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The policies formulated in the *St. Thomas More Academy Student/Parent Handbook* should assist us in working together to achieve our objectives. **Parents and students are responsible for maintaining awareness of policies and regulations as stated within the Handbook.** Please read the Handbook very carefully and use it as a reference.

Mission Statement

St. Thomas More Academy is a community of students, parents and educators working together to achieve excellence in education inspired by Catholic traditions and spirituality.

Expectations

St. Thomas More Academy strives to develop responsible, courteous, self-disciplined children whose pride in themselves, their school and their community is reflected in their behavior. The development of these children requires a consistent practice of thoughtful, responsible behavior during their formative school years.

As a Catholic Pre-kindergarten through Grade Eight (8) school, St. Thomas More Academy seeks to model the Christian value system it proclaims. Our parents, teachers and staff are the first to model the behaviors and expectations we teach. They are to be fair, reasonable, balanced and consistent in defining and administering the disciplinary measures of the school. They are, in the words of the U.S. Bishops, “To Teach as Jesus Did.” Students, too, are expected to accept similar responsibility. They are to publicly demonstrate conduct that reflects the values commonly nurtured in a Christian community.

General Regulations

The principal reserves the right to institute any rule or policy at any time without amending the Handbook in order to ensure the safety of the children, advance the academic mission of the school, or strengthen the children’s religious formation.

Board of Directors

Board members must be practicing members of the Roman Catholic Church; they must state their loyalty to the Holy Father, profess an absolute commitment to the Magisterium, affirm that he/she is living in accordance with the laws of the Church, recognize the importance of classical liberal arts education, and advocate the Catholic position that the parent is the primary educator of the child.

The Academy’s Board of Directors for 2008/2009:

Dr. Jim Merkel, *Founder and President*

Mr. Joe Slattery, *Treasurer*

Mr. Alex Grabenstein, *Secretary*

Mr. Christopher Cosentino, *Principal, St. John’s Catholic Prep*

Mr. William Nicklas, Jr.

Mr. Greg Light

Mrs. Nancy Floria



Admissions

- All faiths are welcome to inquire. Preference is given to current students and their siblings, and to Catholic families when considering space available. When families of other faiths are accepted, they must support the policies of St. Thomas More Academy, including the policy that their children will receive religious instruction in the Catholic Faith, attend Holy Mass and take part in the religious devotions and activities of the Academy.
 - A \$75.00 non-refundable Application Fee is required per child applying to grades PreK through Eight (8).
 - A \$300.00 non-refundable Book and Resource Fee is required per year per student enrolled in grades Kindergarten through Eight (8).
 - A \$150.00 program fee is required for children in PreK instead of the Book and Resource fee.
 - A \$20 art materials fee is required per year per student enrolled in grades PreK through Eight (8).
 - Class size will not exceed 20:1 in grades 1 – 8, 20:2 in K, and 15:2 in PreK.
 - Openings for new students are offered to those who have successfully completed the school-administered placement exam for grades Kindergarten through Eight (8) and have met other admission criteria as outlined in the *Admission Policies Addendum*.
 - We are unable to accept children with learning differences at this time as we do not have the proper educational resources for their care.
 - We are unable to accept children with behavioral problems.
 - A student who is withdrawn from the Academy for any reason may not be re-admitted without an admissions test and written permission of the school authorities.
 - The school conforms to state guidelines with regard to age and Immunization requirements for admission.
 - For the 2008/2009 academic year*:
 - A student entering PreK must be four (4) years old on or before September 1st.
 - A student entering kindergarten must be five (5) years old on or before September 1st.
- * *Unless special exception has been granted by the Academy (for students with birthdays no later than Oct. 15th.)*
- The following must be on file prior to a student's starting school:
 - Birth Certificate
 - Baptismal Certificate (*if Catholic*)
 - Copies of all immunization records
 - Completed and signed enrollment packet
 - School transcripts (*for students entering grades 1 – 8*)

Tuition

Tuition for the 2008/2009 school year is \$5,250.00 per student in grades K through 8. Tuition for students in PreK is \$6,500.00 per student. Family discounts are available for multiple children of the same family enrolled during the same school year: 2nd student - 15%, 3rd student - 40%, and 4th student - free. In cases where one of the children is in PreK, the PreK rate of \$6,500.00 will be charged in full and the discount policy will apply to the remaining tuition fees.



