part in fulfilling the mission of St. Thomas. These technology opportunities and experiences allow students to learn by doing and to have ownership in their education.

A variety of devices(laptops, iPads, etc.) are 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 students receive instruction in computer technology concepts and skills. Internet access is given only to students whose parents have signed the Technology/Internet Agreement. Students who violate the Internet User Agreement (signed at the beginning of the school year) will forfeit their computer privileges. See Appendix C for Technology Acceptable use Policy.

Students in Grades 5-8 will have use of and be assigned St. Thomas owned Chromebooks on a 1:1 basis. These Chromebooks may not be taken home. Chromebooks assigned to students in Grade 5 (or as incoming sixth or seventh graders) will be used through the students’ 8th grade year. All K-8 students will be responsible for taking care of their Chromebooks. Please see the Repair/Replacement Policy below.

Student-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

Devices such as laptops, tablets, etc. go through normal wear and tear in the process of daily use and sometimes need repair. By signing the applicable agreements and accepting use of a STA device, students and their families accept responsibility for using the utmost care while using STA devices.

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. Families will be responsible for the expense of repair or replacement as follows:

- If the device is repairable, St. Thomas will make arrangements for the repair and assess the student a \$75 repair fee for the first repair, \$125 for the 2nd repair, and full replacement cost if there is a third repair needed. This will be billed through Smart Tuition.
- If the device is damaged beyond repair, and it is determined by the student's teacher and Administrator that the damage was preventable by the student, the student must cover the cost of replacement (or loss). The student will be assessed the replacement fee through Smart Tuition.

If needed, loaner Chromebooks will be available to "check-out" in the Computer Lab. The same repair/replacement expense criteria apply to loaner devices as to assigned devices.

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

Please see Appendix C: Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

Curriculum and Learning Opportunities

STA 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.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a tool in the realm of education, supporting students in various ways, such as homework assistance, problem-solving, language learning, and so forth.

However, with its growing role in education, we must address how AI interacts with our school's policies on academic integrity.

ROLE OF AI IN LEARNING

AI can be used as a tool in a student's learning journey. It can offer personalized learning materials, help understand complex topics, and give access to a wealth of knowledge. It can facilitate studying and make learning more interactive and engaging. However, while using AI, it's essential to ensure that actions remain within the framework of academic integrity.

GUIDELINES FOR AI USE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Understand the Difference Between Assistance and Cheating

AI can assist in finding information and explaining concepts, which is very much like a tutor assisting a student. However, students should never use AI to complete assignments, tests, or any form of graded work entirely on the student's behalf. This would be equivalent to cheating

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 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 Programs (6th-8th Grade)

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 Parish 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 Parish training site by going to <https://www.archindysafeparish.org/> Pass code Archindy2021. Volunteers are assets at STA 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.

Parents that are chaperoning field trips need to abstain from use of alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs on school 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 **Appendix B**). 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 and Grades

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

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

Students in **Kindergarten through 2nd 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 **Grades 3-8** will receive a traditional report card with the traditional percentage grading scale as shown below.

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 PowerSchool on-line grade reporting.

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 Administrator 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 Administrator 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 Administrator’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 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 Monday morning.

Missing work will be tagged as “missing” and given 0 points until turned in.

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.

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.

Students in 2nd and/or 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 such as iReady will be used to monitor student progress.

Emergency/School Cancellations

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 25 (10 for Kindergartners) rolls of trash bags. No family will be required to sell more than 50 rolls.

General School Information

Additional School Services

Occupation and Speech 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).

Counselor: A school counselor 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 Counselor 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 school counselor can come from teachers, administration, parents, or the students themselves.

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

After Care

STA 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 After Care Staff that are employed by STA. All After Care employees have background checks, Safe Parish 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

STA 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 STA regulations. See Extracurricular Activity Eligibility for more information.

STA 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 STA at a neighboring parish with a signed waiver from the Administrator. Registration announcements are made via the school newsletter.

Cell Phones & Personal Devices

Students in grades K-6 who bring cell phones or personal devices such as smart watches to school must turn them off and leave them in their backpacks, which are kept in the classroom. Under no circumstances may students remove cell phones or personal devices from their backpacks during the school day (7:30am-3:10pm) 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 devices in the designated location in their homerooms for the duration of the school day. Students may only contact parents via the school office.

