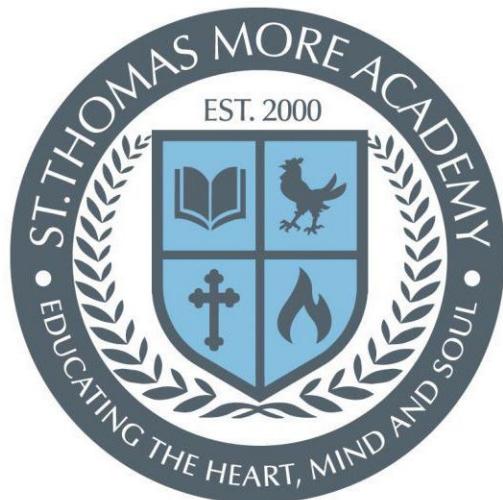


# ST. THOMAS MORE ACADEMY

## PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK

### 2025- 2026



St. Thomas More Academy

103 Prospect Street

Middletown, MD 21769

[WWW.STMAMD.ORG](http://WWW.STMAMD.ORG)

Office: 240-490-5479 | Fax: 240-490-7626



# Welcome!

St. Thomas More Academy (STMA) is an academic institution owned and operated by lay Catholics. The direction of St. Thomas More Academy is vested in its board of directors that oversees the not-for-profit corporation and the fidelity to the mission.

## **Mission Statement:**

St. Thomas More Academy is an independent school rooted in the Catholic faith, providing a classical liberal arts curriculum, inspiring hearts, educating minds and nurturing the souls of our students.

## **Vision Statement:**

St. Thomas More Academy is recognized and respected for academic excellence, producing successful, well-rounded students who are critical thinkers, confident in their faith.

## **Values:**

Saint Thomas More Academy (STMA) strives to realize its vision and achieve its mission, through collective actions characterized by the following values:

*Christ-Centeredness* – Rooted in a rich Catholic Tradition, STMA’s religious education extends beyond the classroom to permeate all aspects of a shared experience as a school community.

*Caring Teachers* – The heart of STMA is the faculty whose members joyfully extend themselves to ensure that each student develops a firm foundation on which a lifelong commitment to, and love of, learning can mature.

*Individualized Instruction* – Our commitment to a teacher-student ratio of no more than 20/1 and small class size ensures that students receive the personal attention they require to accelerate and optimize their learning.

*Development of the Whole Child* – Established with a firm commitment to a classical liberal arts education, STMA’s curriculum stresses religion, a comprehensive reading program, writing, math, and critical thinking with strong attention to language, music, art, and physical education as essential to a core of instruction immersed in a spiritual, loving environment.

*Community* – STMA prides itself on the partnership established between students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community. These relationships focused on the presence of Christ promote a nurturing environment that is evident in all encounters.

*Integrity* – Consistent with attention to Gospel values, interactions with others are characterized by honesty, respect, and trust.

*Stewardship* – STMA invites all members of the community to generously share their time, talent, and material resources in assisting us achieve our mission.

### **Student Code of Honor**

I will honor God with my actions and words.

I will cooperate with those in authority.

I will strive, as a Christian student, to do my personal best.

I will always be honest, trustworthy, kind, compassionate, and set an example for others to follow.

### **School Philosophy**

STMA students are entitled to an excellent education provided in a caring atmosphere with Christian values. To assist in meeting this goal there must be a strong Catholic identity, varying educational techniques, and active parental support. Parents are strongly encouraged to become involved in the life of the school, just as the school seeks to support the life of the family.

### **Catholic Identity**

The student's growth in faith is the central purpose for STMA. Students are challenged to achieve their highest potential. They are encouraged to live their faith in word and deed in their church and larger community. STMA joyfully exercises its responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

### **Board of Directors (BOD)**

The STMA BOD is composed of men and women who are representative of the Catholic community and who are intimately related to the life of the school. The BOD oversees the long-term financial stability and viability of the institution. Additionally, the BOD hires and oversees the Director of the Academy. A current list of BOD members can be found on the school website.

### **Administrative Leadership Team**

The Administrative Leadership Team at STMA is comprised of a Director and a Principal of Academics.

Responsibilities of the Director include, but are not limited to administrative tasks, enrollment management, marketing, school communications, and day-to-day operations of the school and its facility.