Tuition may be paid in one of the following arrangements:

- Annual payment: full payment of all tuition due by August 1st. If you select this plan and make a full payment by the due date you are eligible for a prepayment incentive of \$100 discount per family.
- Semi-annual payments: paid in two installments due August 1st and January 1st.
- Quarterly payments: total payable in four installments August 1st, October 1st, January 1st, and March 1st.
- Monthly (10 payments) beginning August 1st with the last payment due May 1st.
- Monthly (12 payments) beginning June 1st with the last payment due May 1st.

Delinquent Tuition Accounts

- Accounts are considered delinquent after 30 days. A 5% fee will be assessed on all delinquent payments.
- Accounts that remain delinquent past 90 days are considered to be in default of contract and may be turned over to an attorney or collection agency for final resolution. Any additional expenses incurred as a result of the collection will become the responsibility of the parent or guardian.
- Re-enrollment will not be accepted for any student whose tuition account is two or more months past the due date.
- No student will be placed on a class list for the upcoming school year nor will records be released for any student whose tuition account is not up to date.
- Enrollment Fees are considered non-refundable unless Saint Thomas More Academy is not able to place the student or a family relocates out of the Saint Thomas More Academy area prior to the beginning of the school year. Registration fees may be applied to delinquent tuition accounts.
- Checks returned by a bank for any reason will result in a fee of \$25.00, or an amount equal to the fee assessed by the bank, and this fee will be applied to the family's tuition account. The charge will appear on the family's next statement. If a family is granted partial tuition assistance, the balance is due and payable monthly.

If difficulties arise in meeting their tuition responsibilities, parents are to contact Dr. Jim Merkel, founder and president of the board, or Mrs. Lena Laug, business manager, as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to help families continue their children's education at STMA.

Enrollment Contract

All families will sign an Enrollment Contract for the school year. This contract includes, but is not limited to, the recognition that the school has to develop a working budget, and **parental obligation to pay tuition for the full academic year is unconditional. No portion of such fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled,** as by occupying the seat, the school may have lost the opportunity to contract with another student. In the case of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal of children from the school, any and all of the tuition and fees are immediately due and payable.

Families withdrawing students from school should notify the principal in writing as soon as possible. Once all financial obligations are met and a Release of Records form is received from the new school, official school records will be mailed directly to the new school.

Please see Enrollment Contract Addendum, Financial Information Addendum and Withdrawal Addendum in the appendix.



Attendance

Absences

- The school will maintain written documentation for all absences. **Parents are asked to call the school by 9:00 a.m. to report that their child will be absent that day.** The school reserves the right to call the home and/or the parent's place of employment if the child is absent and a call has not been received.
- Upon the child's return to school, a written note explaining the absence must be turned in to the office.
- The school reserves the right to notify the Frederick County Department of Social Services in the event of excessive or unexcused absences from school.
- An excused absence is an unavoidable or unpredictable event such as illness, family death, transportation challenge, etc. that is reported to the school. **An unexcused absence is one that is not reported to the school and for which no explanation is given.**
- A student's presence in school is the responsibility of both the parent and student. **Students who have five (5) unexcused absences within a trimester will be called in for a parent conference and could be dismissed from the school.**
- If a child is absent for more than a few days, steps should be taken to ensure that the child's return to the classroom is smooth and that missed instruction can be made up in a minimal amount of time. Parents should call the office to initiate these steps.
- **A student is allowed a maximum of 15 days of absences within each school year. Absences exceeding 15 days are cause for concern and may be reviewed by the Principal.** An excused absence is validated by a parent's or physician's note to the teacher when the child returns to school.

Tardiness

- **Students who arrive after 8:15 a.m. are considered tardy.** They must report to the school office for a late slip before reporting to their homeroom. Tardiness is entered on the student's permanent record.
- **A tardy student greatly disrupts a class already in session. Consistent tardiness will result in a conference with the teacher and administration.** Parents should ensure that their children are at school between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m.

Early Dismissal

- **Parents are asked to refrain from taking children out of school for appointments.** In cases where this is necessary, the parent(s) must send a note to the homeroom teacher indicating the pick-up time. The parent **MUST** report to the school office prior to the child leaving. Under no circumstances will a child be permitted to leave the school without the parent's signature in the sign-out book.
- **Students who leave school before 11:30 a.m. and do not return to school will be marked absent for the entire school day. Students leaving after 12:30 p.m. and not returning to school will be marked absent for a half day.**

Homework/Make-up Work

- **Homework requests should be made through the office. Any requests made after 9:00 a.m. may not be honored.** The work will be available for pick up after 2:30 p.m. When possible, a sibling or student who lives nearby may obtain the homework directly from the homeroom teacher.
- **Make-up work: A student who is absent when a test is announced is expected to take the test as scheduled or upon return.**