Personal technology being used at inappropriate times may be confiscated. Parents may be notified to retrieve the device from the Administrator 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	
Shirts	Pants

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collar or turtleneck - no cowl necks or Under Armour® • Knit material, plain - no logo allowed • Red - polo style • Long or short sleeve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform style navy blue pants • Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix (no denim) <p>Leggings may not be worn by themselves, but may be worn under jumper/skirt/PE shorts</p>
	<p>Shorts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform style navy blue shorts • Twill fabric - cotton, polyester or mix • Walking length (no shorter than 4 inches above the knee)

Grades K-4

Jumpers

- STA plaid
- Appropriate length of shorts/skirts must **not be shorter than 4 inches above the knee.** If a student is wearing a jumper that is too short, a parent contact will be made. If the infraction occurs again, the student may not be allowed to wear a jumper for the rest of the school year. Students are encouraged to wear shorts under their jumpers for the sake of modesty.

Grades 5-8

Skirts and Skorts

- STA plaid
- Appropriate length; skirts cannot be rolled at waist. **The acceptable length of shorts/skirts must not be shorter than 4 inches above the knee.** If a student is wearing a skirt that is deemed improper by a faculty member, then that student may be given a **written warning**. If the infraction occurs again, the student will not be allowed to wear a skirt for a designated period of time. Students are encouraged to wear shorts under their skirts for the sake of modesty.

Middle School - Grades 7 - 8 only

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White or royal blue <u>STA logo</u> collared shirt • Long or short sleeved polo style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform khaki pants • Uniform khaki walking shorts (no shorter than 4 inches above the knee)
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4th Quarter - 8th Graders

Uniform (official, non-athletic) sweatshirt of the high school they have chosen to attend.

Other Uniform Items for All Students

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.

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

Socks/tights/leggings: Socks must be worn at all times. **Plain** navy, red or black tights or ankle length leggings (with no lace) may be worn under 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 bottom of the T-shirt does not hang below the hem of the uniform shirt. **Plain** white (no lace) camisoles that do not show below the hem of the uniform shirt, with the uniform shirt buttoned appropriately, may be worn. Colored camisoles, T-shirts and shirts with printing on them may **NOT** be worn underneath the uniform shirt.

Jewelry: Jewelry, if worn, should not be valuable and must be appropriate to the school uniform.

Hair: Hair should be clean, well groomed and kept out of the student’s eyes at all times. Students will be considered in violation of the “uniform” policy if hair covers eyes. Hats and head coverings/scarves are not allowed at any time, unless for religious or health purposes, which are noted with the principal.

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.

NOTES:

- Shirts must not be oversized or tight.
- 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.
- Cargo or jean style, baggy, saggy, or tight shorts are **not allowed** on uniform days.
- The wearing of non uniform sweatshirts is considered a Uniform violation.

Uniform Violations

The student will be given a written warning. If the infraction occurs again, the student may be given a consequence.

P.E. Class

The regulation physical education short (length no shorter than 4 inches above the knee) and shirt (gray St. Thomas t-shirt - only) must be worn (Grades 1-8). They may 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 (length no shorter than 4 inches above the knee) skirts/skorts (no shorter than 4 inches above the knee), 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, miniskirts, **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**.

Health and Safety Plan

St. Thomas Aquinas School complies with the Archdiocesan Health and Safety Plan may be found in Appendix C.

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, Outdoor Learning Classroom, and the Parish Center/facilities are off limits to unsupervised students before and after school.

Parents' Association (PA)

The Parents' Association provides support to the Administrator 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 Administrator.

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 Show) 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 Google Calendar. 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 Administrator. 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, School Mass may be celebrated.

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 8th grade and 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 the 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	Musical, Grades 5-8
Art Show	Variety Show
Outdoor Education/Camp	8 th Grade DC Trip
Grades 6, 7, 8	P.E. Dance Program
Catholic Schools Week	Speech Contests, Grades 7, 8
Earth Week activities	Science Fair - Grade 7
Engineering Challenge, Grade 8	Robotics
Junior Achievement BizTown, Grades 5, 6	Various food drives
Field Day	May Ceremony/Crowning of Mary
Faith partners, matching students in higher grades with those in lower grades	Partnering with our Sister Parish in Haiti
Helping families and organizations through service	

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. Visitors will need to present their Driver's License to the school office. The Driver's License will be scanned into our Visitor Management System and returned to the school visitor when they check out of the school

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.