Responsibilities of The Principal of Academics include, but are not limited to curriculum, scheduling, discipline, testing, accreditation, and licensing.

The Administrative Leadership Team reserves the right to interpret and apply the policies it presents and to act on matters not specifically addressed in this handbook.

### **Parent – Teacher Organization (PTO)**

The STMA PTO believes the development and nurturing of the school community is best accomplished in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation with the consideration and respect of the distinctive qualities, talents, abilities, and needs of each person. By providing a vehicle for service, social, and fundraising activities in support of the school, the STMA PTO recognizes the importance of its role in affirming the school community and its members as living expressions of God's love.

The STMA PTO is comprised of dedicated parents and teachers who work together to provide activities and funds to the school. With the hard work and commitment of families and staff, the school can make large strides. The STMA PTO provides an example for our students that together they make a difference in our community, making it a better place.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Accreditation and Certification**

St. Thomas More Academy is certified by the State of Maryland and accredited by the National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools. The classroom teachers are degreed in accordance with the Maryland State Department of Education regulations.

### **Enrollment**

STMA enrolls students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Eight. While maintaining independence as a private entity, STMA recognizes and respects the proper jurisdiction of the local bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in matters relevant to instruction in the doctrines and beliefs of the Catholic Church.

All faiths are welcome to inquire. Preference is given to Catholic families when considering space available. When families of other faiths are accepted, they must support the policies of STMA, including the policy that their children will receive religious instruction in the Catholic Faith, attend Mass and take part in the religious devotions and activities of the Academy.

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

Admission may be denied if the student does not meet STMA's standards of achievement and behavior. It is the right and the duty of the school to decline the application of students who require professional competency beyond staff training.

Class size is limited.

All families must sign an Enrollment Contract for each school year. STMA must 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. 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.

## **Parent – School Agreement**

As the primary educators of their children, parents/guardians freely make the choice of a Catholic education for their children. Enrollment and acceptance at STMA, and the signing of appropriate documents required by the school, constitutes an agreement by the parent/guardian to accept and abide by the rules and regulations of the school and to support its philosophy of education.

### **Tuition**

The STMA website [www.stmamd.org](http://www.stmamd.org) lists current tuition rates. Discounts are available when multiple children of the same family are enrolled during the same school year. A limited amount of financial assistance is available to families each year. See **Tuition Assistance** below. Tuition is paid through FACTS, an online tuition management system.

### **Tuition Assistance**

Parents should first apply for financial assistance through FACTS. The Frederick Parish Tuition Assistance Fund utilizes the FACTS system to determine awards for families registered in Frederick County Catholic parishes. Each January, STMA families in need are also eligible to apply to FOCE (Friends of Catholic Education) for scholarships and tuition assistance for the next school year. All families are encouraged to use the SCRIP and the FOCE gift card programs to receive tuition credits each month, at no cost to STMA.

A \$500 tuition credit may be awarded if a currently enrolled family refers a new family that enrolls one or more children at STMA. The credit is applied once the new family submits a signed contract.

### **Withdrawal of Students**

Families withdrawing students from STMA should notify the school in writing and / or submit the withdrawal in FACTS as early 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.

## **Parent Communication**

Open communication between parents and school is always crucial to the success of the organization. Parents are welcome to contact teachers whenever there is a question or concern. Conferences with individual teachers must be arranged through the office or individual teacher. Appointments may be made before or after regular school hours.

Please use the **“Notes from Parents to School”** for all written communications. Make copies of the form as needed.

If there is a concern involving a student or STMA policies or procedures the appropriate chain of command is:

1. Discuss the issue with the teacher concerned.
2. If you have approached the teacher and if problems persist, make an appointment with the Principal to discuss the problem.
3. If the concern or problem persists a school board member may be asked to intervene.

## **Student Information**

It is very important that STMA has accurate addresses, phone numbers, and emergency contact information. The STMA Office needs to be informed promptly of any change of address or phone numbers. In case of a short-term parental absence, a note to the office and teacher is required indicating the person who is in charge of the student in case of an emergency.

## **School Directory**

A school directory, listing all STMA students/families, is distributed in early Fall and will have families' names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. To be excluded from the directory, please notify the school office in writing.