Inclement Weather/Snow Day Procedures

STMA will observe the Frederick County Public Schools' decision for closing and delayed openings. Parents should tune to local radio stations WFRE 99.9 FM, WAFY KEY 103.1 FM, WFMD 930 AM, or to cable channel 18 for school closing information. With the help of the Parent Teacher Organization, STMA will also be instituting a Parent's Phone Tree to alert parents in the event of an emergency school closing. Additionally, STMA will put a voice mail message on the school's answering machine (301-874-9014) and place a notice on www.schools-out.com as well as the school's own Web site www.stmamd.org. Please be aware that **parents must pre-register to receive e-mail notifications using school-out.com**

If weather conditions indicate the possibility of an early closing, parents should listen to the radio for school closing announcements. If parents cannot arrive at school on time for the early closing, they should have a friend or family member assist them by picking up their child(ren). In this instance, the office must be notified by telephone, e-mail, or fax. Frederick County will usually make the decision by 11:00 a.m. for a one- or two-hour early dismissal.

As a rule, we will follow Frederick County Public Schools for weather and emergency closings. If STMA closes early due to specific reasons relating only to our school, we will advertise on radio stations WFMD 930AM, WFRE 99.9FM and WAFY 103.1FM. Additionally, we will place a notice on www.schools-out.com and www.stmamd.org and will activate the school's Phone Tree.

Health & Safety Policies

Safety

For the security of our school community, all doors are locked at 8:15 a.m. They remain locked throughout the day. Those wishing to enter the school must use the doorbell located to the left of the main set of doors.

Immunizations

Upon entering Saint Thomas More Academy, students must have proof of immunizations. Maryland requires that all children entering school must submit an official immunization record or other appropriate documentation of immunization status. The immunization record should include the month, day, and year of vaccinations, be signed by a physician or health department official, and be approved by the school. **A parent must show a medical contraindication, signed by a physician, for a child to be excused from immunizations.** All health records are confidential.

Communicable Diseases

Communicable diseases are infectious diseases transmitted from person to person by direct contact with the infected person or contact with infected bodily discharges. Such diseases are easily transmitted in school settings. It is, therefore, important that communicable diseases be reported to school so that appropriate control measures may be taken to reduce the spread of infectious diseases to others. The list of communicable diseases is long, but some of the more common illnesses that should be reported to the school include:

- Strep throat
- Ringworm
- Impetigo
- Scabies
- Chicken pox
- Head lice
- Pneumonia
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)



Certain communicable diseases necessitate a 24-hour treatment with an antibiotic before returning to school. In these cases, the school requires a physician's notification of approval for the patient's return to school.

Other more serious communicable diseases that should be reported to school include:

- AIDS
- Hepatitis
- Measles, mumps, rubella
- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- Meningitis
- Tuberculosis

If a parent is unsure if an illness should be reported to school, s/he should consult her/his child's physician. All reports are confidential.

Illness

Students should not attend school if they have a fever greater than 100 degrees F, if they have vomited within 24 hours of coming to school, or if they do not feel well enough to participate in daily school activities including PE and recess. Other exclusions include eye drainage associated with pink eye (conjunctivitis), chicken pox, head lice, and unexplained skin rashes.

If a child becomes ill at school or has a fever of 100 or greater, the student will be sent home. It is the responsibility of the parent, once notified, to pick up the student in a timely manner (*at least within one hour of notification.*) If a child has a fecal accident, the parent will be called and the child must be picked up.

Medication at school

No prescription or over the counter medication will be dispensed at school without written permission from a doctor. This permission must be on the school form, which is available from the school office. All medications must be in original containers and turned in at the school office by an adult. **No medication may be dropped off by students.** The permission form must be signed by both doctor and parent.

Likewise, the original medication container or box for inhalers must be sent to the school. These containers or boxes should include the following: name of medication, directions for use, time for dispensing, name of doctor ordering the medication, date of prescription, expiration date as stated by the pharmacist, strength of medication/dosage, and student's name and grade.

Children may not have in their possession prescribed or over the counter medications. All medications need to be sent to the office where they will be given to the child at the designated time. *Please see Medication at School Addendum.*

Allergy Policy

It is the parent's responsibility to alert the school to serious allergies. Once informed, the school will take the necessary time to understand the particular child's allergies and will develop a plan that both reasonably protects the child and creates the least restrictive environment for the other children in the classroom and school.