Mail Boxes:

Teachers mailboxes are for school personnel only. If parents or students have an item to leave or retrieve from a teacher's mailbox, please ask the school secretary for assistance.

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 Parish 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 Parish training site by registering and completing the training at <https://www.archindysafeparish.org/> Pass code Archindy2021. 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 Parish training certificate will bear a 5 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 Parish 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 Parish Certificate of Completion are in our possession before your volunteer duties begin.

Right to Amend

STA reserves the right to amend this School Handbook at any time, with or without notice. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents through electronic communication.

Appendix A: Archdiocesan Health and Safety Plan

Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis believe:

- in fostering positive relationships that exemplify the love of God;
- that Catholic school communities are enriched by the unique image and likeness of God that is present in each individual;
- that formation best occurs within faith-filled cultures of learning that are inclusive;
- that parents are the primary educators of each young person and that it is the responsibility of Catholic schools to support the domestic church;
- that Catholic schools are part of the evangelizing mission of the Church, forming disciples through the intentional integration of faith, culture, and life; and
- that “excellence” is defined by and achieved through the growth and holistic development - spiritual, intellectual/academic, social, emotional, and physical - of the individual within the context of community.

The best way in which Catholic schools can practice these beliefs is by operating Catholic school ministry and its extra-curricular activities in their preferred form - in person - whenever possible. Therefore, as early as July 1, 2021, Catholic school ministry and its extra-curricular activities will resume with new health and safety precautions in place, unless there is a resurgence of the pandemic and/or canonical and/or civil authorities require(s) closure.

The Catholic school will take every precaution possible to protect students and adults. Heightened protocols related to cleaning and sanitization are in place. Expectations of proper handwashing, physical distancing to the extent possible, and minimal sharing of resources to the extent possible will be enforced. Guidance from IDOE, CDC, and local authorities will be employed as best fits our Catholic school community as determined by administration. A more comprehensive plan is (attached/included).

I understand that the School will make every reasonable effort to provide a safe environment, including specific measures to guard against the spread of a contagion such as Covid-19. I accept that no matter the precautions taken by the School there is no way to fully assure that such measures will be successful in preventing injury, exposure to a contagion, or illness. I understand that by allowing my child to participate in Catholic school ministry and its extra-curricular activities, there is some assumed risk on behalf of students and their parents.

I will provide my student the necessary equipment, resources, and support needed for participation. These needed materials will be communicated by the teacher(s), coach(es), and/or moderator(s). I will also reinforce to my student the need to maintain all expected protocols related to his/her health and that of others.

I understand that parish and school leaders, united in the mission of the Catholic Church, work collaboratively to make sure shared spaces are as safe and secure as possible for participants in all ministries.

Appendix B: Disciplinary Policy

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 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 Administrator. The School Commission has helped to set the Code of Conduct and its correlating policies, but it does not take a role in the daily disciplinary actions of the school.

Specific Conduct Expectations

While it is not possible to specifically identify every type of behavior or conduct that is prohibited at St. Thomas, certain types of conduct are clearly contrary to the Code of Conduct and the mission of St. Thomas and warrant explanation. Such conduct falls into two categories that may warrant different disciplinary responses depending on the severity.

Category 1: Standard School and Classroom Rules

Student cooperation with others and compliance with basic behavioral expectations for a school environment are critical to maintaining a positive learning environment. Accordingly, students are expected to follow rules that apply to the entire school and to specific classrooms and environments.

Standard Rules

All students, at all times, are expected to:

- Follow responsible directions of school personnel in all educational settings, including specific Classroom Rules established by the teacher;
- 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 Administrator 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 Administrator, 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 a partial loss of recess time, 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 Classroom Rules.

Repetitive negative behavior may require incremental consequences implemented by the classroom teacher. In general, repeated violations of Standard and Classroom Rules 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.