## **Policy on Human Sexuality**

Because the Catholic Church teaches that same-sex attraction is inherently disordered and that sexual activity is only appropriate for the purpose of love and life within a marriage considered valid by the Church, those students experiencing this disordered inclination may not advocate for it or express it in the context of STMA classes, activities, or events.

Chaste behavior and modesty in dress and deportment is expected at all times by those on STMA property and at STMA events. All students, faculty, and visitors are to observe modesty when using restrooms or changing rooms and may only use facilities that conform to the individual's biological sex.

One's biological sex and gender expression are not to be disaggregated but should be seen in harmony according to God's plan. STMA shall respect the biological sex with which a person is born and shall apply all policies and procedures in relation to that person according to that person's biological sex at birth.

STMA requires that the use of names and pronouns be in accordance with the person's biological sex.

## **School Property**

Student desks and lockers are the property of STMA. They may be opened and searched at any time by school administration or law enforcement agencies. STMA reserves the right to search student items brought onto school property.

## **Substance Abuse Policy**

To maintain a drug and alcohol-free environment, promote health and well-being, student use or possession of illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages, mood-altering substances, drug related paraphernalia, and prescription or non-prescription drugs not kept with the school front office are all prohibited.

Tobacco and any other controlled substances, including but not limited to e-cigarettes, are forbidden. Vaping (Juul etc.) of any substance is prohibited on school grounds or in the school building.

## **Weapons Policy**

Weapons, including firearms, are prohibited on STMA property, in attendance at an STMA function or on any STMA-sponsored transportation. Possession of firearms or other weapons such as knives or any other items which can be used as a weapon is grounds for disciplinary action, including expulsion.

## **Acceptable Use Policy for the Internet and Technology Tools**

Technology skills are necessary for our students now and in the future. Access to the Internet and technology tools (including software tools, web-based applications and services, computer equipment, iPads, and other personal electronic devices) allow students to conduct research, produce digital content, and communicate with classmates and teachers. The Internet and technology tools put enormous power at the fingertips of users. As such, they also place a great deal of responsibility on users. It is imperative that technology resources be used to build community, encourage critical reflection, and foster readiness for future learning.

Developments in technology at STMA are to be used ethically, legally, and responsibly. As in other areas, our students are expected to make good choices. Individual users are responsible for their activity on the Internet and technology tools, including the material stored and information shared. To protect private and personal information, unauthorized disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal information is prohibited. STMA reserves the right to edit Internet accounts for child-only configurations, and to run filtering software for students' protection. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student users (and their parents) recognize the limitations STMA imposes on the use of the Internet and technology tools and that they understand the standards of behavior the school expects of users.

All users of St. Thomas More Academy's network and technology tools, whether on a school-owned or personal device, are responsible for adhering to the following guidelines for acceptable use. Acceptable uses of the Internet and technology tools are for authorized academic and school-related activities that support learning and teaching and:

- Respect the privacy and property rights of others and the well-being of STMA
- Are consistent with Roman Catholic values and morals
- Treat technology tools and computer equipment with respect

Unacceptable uses of the Internet and technology tools include but are not limited to:

- Violating the rights or privacy of others, including by photographing or filming an individual without consent
- Posting or distributing videos or photographs without consent of the persons depicted and STMA
- Using technology to send profanity, obscenity, or other offensive or harmful language
- Unauthorized copying, downloading, or installation of content, software, or applications (including plagiarism or “pirating” music)
- Sending false information or sending messages to the STMA community that fail to identify the sender (including anonymous messages or messages using a pseudonym)
- Using any program designed to disrupt network performance or breach network security, such as software designed to capture passwords or break encryption protocols
- Revealing personal information beyond what is required for login while using Internet or web based resources
- Responding to inappropriate messages from others (which should be reported to STMA)
- Downloading or copying information onto disks or hard drives without prior teacher approval
- Accessing, downloading, storing, or printing files or messages that are inappropriate or may be offensive to others (including pornography and other inappropriate images)
- Sharing of passwords or attempting to discover another’s password (passwords should be changed frequently)
- Using or accessing another’s account (network accounts are to be used only by those for whom the account has been established)
- Intentionally writing, producing, generating, copying, or introducing dangerous codes or programs designed to cause harm, including, but not limited to viruses, bugs, ‘worms’, etc.
- Intentionally damaging, altering, or tampering with any hardware, software, printers, keyboards, speakers, etc.
- Accessing or searching files, directories, or folders for which the user does not have authorization
- Intentionally erasing, renaming, or disabling of anyone else’s files or programs
- Accessing social media, email, or other off-task websites or apps during school without explicit permission of a teacher or adult supervisor
- Violating STMA’s code of conduct or the law.
- Harassment/cyber-bullying of others online, whether against a student, non-student, or employee, is serious, is prohibited, and is contrary to the school’s policy and values. Harassment/cyber-bullying whether it is initiated on campus or off campus, online or in person, should be reported immediately to a faculty member, and may lead to disciplinary action and possible criminal prosecution under Maryland’s law prohibiting the Misuse of Interactive Computer Service (“Grace’s Law”).