If a student carries an EPIPEN with him/her, the physician's order must state this requirement.



Child Safety and Protection

Maryland law requires that all educators and school employees, including volunteers, report suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities in order that the child(ren) may be protected from harm and the family may be helped. Our school policy supports Maryland laws in this regard.

Information (aka Emergency) Cards

It is imperative that every child have an information/emergency card on file in the school office. It must be kept up-to-date all year. The school office should be notified *in writing* immediately should there be a change of address, telephone number (home, business or cell), or e-mail address. Students will only be dismissed to the parent/guardian, those adults listed on the emergency card, or an adult designated by the parents in writing, fax, e-mail, or verified phone call.

Student Conduct and Expectations

General Conduct Guidelines

- **Students are to show respect and consideration** for other students, persons in authority – both adults and students - school property, and the property of others.
- **Students will refrain from throwing inappropriate items**, e.g., rocks, dirt, snowballs, clothing, books, etc., in the school building or on the school's grounds.
- **Students will make only appropriate gestures and use respectful language at all times.**
- **Candy or food will not be eaten during class or outside. Chewing gum is not permitted on school property.**
- Students must remain on the school property during the school day.
- Running is reserved for the gym and for outside play.
- Students are to be quiet and orderly in the halls at all times.
- Students may enter the building during recess only when they have permission from an adult.

Discipline Policy

In order to ensure an environment conducive to safety and learning and to instill respect for oneself and others, Saint Thomas More Academy has adopted the following guidelines for inappropriate behavior of the student body while attending the Academy.

Inappropriate behavior is defined as:

- Inappropriate physical contact with another person. This includes hitting, punching, kicking, biting, pinching, slapping, and/or throwing objects at another person in the school or on the school grounds and any other inappropriate direct or indirect contact.
- Verbal abuse or unsuitable language.
- Direct acts of defiance.
- *Repeated* disruptions to classroom learning and/or continually contentious behavior at recess/lunch

First Offense: A conduct referral will be sent home to be signed by a parent and returned by the next school day. A parent conference may be requested.



Second Offense: A conduct referral will be sent home and a parent conference will be scheduled that day or before the child returns to school. At the conference, both parents, if possible/relevant, will be present and an agreement will be reached on *how the behavior will be addressed at home and at school*.

Third Offense: The child will be dismissed for the remainder of the day. A two day suspension will follow. A parent conference will be scheduled, whereupon the family must demonstrate a specific and suitable plan (via counseling, a behavior intervention plan, etc.) to address the problematic behavior(s).

Fourth Offense: In this instance OR if a family is unable to demonstrate a specific plan to address problematic behavior, the student’s enrollment will be terminated.

1. IF a child has been removed from school, s/he may not be re-admitted during that same school year.
2. The child may be readmitted the following year provided that the parents show evidence that professional assistance has been sought for the problem and that such assistance has resulted in sustained behavioral improvement. Upon receipt of evidence, administration *may choose* to readmit the child to STMA on a probationary status.

Discipline Policy at a Glance					
Circumstance	Conduct Referral and/or Phone Call of Concern from Office to Home	Parent Conference	Child Dismissed for the Day AND Two Day Suspension	Parent(s) Must <u>Demonstrate</u> a Specific Plan to Address the Behavior(s)	Enrollment Terminated
1 st Offense	YES	Possibly			
2 nd Offense	YES	YES – must take place <u>that day or before</u> the child returns to school.			
3 rd Offense	YES	YES	YES	YES	
4 th Offense OR if no Specific Plan to Address the Behavior is Provided	YES	YES	—	—	YES

Suspension

Certain actions may result in the suspension of a student. While it is not possible to list all cases that could arise, several categories are listed for guidance. Other problems of equal seriousness may arise and will be treated similarly.

- Possession of cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics, caps, matches, lighters, firecrackers, weapons, etc.
- Fighting.
- Physical abuse of a student, teacher, or staff member.



- Leaving the school grounds during the school day.
- Stealing/cheating/altering a school document/plagiarism.
- Serious property damage – reimbursement is required before the student may return to class.

Parent Conduct and Expectations

Parents are expected to be supportive of the staff and teachers. This support should be demonstrated through verbal comments as well as conduct. Repeated argumentative behavior or disruption of class/the school by a parent will result in the parent being asked to seek out another school for his/her children. We work as a team.

Parent/Teacher Relationship

Parenting and teaching are extremely difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each role, we are better able to support the actions of the other to the greater benefit of our children-students. As parents, you have a right to understand what expectations are placed on your child. This begins with school-wide standards from administration and clear communication from the teacher of your child's class.