Category 2: Serious Misconduct

Student misconduct that is more serious than that described above in Category 1: Standard and Classroom Rules is expressly prohibited and may warrant progressive discipline that is administered by the teacher and/or school Administrator, reported to and recorded by the school Administrator, and specifically communicated to parents.

Serious Misconduct generally includes conduct that disrupts a student's ability to learn, prevents other students from learning, exhibits disrespect for people and property, or raises safety concerns within the school environment. Serious Misconduct is specifically prohibited and is subject to the Progressive Discipline Policy outlined below.

Examples of Serious Misconduct may include:

- Repeated violations of Standard and Classroom Rules;
- Disrespect or bullying of others including bullying, harassment, touching, and intimidation;
- Lying and dishonest behavior;
- Cheating, plagiarism, or use of Artificial Intelligence** 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 FOR MISUSE OF AI

The misuse of AI, such as using it to cheat on tests, plagiarize work, or misrepresent one's understanding, will be treated as a serious violation of our school's conduct policy. Consequences can range from grade penalties, failing the course, or even suspension or expulsion.

We encourage you to use AI as a learning tool, but to do so responsibly and ethically. The goal of education is not just about earning grades; more importantly, it's about learning, growing, and preparing oneself for the future. The responsible use of AI aligns with these goals and helps students to become better learners and future leaders.

**** In STA Middle School classes, any instances of cheating, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of understanding with AI results in zero percent credit and an automatic detention.**

- To **cheat** is defined as *"to act dishonestly/deceitfully in one's class work, homework, quizzes, tests, projects, and other assignments."*
 - Examples of Cheating: collaborating with a classmate inside/outside class on an assignment, writing down another student's answers from a quiz or assignment, using unauthorized class materials on an assignment/assessment, etc.
 - All of these instances are cheating because these do not reflect a student's own honest work.
- To **plagiarize** is defined as *"to take another's answers, words, writing, and/or work and submit it as one's own without giving proper credit."*
 - Examples of Plagiarism: copying and pasting information from a book or the Internet (Google, Wikipedia, etc.) without proper MLA citations, submitting another classmate's work as your own, etc.
 - All of these instances are plagiarism because the student is taking someone else's ideas and work and using it as his/her own: whether from their classmate, a book, Google search, or website. A student never has permission to plagiarize, regardless of the circumstances.
- Repeated violations of this middle school policy will result in the following:
 - First Instance: Student receives no credit for assignment and serves detention after school.

- Second Instance: Student receives no credit for assignment, serves detention after school, and attends a parent-teacher conference.
- Third Instance: Student receives no credit for assignment, signs a behavior contract following a parent meeting with the principal, and serves an in-school suspension.
- Further instances of cheating and/or plagiarism will result in escalating consequences, not limited to out-of-school suspension.

Certain types of Serious Misconduct warrant more thorough identification and explanation.

Bullying and Harassment

STA is committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for all. St. Thomas does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form.

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.

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.

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.

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

so that it can be quickly and appropriately addressed. All teachers, staff members, and Administrators are required to take action to address reports of bullying or harassment.

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 Administrator 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 and may be cause for suspension or expulsion from school:

- 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

Progressive Discipline Policy for Serious Misconduct

The Progressive Discipline Policy has been created to help provide consistency and understanding among teachers, staff, Administrators, students, and families when a student has engaged in Serious Misconduct. The progressive nature of the policy is designed to be predictable but also flexible to accommodate the severity of a given situation. Teachers and the Administrator retain discretion to administer discipline that is in keeping with the goal of this policy. The typical steps of progressive discipline in response to the same or similar Serious Misconduct being repeated within the same academic year are:

Step 1. Verbal Discussion: A disciplinary action whereby the teacher or other staff member communicates verbally with the student to identify the misconduct and discuss a course of action for correcting it. Verbal discussions should be noted in writing by the teacher.

Step 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. A fifth detention in a quarter may result in an in-school suspension.

Step 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.) Suspension records shall be retained by the Administrator.

Step 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.

Step 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 Administrator, 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.