Parents are responsible for:

- Reviewing and discussing this policy with their child as well as supporting STMA in its enforcement
- Partnering with the school in monitoring their child's use of technology
- Modeling appropriate Internet behaviors for their child
- Reporting any concerns regarding this policy or their child's use of the Internet or technology tools to school personnel. Failure to adhere to the policy guidelines may result in a revocation of a student's Internet access and other technology privileges and disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion.

### **Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy**

Students are strongly encouraged to leave cell phones and other personal electronic devices (such as iPods, smart watches, or similar devices) at home and not bring them to school.

If such devices must be brought to school, they must be dropped off at the front office before morning assembly and prayer and may be picked up only when the student leaves school for the day. Students may not have cell phones or personal electronic devices during clubs and/or on campus activities.

At no time during the school day should a student have a cell phone or personal electronic device in his or her possession, including in a backpack and/or in a locker. If a device is seen, heard, or used during school hours, it will be confiscated and released only to a parent or legal guardian.

The school office phone is available for student use during school hours should the need arise.

### **School Day**

#### **STMA Daily Schedule**

7:00am-8:15 am - Before School Care  
8:15 am – 8:30am - Students may go to classrooms  
8:30 am - Announcements/Prayer  
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm Dismissal  
3:30pm-6:00pm – After School Care  
4:00pm -Teachers depart.

## **Lunch and Snack**

A morning snack time is provided for all students. Lunch is in the afternoon. Children should come to school each day with a nutritiously healthy lunch and snack, as well as milk, water or juice from home. STMA does not provide microwaves to heat lunches. Optional hot lunch delivery days are offered through My Hot Lunch Box. All ordering is done online. Parents are discouraged from delivering other restaurant lunches for their children.

If a student forgets lunch, a Lunchable may be offered with parental permission and the family's tuition account will be charged \$5.00. Students will eat in their classrooms. Grace is said before meals. Students are expected to clean up after themselves, with responsibility increasing with age.

## **Recess**

Children in grades PreK through 8 go outside for recess daily, weather permitting. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. No child may be excused from recess without a daily written excuse or phone call from the parent or guardian. Excuses are only accepted for situations such as acute asthma or environmental allergy, fractures, etc.

## **Student Arrival and Dismissal**

Students arriving for Before Care should use the side doors facing the staff parking lot. Before and After Care will be in the multi-purpose room.

Front Doors will be locked until 8:15 am. Staff members will come outside to greet students as they exit their cars. Students should be dropped off between 8:15 and 8:30 am.

Parents should call or email the office and their child's teacher by 9:00 am to communicate any updates about their child's schedule.

## **Early Checkout**

A parent picking up a student early should email the office and their child's teacher or send a "Notes from Parents to School" that morning. The child will be called from the classroom when the parent reports to the office. The parent must sign their child out.

No child, under any circumstance, will be allowed to leave school during the school day with an adult other than a parent or guardian without prior permission from the parent/guardian.

## **Tardiness**

A student who arrives after 8:30 a.m. on a regular school day is tardy.