STMA is a PreK through grade 8 school in which we endeavor to educate the *whole* person: physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually...in cooperation with parents who are children's primary teachers. In order to do this effectively, we must offer *varied learning experiences*, which include movement, and a well-balanced day; we must *differentiate instruction*, teaching the basics while encouraging wonder, inquiry, and intelligent debate; we must have *clear behavioral expectations* associated with logical consequences; and we must *act, teach, admonish, and encourage in ways which lead children to Christ*.

Communication You Should Expect from Administration

- Handbook which explains necessary policies and procedures for a smooth-running school, including a clear discipline system
- Beginning-of-the-year assembly in which the principal reviews school-wide expectations with students

Communication You Should Expect from Your Child's Teacher

- The teacher's classroom rules, which align with school-wide expectations and a Catholic philosophy of living (*Ex: We will be encouraging to one another in word and deed.*)
- The teacher's discipline system (*consequence system when students choose not to follow the rules*)
- A systematic way that the teacher informs you when a student needs improvement academically or behaviorally
- Identification of the curriculum your child will be taught along with monthly updates

At STMA, your son/daughter will experience some of the most rewarding moments of his/her life. However, there will be times when your child will encounter adverse situations that may affect his/her attitude. **It is at these times that we encourage you to speak with the teacher.** This is always part of the scholastic experience, no matter which school you attend.



Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Teachers

- Ways to help your child improve academically, behaviorally, or socially
- Concerns about your child's behavior or academic progress
- The mental or physical treatment of your child
- Pertinent home situations that may impact your child while s/he is at school

Concerns Not Appropriate to Discuss With Teachers

- Other students or parents
- Other faculty

There may be situations that require a conference between the teacher and a parent. These are to be encouraged. It is important that both parties involved have a clear understanding of the other's position. When these conferences are necessary, the procedures listed below should be followed to help promote a resolution of the issue or concern.

If you or your child has a concern to discuss with a teacher, the procedure listed below should be followed:

- If at all possible, have your child speak with the teacher. This is an important developmental step and part of the maturation process.
- If the issue has not been resolved, make an appointment to meet with the teacher.
- Please do not attempt to confront a teacher before or after school. Instead, make an appointment.

What can a parent do if the meeting with the teacher did not provide a satisfactory resolution?

- Call and set up an appointment with the principal to discuss the situation.

Many of the character traits required to be a successful student are exactly those that will promote a rewarding life. We trust the information provided makes both your child's and your experience with STMA more enjoyable and less stressful.

Dress code

STMA reserves the right to determine what it considers unacceptable dress. The following criteria are to be followed on out-of-uniform days:

1. Male and females students are restricted from wearing clothing that is unduly revealing:
 - a. Tops cut low at the neck or under the arms
 - b. Clothes that expose bare midriff
 - c. Pants worn below the hips exposing skin or underwear
 - d. Spaghetti strap tops (even when covered by another shirt)
 - e. Skirts, skorts, or shorts that are inappropriately short (including cheerleading type skirts)
 - f. Tank tops
 - g. Transparent clothing



2. Hair and jewelry are worn in a manner befitting Christian modesty, nothing radical or extreme including styles, cuts, and hair color. Earrings may not dangle.
3. Boys may not wear earrings.
4. Students may not dye their hair.
5. Students are not to wear clothes or items that advertise drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or weapons.
6. Students are not to wear clothes or items with sexually offensive or vulgar words or pictures.
7. Makeup, nail polish, and perfumes are not to be worn.
8. Footwear must have closed toes. No flip-flops! No shoes with high heels.
9. Hats, bandanas, sweatbands, caps, and visors may not be worn.
10. Backpacks and lunchboxes must be plain or befitting Christian modesty as well.

School Uniforms

STMA's school uniform companies are Lands' End and Educational Outfitters.

When placing an order with Lands' End, please use our preferred school number, **9000-6548-3**. Their contact information is: www.landsend.com/school and 1-800-963-4816.

Educational Outfitters is located on West Patrick Street in Frederick, MD, just past the Frederick Town Mall. The store is located in the Stonegate Shopping Center. Their phone number is 301-668-4844.

Complete uniform guidelines are provided in the appendix of this Handbook. Please refer to the guidelines when making all of your uniform purchases.

