



ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

COURAGE, HOLINESS, INTELLECT, LEADERSHIP, SERVICE

"St. Thomas More – A man for all seasons, a school for all children"

A School of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium

3515 South 48th Avenue Omaha, NE 68106

Phone (402)551-9504 / Fax (402)551-9507

School Website: stmbengals.org

Principal: Mr. Gary D. Davis

2024 – 2025

Family / Student

Handbook

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3515 South 48th Avenue Omaha, NE 68106

Phone (402)551-9504 / Fax (402)551-9507 School Website: stmbengals.org

Principal: Mr. Gary Dean Davis

Dear Parents and Students,

We are pleased to be your partner in education. The administration and staff accept the responsibility you have entrusted in us and will strive to provide a top-quality education for students that will help them become contributing members of the Catholic Church and responsible citizens of the community.

As educators, parents, and students we share the responsibility of providing a Christ-centered atmosphere, which encourages love of God and neighbor, academic excellence, discipleship, and a positive learning environment. The teachings and examples of Jesus Christ provide us the basis needed to attain this goal.

Please read this handbook carefully so you are familiar with the policies and practices of St. Thomas More Catholic School. Your support and cooperation are important for the success of the school year. May God continue to bless and guide St. Thomas More School.

In service to youth,
Mr. Gary D. Davis
Principal

Section I---Philosophy

Philosophy St. Thomas More Catholic School is a school of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium along with the Dual Language Academy, Holy Cross, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Bernadette, and Sts. Peter & Paul Schools.

St. Thomas More School provides a Catholic environment where children from Preschool through 8th grade can learn and be given the opportunity for intellectual, physical and spiritual development. We believe that the cooperation of the faculty and staff, parents and student will result in the development of mature Catholic citizens. The Catholic tradition holds that parents are always the primary educators of their children. Accordingly, all that the school provides is meant to complement the efforts of parents in providing similar faith development experiences at home. When both the family and the school community make continuous efforts to assist students in the formation of their faith, students grow in and become committed to their faith. The church is strengthened in its mission of proclaiming the Gospel. We ask that you continue your efforts in all of the named areas and continue to model for your children the discipleship of Christ, which is the fruit of our adult faith. Our own commitment to prayer, to the Eucharistic liturgy, to the sacrament of reconciliation, to the service of others, and to offer assistance to those in need will form children in rituals and practices that will enable them to deepen their relationship with God. As a member of the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Omaha and in accordance with I. R. S. Form 5578, the **Annual Certificate of Racial Nondiscrimination**, St. Thomas More Catholic School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origins to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of the educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Mission Statement We provide an excellent academic and faith-filled Catholic education in southeast Omaha that is affordable and will be sustainable for generations to come

Charisms A charism is a spiritual gift or talent granted by God to the recipient not primarily for his own sake but for the benefit of others "in order to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ". Through the intercessory power of our patron St. Thomas More, our school is guided by the charisms of **Courage, Holiness, Intellect, Leadership, and Service**.

Motto "St. Thomas More, a man for all seasons, a school for all children."

Catholicity: We believe that it is important to bring the Catholic faith perspective into all curriculum areas and all faculty and staff demonstrate a positive faith life for students and colleagues.

Communication: We believe that open lines of communication need to be in place to educate children effectively.

Environment: We believe that through a diverse and differentiated learning environment that all students will have the opportunity to succeed.

Discipline and Character Formation: We believe that students should develop the self-discipline necessary to become responsible community-minded adults. Our school uses Love and Logic as our guiding method to work with students.

Technology: We believe that students should acquire the proficient technological skills that allow them to access and process information so that they can apply what is learned to be responsive to ongoing changes in technology.

Fine Arts: We believe that students should acquire an appreciation for learning to express their creativity through the fine arts as well as to learn the appreciation of diversity and cultural beauty in the world around them.

Service: We believe that service to the community is essential to living a life that is Christ filled. Our service efforts take many forms and include supporting the rights of the unborn, poor, aged, sick, and marginalized.

Exit Outcomes for Graduates and Grade Promotion (K-8)

Graduates of St. Thomas More Catholic School will demonstrate:

- Religious knowledge, virtues and practices
- Knowledge of core disciplines and the fine arts
- Higher order thinking skills
- Effective communication skills
- Competence in the use of technology
- Effective social interaction skills Independent learning skills
- Knowledge of practices essential to sound health, effective citizenship, stable families, lifelong learning, and responsible stewardship.