## **Dismissal Procedures**

Dismissal is staggered by last name. Families with last names beginning with A-M should pick up between 3:00 and 3:15 pm. Families with last names beginning with N-Z pick up between 3:15 and 3:30 pm. Parents / Guardians are asked to wait in their cars in the carline which forms in front of the school on Prospect Street. ***There is no parking in this area during drop off or pick up times.*** Students will be escorted to their vehicles by STMA staff or Safety Patrol members. Only passenger side doors should be used for student loading. Please wait for the cars ahead of you to move before moving forward or pulling out of the car line. If the line backs up to the end of Prospect Street, please circle around the block to avoid a traffic jam.

Students who are not picked up by 3:30 pm on regular school days or 12:30 pm on early dismissal days will be taken to After Care. A discounted \$5.00 fee will be charged for any child picked up within 15 minutes. The full After Care rate will apply to students picked up later than 4:00 pm.

## **Attendance**

If a student is absent from school, a parent must report the absence, no later than 9:00 a.m., by calling the school office or emailing [info@stmamd.org](mailto:info@stmamd.org). The following information is needed:

- child's name
- grade/teacher
- reason for absence
- homework plan if applicable

If notification is not received, the school office will call to resolve the student's absence.

In the event of an absence, assignments can be made up and full credit received if the reason is:

- illness of student
- death in the immediate family or family emergency
- court appearance
- quarantine
- exposure to contagious disease
- medical and dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours

“Notes from Parents to School” are to be sent by parents for each absence. If a student is absent for four consecutive days or more, a doctor’s excuse must accompany the student upon return.

Vacations are discouraged during school days. Students are required to turn in missed work. If the missed work is not completed with appropriate effort or in a timely manner it will receive a zero. Tests will be made up by the student for a grade. Tests missed due to an absence will be given the first day back at school. Homework may not be available in advance of a student’s absence.

## **Safety**

### **Inclement Weather/Snow Day/Emergency Closing Procedures**

STMA will observe the Frederick County Public Schools’ decision for weather related closings and delayed openings. Parents should sign up for Remind text messaging service for emergency school closing information. The school will send an email as well when schools are closing. Weather related closings and delays will be posted on the school website and social media.

If weather conditions indicate the possibility of an early closing, parents should listen to the radio for FCPS 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 staff must be notified by telephone or email. Frederick County will usually make the decision by 11:00 a.m. for an early dismissal. Parents should plan for the care of their children during these emergencies. **Before Care will not be available on delayed opening days due to inclement weather. After Care will not be available on any day school closes early for inclement weather.**

## **Security**

For the security of the STMA community, all exterior doors are locked at 8:30 a.m. and 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.

## **Visitors**

Parents and other visitors must report to the school office upon entering the building. They must sign in and out and wear a visitor badge while in the school. Visitors granted access to the building must follow all security / safety protocols. Parents dropping off a lunch or other items are to leave the items with office personnel who will ensure delivery to the student.

## **Emergency Drills**

To ensure orderly and safe evacuation of the school in an emergency, monthly drills will be held. Students will be taught how to evacuate safely in the event of fire, to shelter in place during a lockdown, and how to protect themselves during a weather emergency.

## **Health**

An Annual Student Health Survey form is required for each student to update the student's health file with current and pertinent information.

In the event of a serious accident during school hours, we will attempt to notify parents before any medical care is given. If an accident occurs during a field trip, the nearest medical care facility will be utilized.

According to the Maryland Department of Education a student should be temporarily excluded from school for:

- A temperature of 100 or higher – any fever should be gone for at least 24 hours before the student returns to school
- Most inflammatory eye conditions, such as pink eye
- Rashes or eczema that is known to be contagious or infectious
- Head cold of any consequence, especially with a persistent cough and excessive drainage
- Sore or inflamed throat -- if strep throat is diagnosed, the student needs to be on medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- Discharge from the ears
- Body lice or head lice
- Vomiting or Diarrhea

If a child is sent home ill with a possible contagious condition during the day, he/she will not be permitted to return to school that same day. Students sent home, or have been absent during the school day, may not participate in extra-curricular events that day or evening. Any fever should be gone for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Children who vomit at school must go home and remain home for 24 hours.

Parents must remain vigilant throughout the school year in monitoring their children's health, keeping their children home when necessary, and openly communicating with school administration about any health concerns or illness.

## **Allergy Alerts**

It is the parents' responsibility to alert the school staff to allergies. Once informed, the school staff will take the necessary time to understand the 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 self carries an EPIPEN or inhaler, the physician's order must state this requirement.