Arrival and Dismissal Policies

- **The school day begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. Students may arrive as early as 8:00 a.m. Upon arrival, students should go directly to their classrooms.** If a child is late arriving to school, s/he will need to report to the office for a late slip. **Students should not be left until the parent witnesses them entering the building.**
- All parents and visitors must report to the school office.
- **School is dismissed at 3:00 p.m. Students must be picked up no later than 3:15 p.m. by their legal guardian unless written permission is given ahead of time.** All carpool information needs to be complete, up to date, and on file in the school office.
- **Students should not arrive before 8:00 a.m. or remain after 3:15 p.m. The school is not responsible for supervision of students before or after the times stated above, and the school is not liable for any injuries or accidents which may occur during unsupervised times.** This is required by insurance coverage and is done for the safety of the children. Parents are advised, therefore, to follow the times as stated above.
- If a student is participating in a scheduled, supervised activity before or after the hours noted above, specific arrangements must be made for drop-off and/or pick-up at designated times.
- **Before and after school is not a conference time. Likewise, parents should not distract teachers from their duties between 8:00 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. Conferences may be scheduled at any time, but**



should not be impromptu or in front of other students. Parents should send a note indicating their need to talk with a teacher, or call the school to arrange a time.

- STMA does not have a transportation system at this time. Parents must make arrangements for their child(ren) to arrive at school and be picked up on time.

Morning Drop Off

Student drop off begins at 8:00 a.m. *Parents have the choice of using one of two methods for drop off:*

- a. Using the “Kiss and Ride” car line, parents may pull up in a line to the front door and may drop off children who will walk into the school independently. *This is the preferred method of drop off for those with children who are able to get themselves out of the car independently.* Please refrain from parking in the morning car line. This line is to be kept open for those who are dropping off only. If you must enter the school, please park in the parking lot so as not to hold up commuters.
- b. Parents who wish to escort their child(ren) to the front door are asked to park in the parking lot and walk their child(ren) to the front door. The child(ren) may then proceed directly to the classroom independently.

Afternoon Pick Up

Two teachers will coordinate dismissal at 3:00 p.m. each day. One teacher will announce carpool names via a walkie talkie from outside the school. The other teacher will alert students inside the building when their ride has arrived.

Parents have the choice of using one of two methods for pick up:

- a. Using the “Kiss and Ride” car line, parents may pull up in a line and wait until their child(ren) is/are dismissed by the teacher on duty. It is very helpful to have a sign in the front window of your vehicle indicating the last name and grade(s) of the student(s) being picked up. *This is the preferred method of pick up for those with children who are able to get themselves into the vehicle independently.*
- b. Parents who wish to meet their child(ren) at the front door are asked to park in the parking lot and wait on the covered walkway until their child(ren) are dismissed by the teacher on duty. Again, please recognize that this happens when the outside teacher with the walkie talkie directs the inside teacher to do so. The inside teacher should *not* be directed by parents who are waiting.

Special Note: Some families have unique arrangements for custody and guardianship of their children. Unless legal notification has been given to the office, it is assumed that both parents are permitted to pick children up and to have access to school-related information.

For the safety of everyone in our school community, please proceed with caution while in the parking lot. Please pass other cars with great care as many small children may be present.

Early Departure

Written confirmation or a phone call from parents to the school office is necessary to indicate a change in a child’s/children’s dismissal routine. Students are permitted to leave with a non-parent/non-designated person only if they have a signed note from home OR if a verifiable phone call has been made to the office by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the change. Parents are asked not to request early departure for a child unless absolutely necessary. Anyone coming to pick up a child for early departure must report to the office where they must show a photo ID (if unknown) and sign the child(ren) out.



Visitors and Volunteers

Volunteers are essential and appreciated. Cooperative assistance is required with students' families in order to provide certain school functions. Areas that rely on volunteers include: Library, cafeteria, classrooms, and the front office. **Upon arrival, all volunteers must sign in at the front office and obtain a volunteer badge. Volunteers are also asked to sign out upon leaving the building.**

Visitors will be asked to wait in the reception area until the person they wish to see is available or until they can be escorted. All visitors must enter the building through the main, front doors and sign in to receive a visitor's pass.

Vacations During the School Year

It is sometimes unavoidable for students to miss school due to family vacations. Parents should be aware that students miss valuable instruction time while they are away. **Parents may request homework prior to leaving on vacations during the school year. These requests may not always be honored as it is sometimes difficult for teachers to project what they might be able to cover while a student is away.** Students are required to make up all tests, classwork, and homework after such absences in a timely fashion.