Students will demonstrate competency in content areas and earn a grade promotion by earning passing grades in all subjects taught. When students fail to demonstrate grade proficiency despite efforts made by staff to provide additional instructional assistance, graduation and promotion to the next grade may be in jeopardy. Trimester grade failures in three core subject areas constitute sufficient cause for a formal review of student progress to determine if grade promotion has been earned. Parents will be contacted for consultation whenever grade retention for any student is being considered. A full review of applicable information will be made by the administration, teaching staff, and parents to determine the course of action that will provide greatest benefit to the student.

The Nature Of This Handbook This Family/Student Handbook is provided to inform parents for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contractual agreement between St. Thomas More Catholic School and any student or any parent of any student. The information contained in the Handbook provides a general description of rules and regulations. The school reserves the right to add to, modify or abolish any of the Handbook provisions without notice. Non-enforcement of any of the rules or regulations does not serve as a waiver of their future enforcement. This Handbook does not create any restriction on St. Thomas More Catholic School's right to institute any course of disciplinary action it believes is necessary and consistent with its Catholic educational mission.

Section II – Administration

School Contact Information:

Omaha Catholic School Consortium

4501 St. 41st St.
Omaha, NE 68107
Phone: 402-590-2810
Fax: 402-590-2811
Mrs. Shannan Brommer, Executive Director
Mr. Michael Goetz, Finance Director
Mr. Andrew Bauer, Director of Education
Ben Connealy, Business Manager
Olga Casillias, HR/Payroll

St. Thomas More School

3515 S. 48th Ave.
Omaha, NE 68106
Phone: 402-551-9504
Fax: 402-551-9507
Mr. Gary Davis, Principal

Midtown Catholic - St. Thomas More Parish

Phone: 402-556-1456
Rev. Frank Jindra, Pastor

Beatrice Arellanes, Coordinator Latino School Enrollment 402-557-5570

Administration:

Episcopal Supervision The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, as chief representative of the Church's teaching authority, is the head of the school system in the Archdiocese. Practically, the Archbishop delegates comprehensive regulatory and general supervisory authority, including policy-making, to the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent, and the Pastor of the Parish. The Archdiocesan Catholic Schools accept the authority of the Superintendent as delegated by the Archbishop.

Superintendent / Catholic Schools Office The Archdiocesan Catholic Schools accept the authority of the Superintendent as delegated by the Archbishop. St. Thomas More Catholic School will work in cooperation with the Catholic School's Office.

Executive Director

Under the supervision of the Consortium Board, the Executive Director serves as Chief Executive Officer in directing all internal and external activities of the Consortium. The Executive Director's responsibility is to articulate, advance, oversee and promote the vision and mission of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium. He/She is responsible for overseeing the business operations, financial management, development and fundraising, educational direction, and day-to-day operations of the organization. Additionally, He/She is responsible for developing and building relationships with pastors and other Archdiocese of Omaha organizations to all party's mutual benefit.

The Executive Director is the direct supervisor of the school principals, but delegates the administrative responsibilities of the school to the principal. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to: the operation of the school program and premises, management of the staff members (employment, supervision, professional development, and evaluation), establishment of educational programming, the management and evaluation of student behavior, and spiritual leadership.

Director of Education

The Director of Education reports directly to the Superintendent of Schools but works collaboratively with the Executive Director in supporting the principals of the six Consortium schools in the areas of Catholic Faith Identity, academic excellence, school improvement, student discipline, extra-curricular activities and other related school issues. The Director of Education works directly with the administrators in setting the academic direction for the Consortium schools.

OCSC Board of Directors In accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Omaha Archdiocese Catholic School's Office, the Board of Directors is responsible for establishing uniform policies on all matters pertaining to the school sites, including matters pertaining to employees, salary scales, educational, athletic and related programs, the school calendar, development, finances, physical plans, public relations, educational standards, recruitment, and applying Catholic principles to the educational programs and all catechetical courses. The board also is responsible for establishing a formula for the financing of the school sites.

Pastor The Pastor of the parish acts as the official delegate of the Archbishop in the "teaching mission" of the Roman Catholic Church. All Catholic Schools/programs and their personnel are responsible to the Archbishop and his delegates in all matters concerning the Catholic Faith. This includes serving as the officially designated spiritual leader of St. Thomas More Parish, monitoring the Catholic Faith identity and quality Religious education curricular offerings of the school, and overseeing the sacramental preparation for the students of St. Thomas More School.

Principal The principal, under the direction of the Executive Director and the Board of Education, is the chief administrative and supervisory office of the school, and as such, serves as an ex-officio member of the Omaha Catholic School's Board of Directors. The principal is the official representative and spokesperson for the school and is the administrator primarily responsible for assuring the policies enacted by the OCSC Board of Directors and Omaha Catholic School's Office are put into action.