NOTES:

- All behavior infractions and resulting consequences in Steps 1-5 will be documented by the teacher and reported to parents in writing.
- All discipline issued in Steps 1-5 shall be reported to and documented by the Administrator.
- Students' progressive disciplinary records will be retained throughout their time at St. Thomas, but steps will restart each new school year.
- Administrators will work with the classroom teachers and parents to address Serious Misconduct when it first occurs.
- **The Administrator will consult with the Office of Catholic Schools** when necessary to obtain clarification or advice on managing certain situations, and must consult the Office when administering the Fair Process outlined below.

Procedures and Policies Related to Suspensions, Expulsion or Exclusion

Separating students from their classmates or school, temporarily or permanently, are serious forms of discipline that St. Thomas School does not take lightly. That said, repeated disruptive behavior or extreme behavior which prevents the educational mission of the school from being carried out may require suspension, expulsion, or exclusion.

Suspensions will result in an automatic Successful Learning Traits 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 school counselor should be strongly considered.

Before implementing a suspension longer than 3 days, families shall be invited to participate in the Fair Process explained below. Thereafter, the Administrator may take the following disciplinary actions:

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

Fair Process

There are three circumstances 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 Administrator is considering consequences which require a fair process hearing, the Administrator 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.

Application

The Code of Conduct and the Progressive Disciplinary Policy applies 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, including but not limited to CYO sports and field trips;

- Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function or event;
- Using property or equipment provided by the school;
- Using software technology or a network that is ‘owned’ by St. Thomas Aquinas School.

Appendix C: Technology Acceptable Use Policy

St. Thomas Aquinas School provides Information Technology tools and network access (“IT Systems”) for the benefit of its staff and students. Students are responsible for good behavior on school IT Systems just as they are in a classroom or a school hallway. Communications on internal and external networks are often public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. Access to IT Systems and support of those services will be provided to students who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner.

The school’s IT Systems are to be used primarily to support teaching and learning, in accordance with the policies and guidelines contained in this document. This Acceptable Use Policy (“AUP”) addresses acceptable and unacceptable ways in which the students in our community may use our IT Systems, and it addresses specific user responsibilities, rights and expectations.

However, given the rapidly changing nature of IT systems and services, the policies defined in this document cannot cover every possible situation. Therefore, in addition to the specific acceptable and unacceptable uses presented, this AUP provides general principles which shall direct the use of St. Thomas’s IT Systems. Put another way, students and adults are expected to use good judgment when working in gray areas not covered explicitly by the rules.

Adherence to this policy shall be the joint responsibility of the students, parents and employees of St. Thomas.

In the classroom environment, the teacher or other designated adult is the determiner of appropriate and inappropriate use of technology. Teachers may declare technology-free times, call for the placing of technology at the front of the room or in a ready-to-use position. It is inappropriate to attempt to covertly use technology or overtly use technology in ways that are inappropriate, not indicated by the instructor. No intra- or inter-class communication is authorized between students except as designated and/or supervised by an adult for a specific time period (such as a class).

Electronic devices should be used in the building following guidelines that promote the utmost respect of decency, civilized behavior, and common courtesy. Devices should not be used to conduct audio/video conversations except in authorized areas or with the specific permission of an adult. Notifications and other alerts should be silenced at all times unless requested by an adult.

Use of personal or school communications tools, including but not limited to chat, telephone, e-mail, texting, social networking should follow guidelines of personal decency and decorum. Inappropriate language, bullying or harassing behavior, overtly sexual or

violent behavior or innuendo is a violation of the letter and spirit of the rule and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Personal electronic devices should not be used in violation of any school policy or direction given by a classroom teacher or other St. Thomas Aquinas employee. Use of personal electronic devices for entertainment or recreational use may be severely limited by the St. Thomas IT staff, teachers or administrators based on the level of distraction and/or network resources used.

Any devices used or operated in an unauthorized manner may be taken and held in the Principal's Office until a parent or guardian picks them up and may result in the user being subject to other disciplinary consequences.

Security

Security on the St. Thomas network is a priority. Anyone identifying a security problem on the network should notify a teacher or the IT staff immediately and not demonstrate the problem to other users or try to bypass the problem by using another account. Users may not use accounts or passwords belonging to other users, or misrepresent other users on the network. Unauthorized attempts to login to the network as a system administrator will result in cancellation of user privileges.