Religious Formation

As an Academy which educates according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, certain religious exercises will be required of the students, even if they are not Catholics. The required activities include, but are not limited to: the Sign of the Cross, the Rosary, Mass, Prayers in class, Grace before meals, and full participation in religious education classes. There will be time taken from the school day to attend First Friday and Holy Day Masses. Help may be needed with transportation to church on these days.

Homework

Homework is a must. The purpose of homework is to foster habits of independent work-study, to reinforce learning that has taken place at school, and to relate school learning to out-of-school interests. Parents are asked to foster an atmosphere conducive to doing homework and stress the importance of homework to the student.

Homework includes written and/or study work, projects, and leisure reading. Students at all grade levels are expected to complete homework assignments. **Assignments missed because of excused absences must be completed in the same amount of days that the student is absent.**

Report Cards

STMA follows a trimester schedule for Grades One (1) through Eight (8), giving out report cards to students three times per year. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten follow a semester schedule and use an "observational report" (which indicates developing and mastered skills) rather than a report card. Parent conferences are conducted for *all* students in October and February. At any time, either a teacher or a parent may initiate a conference.



Parent/Teacher Communication

Parents are given the opportunity to meet the teachers on “Back to School Night” in September.

Throughout the year, parents may request conferences with teachers. Conferences may be arranged with teachers or administration by calling the school office, via a written request, or by e-mail. **Parents should refrain from calling faculty members at home.**

All parents and visitors to Saint Thomas More Academy must report directly to the office. If a parent must speak to a teacher, it should not be done in the context of the school day during class time. Without special permission from the office, teachers/students/classes are not to be interrupted by anyone while school is in session. Please remember that teachers are “on duty” from 7:45 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. each day, and time to communicate with parents during the school day differs with each teacher. Please keep in mind that during arrival and dismissal time, teachers are actively involved with students and preparation for/closure of the day.

In an effort to keep parents/guardians informed of children’s progress and school happenings, one yellow folder per family – called the “Friday Folder” - is sent home with the “youngest or only” student from each family attending STMA. Please read the contents of the folder carefully and return the folder to school each Monday.

In addition to the *Friday Folder*, the school regularly communicates with parents via a weekly e-mail update to families. To conserve paper, this e-mail is intended to serve as a “school newsletter.” To be certain that you do not miss any important communications from the school, please be sure to have your family’s current and preferred e-mail addresses on file with the office. E-mails can be sent to more than one address if so desired.

Lunch

All students are to bring their lunch on all full days of school. All lunches should be ready to eat as NO MICROWAVE is available for heating foods. **Parents are discouraged from delivering restaurant or fast food lunches for their children in lieu of bringing lunch from home.**

In an emergency, those children who forget their lunch will be given a fruit cup and choice of peanut butter or cheese on crackers. The family will be billed \$5 for each lunch the school provides.

Students will enter the cafeteria in an orderly manner, proceed to their assigned tables and eat in a mannerly fashion. No student may leave the table unless permission has been granted. Students will clean up after themselves.

Playground

- Students will respect and obey the teachers/aides on duty and report any misconduct to the adults in charge immediately.
- If an accident occurs, students will immediately report to the teachers/aides on duty.
- Fighting or rough games (dodge-ball, keep-away, tackle football, etc.) are not permitted.
- Students may not throw objects (rocks, sticks, sand...)
- Food or chewing gum is not permitted on the playground.
- Students will line up and enter the building quietly.



Emergency Drills

To ensure orderly and safe evacuation of the school in emergency situations, monthly fire drills will be held. Emergency drills are conducted in silence and good order. After the emergency signal is sounded, students are to immediately leave all classrooms in a quiet, orderly manner; the return to the classroom also requires these behaviors.

Textbooks

Textbooks belong to the school and are used by the students. **Any damage, defacement, or loss of a book will require a replacement by the family.** Students are responsible for turning in the textbooks they have been assigned at the end of each year. *All hardcover books must be covered at all times.* If a student withdraws from the school for any reason, the student's textbooks remain the property of the school, as per the non-refundable Book & Resource Fee policy.