## **Providing Treats in School**

Because STMA has children with allergies, parents must first contact the teacher to inquire if treats are acceptable in class. The teacher will then take appropriate steps to ensure the safety and participation of everyone.

## **Medication Policy**

- All medication will be kept in the front office in a locked medicine cabinet.
- The school administration will administer all medications. Students are not permitted to medicate themselves at any time, with the exception of students who are authorized by their doctor to self-administer inhalers or Epi-pens (see allergy alerts).
- All prescription medication to be administered during school hours must be in the original prescription container marked with the student's name, the name of the medication, the accurate dosage, and when it is to be administered. Any dosage changes must have a doctor's written statement (which may be faxed to the school) or a new original prescription container. All prescriptions must be current within the year.
- All prescription medication, including inhalers that are administered on a regular basis, must have a completed "Prescribed Medication Permission Form" on file. This form can be obtained from the school office.
- Medications, such as antibiotics, that are ordered to be given 3-4 times a day, necessitating a dose to be given during school hours: parents should request an extra bottle from the pharmacist so only the amount of medication needed at school can be sent, to avoid having the student carry the medication back and forth each day.
- Non-prescription medications to be given must also be in the original container (i.e no baggies) with written authorization from a parent/guardian detailing when the medication is to be given and the reason for giving it.
- If it becomes necessary to give a student medication that is not kept at school, a parent/guardian may come to school and administer the medication. Inform the office beforehand.

## **Academics**

STMA provides a classical education for children in a faith centered environment. The day starts with prayer, and children are actively taught to be kind, sensitive to others, and confident. In addition to reading, language arts, math, science, and history, and Grades 3 - 8 study Latin. Art, music, and physical education are also offered.

Using the classical method, the order to the world is stressed throughout all the subjects studied. STMA students learn “how” to learn, acquiring the tools of learning that make this possible. Respecting the classical trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) teachers strive to feed the soul as well as the intellect. Children respond beautifully to this approach to learning, quickly becoming people who love to learn.

## **Assessment**

Report cards may use a variation of the grading scale as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher. Grading in Kindergarten, First and Second Grade depends upon intellectual development and ability, growth in knowledge and skills, neatness, completion of work, and on task time.

In addition to the above, grading in Third through Eighth Grade depends upon: tests, quizzes, class participation, homework/daily work, projects/reports. The grading scale is 100 – 90 = A, 89 – 80 = B, 79 – 70 = C, 69 – 60 = D, and any grade of 59 and below is failing (F).

## **Honor Roll**

Students in grades 4-8 have the opportunity to achieve Honor Roll. To determine honor roll status a student’s class percentages are added for the trimester. Main courses count 2 times and Specials count 1 time. Honor Roll – averages 89.5 – 100. A grade of a D or an F in any subject will eliminate a student from being on the Honor Roll.

Conduct and Effort grades are not included in the overall average. However, if a student’s Conduct or Effort grade is unsatisfactory, the student will not be on Honor Roll.

## **Field Trips**

Both school-wide and grade level field trips are taken throughout the school year. A signed permission slip must be on file for a student to participate.

Teachers and the Administrative Leadership Team have the right to prohibit a student from participating in a field trip when circumstances warrant.

If chaperoning a field trip, parents are asked not to bring others along, including siblings.

## **Homework**

Homework is an essential part of the learning process. A certain amount of homework is necessary to reinforce what is taught at school. The student who successfully learns the process of completing homework also masters self-discipline, independence, initiative, and responsibility. If minimum work requirements cannot be met, students will be placed on academic probation and placed on a program to assist them.

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 the responsible completion of homework to the student.

Homework includes written and/or study work, projects, and purposeful reading. Students at all grade levels are expected to complete homework assignments and turn them in on time.

Assignments missed because of excused absences must be completed in the same number of days that the student is absent.