Home and School Association The essential purpose of this group is to provide support to the principal, teachers, and students of St. Thomas More Catholic School through joint efforts of the school and the home. This is accomplished primarily through the coordination of volunteers for many areas of the school. The Home and School Association also organizes fund-raising events throughout the year, which help supply the school with needed items.

Section III—Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities At the beginning of each school year the student, parent, and teacher will be required to sign a **Student/Parent/Staff Handbook Agreement Form**. This form summarizes each member's responsibilities toward serving the mission of the school.

The **Student** is responsible for:

1. Participating fully and actively in liturgies and put his/her faith into practice daily. Fostering a positive, welcoming and safe school environment.
2. Behaving in a manner that does not interfere with the learning and rights of others.
3. Respecting and cooperating with all authority figures in the school.
4. Attending school daily, on time, and in uniform.
5. Listening, following directions and asking questions when clarification is needed.
6. Learning the essentials of good communication skills.
7. Working together to resolve problems.
8. Knowing and abiding by the St. Thomas More Catholic School rules and regulations.
9. Completing assigned school work to his/her full potential and abilities.

The **Parent** is responsible for:

1. Setting an example of respecting the worth of other persons and Jesus Christ's teaching.
2. Fostering a positive, welcoming and safe environment.
3. Making sure their child attends school daily, on time and in uniform.
4. Reading, reviewing, and abiding by the school rules and regulations with family members.
5. Monitoring the academic progress of the student and timely completion of assignments by checking assignment notebooks and book bags, and grades on Sycamore.

6. Responding to a teacher or principal's request for information by returning a phone call, email, written note, or signing a permission slip or evaluation.
7. Cooperating with school and church officials when discipline is necessary.
8. Seeking from school and community agencies help in correcting their child's behavior as recommended.
9. Making restitution for any willful damages done by their child to the school, staff or student property.
10. Notifying the teacher and/or administrator of a child with special needs (i.e. a child having been diagnosed or in the process of being diagnosed with a learning disability and /or behavior impairment).
11. Keeping the tuition payment current and paying all fines and assigned fees.
12. Attend weekly religious services (Mass for Catholics).

The **Teacher** is responsible for:

1. Setting an example of respecting the worth of other persons and Jesus Christ's teachings.
2. Treating each student with dignity and respect.
3. Fostering a positive, welcoming and safe school environment.
4. Consistently enforcing school rules and regulations.
5. Reviewing with students and posting the rules and regulations of the school and classroom.
6. Modeling appropriate behaviors for students.
7. Communicating with students and parents about student behavior, attitude, and academic skills.
8. Promptly reporting to the Principal continuous student misbehavior or any misbehavior that will or may result in suspension or expulsion.
9. Giving consideration as appropriate in regard to students who are determined to have special needs. (i.e. a child having been diagnosed or in the process of being diagnosed with a learning disability and /or behavior impairment).
10. Communicating with parents in a timely manner when a student demonstrates consistently poor academic progress using Sycamore, notes home, and or phone calls needed per situation.
11. Posting grades weekly on Sycamore.

The **Principal** is responsible for: Developing rules, regulations and procedures to implement school policies and curriculum standards, in accordance with state and Archdiocesan requirements.

1. Fostering a positive, welcoming and safe school environment.
2. Communicating school rules and regulations to parents, faculty, staff and students.
3. Setting an example of respecting the worth of other persons and modeling Jesus Christ's teachings.
4. Consistently enforcing school rules and regulations.
5. Communicating to parents, with the teachers, any problems or issues involving their child.
6. Assisting teachers and parents to resolve behavior issues.
7. Functioning as the instructional leader.
8. Managing the school facility.
9. Providing a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff.
10. Hiring and retaining a high quality faculty and staff.
11. Providing for the health and welfare of students.
12. Assisting as needed in conflict management.
13. Functioning as a liaison between the school, parish committees, and the business office.
14. Providing on-going staff development for teachers with regular classroom visitations.
15. Forming bonding relationships with staff and students.
16. Collaborating with staff for community building.
17. Recruiting new students.
18. Managing the school office.
19. Evaluating and sharing a review with faculty and staff annually.
20. Providing needed instructional materials to provide for the implementation of the curriculum.
21. Initiating school improvements that enhance the school's ability to offer an effective and up-to-date educational experience for students.
22. Working with staff to complete all necessary steps to follow the guidelines and processes prescribed by the Archdiocesan School Improvement Plan (ASIP).
23. Ensuring the school is in compliance with the Nebraska Department of Education to maintain its status as an accredited or approved school by engaging the staff in necessary improvement practices.

The **Executive Director** is responsible for:

1. Ultimate oversight of the school.
2. Working closely with the administration for the realization of school goals.

The **St. Thomas More Catholic School Community** is responsible for:

1. Providing inspirational, financial, and moral support so the school can accomplish its goals.
2. Acting as Christ-like role models for young children.
3. Cooperating and supporting the Pastor and school administration.
4. Supporting the enforcement of school rules and regulations.