Unacceptable Use

The list of inappropriate uses of St. Thomas technology resources currently includes, but is not limited to the following (this list may be updated at any time):

- Use of the Internet or school network for any illegal activity, including gambling, computer hacking (and all variations thereof) and copyright or intellectual property law violations;
- Use of Anonymous Proxies, Caching Servers, or any other means to avoid restrictions placed on the IT network and/or Internet access;
- Gaining intentional access to materials, maintaining access to materials or distributing materials which are obscene, pornographic or whose dominant appeal is sexual arousal;
- Gaining intentional access to material, maintaining access to materials or distributing materials which utilize or encourage excessive use of violence, blood, gore, or diminish the value of life;
- Associating a website with the school without proper authorization or representing the school by name, logo, or identity in a formal or informal publication, document, or program without prior approval;
- Downloading, installing or accessing unauthorized software or other executable files (e.g., .exe, .bat, .pif, .reg) without the permission of St. Thomas staff; this includes but is not limited to the use of unauthorized operating systems or other root level programs that could be installed on school computers or device.
- Deliberately introducing a virus to, or otherwise improperly tampering with, the system;

- Intentionally installing or accepting spyware, malware, or other disruptive, intrusive, or destructive programs;
- Attempting to gain access to or gaining access to network hardware (including wall jacks, wires, switch-es, routers, servers, access points, etc.). This includes placing unauthorized devices onto the school's wired network.
- Obtaining or sending information which could be used to make destructive devices such as guns, weapons, bombs, explosives or fireworks;
- Posting messages on or through the network or Internet, including those that are anonymous, that use abusive or profane language, or use the system to harass, insult or verbally attack others or disrupt normal function;
- Gaining unauthorized access to resources or files;
- Identifying oneself with another person's name or using password, account, or credentials of another user (including guests);
- Providing access to the school's network to unauthorized individuals or granting limited authorizations to unauthorized people;
- Using IT Tools for financial or commercial gain
- Stealing or vandalizing data, equipment or intellectual property;
- Invading the privacy of other individuals;
- Attempting to gain access to or gaining access to student records, grades or files outside of the adult supervised and approved shared drives or individual authorized account;
- Degrading or disrupting equipment or system performance;
- Failing to obey school or classroom technology use rules;
- Taking part in any activity related to technology use, which creates a clear and present danger or a substantial disruption to the orderly operation of the school;
- Use of school or personal electronic devices to perform unethical actions including, but not limited to, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, or plagiarism (e.g., cell phone texting answers or taking pictures of exams);
- Posting any video, photograph, image or likeness of any student or employee without express permission of that individual and of the principal to any website;
- Installing, moving, deleting, downloading/uploading or reconfiguration of any software or files on school equipment without permission.

Risks

The educational community of St. Thomas makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing and is not responsible for any damages the user may suffer. This includes loss of data, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruptions. The student is responsible for evaluating any information obtained from the Internet. St. Thomas specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through its network and will not be responsible for unauthorized financial obligations resulting from provided access to the Internet. The users of the St. Thomas network agree that they waive any right to privacy that they may have for such use (including personal devices). We may monitor the user of technology and may also examine all system activities in which the user participates. Users have no right to privacy as to any information or file created, maintained, transmitted or stored in or on St. Thomas' property, through our technical resources or on personal devices at school. Users should know that

content that includes (but is not limited to) sexual comments or images, racial slurs or other offensive comments, defamatory, discriminatory or harassing materials distributed, accessed or downloaded through the St. Thomas network could expose them to legal liability as well as to disciplinary action.

Violations and Sanctions

St. Thomas endeavors to create an atmosphere that fosters academic achievement, personal responsibility and respectful relationships among students, faculty, staff, administrators, families and other members of the St. Thomas community. Any behavior or action contrary to St. Thomas' purposes is considered an infraction and may result in the immediate and/or permanent loss of access to the St. Thomas network and/or further disciplinary actions. At any time as required for administrative or technical reasons a network administrator may remove a student's network access.

Copyright

St. Thomas does not sanction copyright infringement. We ask all organizations bearing the St. Thomas name to honor all copyright and license restrictions.