Field Trips

Field trips will be at the discretion of the teacher and administration. Parents will often be welcome and may be needed to provide transportation and assist the teacher. Permission slips will be required. **School uniforms are to be worn for all field trips unless a specific exception is made. Electronic devices including iPods, Game Boys, etc. are not permitted on field trips unless special permission is given by administration.**

Birthday Parties

Invitations for birthday parties may be exchanged in class only if the entire class is invited. Children must respect the feelings of one another, and refrain from talking about a party where "all" are not invited. If a parent wishes to share a birthday treat with the child's class, arrangements must be made in advance directly with the child's teacher. **Due to the presence of food allergies in some classes (PreK through Grade 1 this year), birthday parties may only include *non-food* treats.**

Telephone Use/Messages

School phones are for school-related business. Examples of acceptable phone use are: serious illness, family emergencies, altered medical appointments, and unexpected transportation changes. Likewise, **it is requested that personal calls between parents and children be kept to a minimum.** Only emergency messages will be forwarded to children. Students' outgoing messages will also be limited to emergency messages. Forgetting a book, a homework assignment, or materials for an out of school activity will *not* be regarded as an emergency.

Teachers are *not* available for calls during the school day. Parents may leave teachers a message via the front desk to be returned after school. **It is School Policy that teachers' home phone numbers and personal e-mail addresses are not given out; nor are parents to access and use such information via the *STMA Student/Parent Directory.***



Cell Phones/Pagers

Students are not permitted to use cell phones/pagers or have these items on their person during the school day (8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.) Only those students remaining for after school activities may bring a cell phone; however, it must be kept secured and turned off until after 3:15 p.m. After 3:15 p.m., the cell phone is NOT to be used for anything other than contacting a parent/guardian. The school is not responsible for lost or damaged items if the student brings them to school.

Electronic Devices

Students are not permitted to use iPods, Game Boys, and other electronic devices during the school day (8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.)

Lost and Found

All articles found are to be taken to the office. Items will be stored in a labeled container located in the PTO/Conference Room. If the article is marked with a name, it will be returned to its owner. If there is no marking, it will be held for several weeks and then donated to an organization assisting the poor. **Parents should label all clothing – uniforms and outerwear – and all school accessories (book bags, backpacks, lunchboxes, etc.) before allowing their children to wear/bring them to school.**

Library

Each student in PreK to Grade Five (5) is given the opportunity to visit the library and check out books. Books are checked out for one/two weeks. Library books need to be returned on the due date, and if any books are outstanding, no new books will be permitted to be checked out.

A lost or destroyed book must be paid for by the family. Children deliberately damaging visual aids or books in the library will not be permitted to continue using them. Reference books are not to be taken from the library.

To ensure that all library books are returned before the summer begins; report cards will be released when all library and general book fee obligations have been met.

Fundraising

STMA has one annual major fundraiser in which parents are obligated to participate in the form of raffle ticket sales: the Holiday Celebration. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) does hold other regular fundraising events (such as Grapes & Gifts Galore) but participation is optional.

The management of other solicitations is as follows:

- Friday Folders contain office-based communications, student offerings (sports, scouts, etc.), and purely charitable solicitations for causes that have affected or affect immediate STMA families.
- Events, promotions, etc. that fall outside the above criteria are given a “mention” in the school’s weekly e-mail communication and shared via the school’s “flyer bookcase” in the front office.



Right to Amend the Handbook

STMA reserves the right to amend the *Parent/Student Handbook* and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified of any changes made. This *Parent/Student Handbook* is an informative booklet for parents and students setting forth rules and policies of the school.

As teachers and the principal, we vow to enforce the student code of behavior utilizing the discipline guidelines as stated under the school's discipline policy in order to provide an environment that will enhance the catechesis of God's word as delivered through the fullness of the Faith throughout His Holy Catholic Church.

Mrs. Margie Neff, Principal

Mr. Eddie Argauer

Mrs. Judi Atwell

Ms. Kelly Bowersock

Mr. Rob Childress

Mrs. Margie Harp

Mrs. Cheryl Horner

Mr. Ken Jones

Mrs. Eileen Lombardi

Ms. Ann Marie Lynch

Mrs. Julia Medrano

Mrs. Mariana Nestianu

Mrs. Theresa Pedersen

Ms. Lauren Ritter

Mrs. Sherri Slattery

Mrs. Judy Smarsh

Mrs. Tami Stakem

Mrs. Laith VanGrootenbruel



St. Thomas More Academy School Handbook

Receipt of Handbook Form

As students and parents, we acknowledge that we have received, read and will adhere to the information in the *STMA Student/Parent Handbook* for 2008/2009. In addition, recognizing human imperfection and the ongoing need for guidance and formation of the student, we respect the school's right to discipline per STMA's discipline policy.

Parent Name – Printed

Date

Parent Name – Signature

Date

Student Name(s) (Print)

Signature of Student(s)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Please return this signed form to the office on or before Monday, September 22, 2008.