Homework should provide:

- An extension of classroom activities
- An evaluation tool for both the teacher and student
- A positive learning experience emphasizing quality not quantity.
- Additional opportunities to learn time management and organizational skills

Teachers will:

- Check assignment book each day in class
- Provide assignments relevant to class work
- Use assigned homework as an assessment tool
- Consider the age and capabilities of the student when preparing assignments
- Consider the time required to complete an assignment

Parents will:

- Check assignment book each day at home
- Provide adequate time and a suitable place for the student to complete homework
- Be available for questions, but remember that homework is the child's responsibility
- Contact the teacher when their child consistently has difficulty completing assignments

Students will:

- Clarify homework instructions with the teacher
- Take home materials needed to complete assignment
- Budget time
- Return all completed work to the teacher by due date
- Students in all grades will use the provided assignment notebook

### **Make-Up Work**

Students who have an excused absence have the same amount of time missed to make-up missed work. Example: If a student was ill for 2 days, then they have 2 days, upon return to school, to complete and turn in missed assignments/activities.

Homework may be requested before 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. Homework will be placed in the school front office to be picked up.

### **Physical Education (P.E.)**

Students attend P.E. once or twice per week. Participation is expected except when a student has a note from a doctor releasing them from P.E. class. A doctor's note is required indicating the appropriate level of P.E. activity if a student has sustained a fracture or injury. If a student has worn a cast or a splint, a doctor's note is required to resume PE activity.

### **Promotion and Retention**

Students who have successfully completed grade requirements will be promoted to the next grade. However, a teacher/administrator may decide it is the child's best interest due to academic or emotional immaturity to retain that student in his/her current grade level. Parents will be notified by the beginning of the third trimester if a student is in jeopardy of being retained.

### **Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten**

A decision to retain a student in the PreK or Kindergarten program shall be based on the progress of the child, especially with regards to level of maturity attained and the ability to handle the academic program of the next grade. This decision will be a consultative one involving the teacher, parents, and administration.

### **Grades 1-3**

Inability to read causes more children to experience failure or lack of progress in school than any other single factor. The foundation in reading is laid in the primary grades, especially the first two grades. Hence, in the primary grades, promotion is to be determined mainly by the student's progress in reading. It is important to determine the overall ability of the student.

### **Grades 4-8**

Students in grades 4-8 are required to pass all core classes: Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies.

Promotion to the next grade also demands that students maintain a general average of 70% or above.

## **Reports to Parents**

Reports of each student's progress will be made during the year. Report cards are sent home at the conclusion of each trimester. A Parent/Teacher Conference is scheduled in the fall and spring. Additional conferences may be planned as deemed necessary.

If a teacher observes that a child is having difficulty with classroom work, parents will be notified by phone or in writing and an appointment may be made to discuss the student's progress.

## **Discipline**

### **Discipline Policy:**

The goal is to form disciples of Christ by encouraging virtuous living and clear expectations of behavior and the consequences for not following them.

The following have been determined by administration, faculty, and staff to be the non-negotiable essential requirements of a well-mannered STMA student:

1. Walk in the hallways and stairwells.
2. Listen while others are talking.
3. Keep hands, feet, and objects to oneself.
4. Do not threaten another with physical violence or verbal abuse (includes name calling, humiliation, gossip, bad language).
5. Be honest. Do not steal or cheat.
6. Greet adults and each other with courtesy. Stand up when an adult enters a classroom and greets the class.
7. Be in full uniform each day.
8. Do not bring electronic devices to school unless listed on the school supply list.
9. Participate in class and follow teacher assignments.
10. Take care of books and school property. Do not cause vandalism or damage.

**A Behavior Incident Report on the Notes Home will be emailed and sent home with any student who gets 3 misbehavior incidents in one week (from any teacher, in any class).**

Any family whose student either 1) threatens physical violence or verbal abuse or 2) cheats or steals will get an immediate phone call from the teacher or Principal. The family must make an appointment with the teacher and/or Principal within 48 hours.

In the case of physical violence, the student accused will not be allowed back in school until the parent conference takes place.

The consequence for pre-meditated intent to harm with physical violence:

1st offense – 1 day suspension, write out plan for improvement, letter of apology

2nd offense – expelled from school, must pay balance of full year tuition

The consequence for verbal abuse:

1st offense: 1 day in-school suspension, letter of apology, write out plan for improvement

2nd offense: 2 day out of school suspension

3rd offense: expelled from school, must pay balance of full year tuition

Vandalism and deliberate damage to property must be repaired/replaced at the expense of the parents. Additionally, in-school community service hours will be assigned.

The Administrative Leadership Team reserves the right to limit all school-related extracurricular activity participation based on a student's conduct and/or effort grade.

**Harassment and Intimidation**

Harassment or intimidation shall include, but not be limited to, verbal or physical threats, offensive or threatening communications, gossip, unwanted or offensive contact, obscene or threatening gestures, or other form of willful conduct intended to place someone in fear or in physical danger. Students making such threats in any form face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

School Policy also strictly prohibits any form of sexual harassment, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- inappropriate or unwanted physical contact (e.g. grabbing or touching a person's private areas).

- inappropriate physical gestures (e.g. rude hand gestures or exposing private areas of the body);
- inappropriate language or suggestions of a sexual nature; and derogatory and/or offensive jokes and comments

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a form of violence that hurts others and it is strictly prohibited at STMA. Parents and teachers should be alert to bullying at school or during school-sponsored activities where a student or group of students intentionally and repeatedly uses their power to hurt other individuals or groups. Bullies' power can come from their physical strength, age, financial status, popularity, social status, technological skills, or by association.

### **Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying occurs when any person is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another individual or group using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, or cell phones. STMA reserves the right to discipline students for actions taken off-campus if actions are intended to have an effect on another student or they adversely affect the safety and well-being of a student while in school. Please also refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for the Internet and Technology.

### **Reporting Harassment or Bullying**

Any occurrence of bullying or harassment should immediately be reported to a student's teacher and / or the Administrative Leadership Team. The Principal of Academics will investigate the incident and take appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary.

### **School Uniforms**

School uniforms are intended to remind students that they have come to school to learn, that school is a place set apart. STMA's specific uniform distinguishes our students, reflects our unity of purpose, and reflects our equality before God, rather than our own glory. Uniforms also take the pressure off competition and economic status for students. Please refer to the Student Uniform Guidelines at [www.stmamd.org](http://www.stmamd.org).

Occasionally STMA allows students to have "Out of Uniform Days" where they may dress out of uniform. These special days will be school wide, usually on holidays with a specific theme, and will be communicated in advance. Children may wear jeans, khakis or other clean, casual type slacks with appropriate tops. T-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. may be worn, but they must be appropriate to the Catholic environment of STMA. It is permissible for girls to wear a casual

skirt on “Out of Uniform” days, as long as the skirt follows the guidelines for uniform skirts and the hem touches the top of the knee or longer.

In addition, teachers may award “Spirit Wear Days” to students that will allow them to wear P.E. bottoms with shirts related to St. Thomas More Academy i.e. Field Day shirts, saint or religious shirts, or anything purchased through the STMA online Spirit Wear shop. \*Note that “Spirit Wear Day” passes are non-transferable to other students and must be used within the school year issued.

As disciples of Christ, the following principles should always guide students:

- Our actions and attire should point to the Lord we serve.
- Attire should reflect both modesty and humility and should also respectfully reflect our biological gender.

Classes generally go outside daily, even when the weather is cold. During these times, it is necessary for students to have hats, gloves, scarves, etc.

PE Shorts: Plain navy “Bermuda” or Basketball style shorts No short running shorts or short-shorts (During Summer Uniform Period) - *no embroidery required* Cotton Knit or Micromesh

Please label ALL articles of clothing with your child’s name.

### **Personal Appearance Requirements for Students in All Grades**

#### **Hair**

Must be clean and neat

No dyed or spiked hair

No bizarre cuts/designs

For boys, hair should be cut above the eyebrows and around the ears; hair should not fall over the collar.

Hair accessories should be simple. There should not be fairy hair or headbands with fake braids or animal ears/horns. No head scarves.

#### **Jewelry**

For safety reasons no dangling earrings (including religious symbols) will be permitted. No bracelets or necklaces may be worn. For boys, other than a Christian medal on a chain, and/or a watch, no jewelry is permitted. Smart watches are not permitted.

#### **Makeup**

No make-up or face glitter is to be worn by students at any time.

No fingernail polish

#### **Shoes**

No light up shoes or wheelies





## **Acknowledgment Page**

I have read and agree to the guidelines in the Parent/Student Handbook.

Parent Signature

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Student Signature

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Date

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Please sign this handbook acknowledgement form and return it to the STMA office. Retain the handbook at home for your reference throughout the year.