Section IV---Policies

Communication:

FACTS

Our school uses the FACTS Student Information System and Tuition Management system. Through FACTS, parents are able to enroll their students, monitor student grades and progress, view assignments, communicate with teachers and staff, log parent participation hours and make tuition, lunch and other fee payments. Parents are encouraged to check the email and phone number they have registered with FACTS daily for special school news updates. A link to FACTS is also available from our school website at www.stmbengals.org.

Weekly Newsletter: A weekly newsletter entitled “Bengal News” will be e-mailed to parents via REMIND and posted on the school’s website at www.stmbengals.org. It will contain important information of upcoming news, events, opportunities, and the new monthly lunch menu. In addition, each Thursday is designated as Communication Day when other fliers and reminders for the week will be available on the website or be sent home with students. **It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to review and retain this information for future reference.** All groups requesting to have information sent home with students or added to the Bengal News must e-mail their request to the principal **on Tuesdays prior to 12:00 p.m. (or on the day before the last day of the week on shortened weeks).**

Parent-Teacher Conferences: There are **two scheduled parent-teacher conferences each year, held toward the end of the first and the middle of the third trimesters.** To register for conference times parents will need to log into their Sycamore account and go to “My School” and then “P/T Conferences” to schedule their time. Parents of Jr. High students are to sign up only for a conference with their student’s **home room teacher only.** They will be the teacher who will have their progress report. If an additional conference is requested to meet with another teacher, parents may wait for an opening slot on conference day or may schedule a conference with the teacher for a different day. Conference times will be fifteen minutes in length. If the case that more time is needed, the teachers will be happy to schedule an additional conference **at a later date.**

Parents are expected to be in attendance. Parents should welcome this opportunity to confer with the teacher on the progress of their child. Teachers are also available for conferences at other times during the school year. Parents should arrange these meetings with the individual teacher. Conferences for **Preschool** are also conducted, but may be at a different time.

Confidentiality: Parents are encouraged to make the school aware of personal situations or issues that may impact their child’s school performance by means of a note, e-mail, or phone contact with the principal. The principal will share sensitive information about a student with faculty and staff only on a need-to-know basis, with the consent of the parent. Personal information shared by a student with a teacher (or other school personnel) through any means, verbal or written, will be treated confidentially **unless,** in the professional judgment of the teacher, disclosing the information is necessary to protect student health or safety. The teacher will report concerns to the Principal, who will take action as warranted. This policy includes information shared in student journals as part of a class assignment.

Problem Resolution: Communication and cooperation between a parent/guardian and a teacher are essential to a student's success. **If at any time issues or concerns arise, the parent must always first consult with the teacher to seek understanding or resolution.** If the parent is unsatisfied with the results of that conference then they may seek consultation with the Principal. The Principal may choose to convene a conference to address the matter and may also seek the advice of the Education and Executive Directors. If a satisfactory solution is not achieved, the Education and Executive Directors may become involved in the process.

St. Thomas More School prides itself in its partnership with parents. If at any time, the parents have a question or concern they are encouraged to contact school personnel according to the following guidelines:

Academic Concerns: Always contact your student's Teacher first. If additional assistance is needed then the participation of the Principal may be requested.

Physical and Emotional Concerns: Teacher, then Guidance Counselor, then Principal

Special Education Concerns: Teacher then Principal

Athletic Concerns: Coach, then Athletic Director, then Principal. Be mindful that our sports club is an entity of the Parish and is not under the jurisdiction of the school.

Other Extracurricular Activities: Extracurricular Sponsor, Teacher, then Principal

Financial Concerns (Tuition, etc): OCSC Financial Director, then Principal

Grievance Procedures

If a parent/guardian has a concern regarding an issue/situation in school, the following steps are recommended and expected. The steps to resolving any conflicts or concerns should be followed in the order they are presented below:

1. Contact the child's teacher to discuss any concern and a possible solution. In cases relating to St. Thomas More School policies or procedures and outside their child's classroom, parents/guardians should begin with a discussion with the principal.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the teacher, the parent/guardian should then schedule a conference with the principal.
3. Should the principal, upon hearing the concerns of the parent/guardian, feel it is necessary, a meeting may be scheduled involving the parent/guardian, teacher(s) and the principal to help facilitate a solution to the concerns being addressed in the classroom.
4. If the parent/guardian still feels the problem/concern has not been resolved, the Executive Director should be contacted. The Executive Director has the ultimate authority for all educational operations in the school.

Parental Dissatisfaction When parents are seriously dissatisfied with an aspect of the school's program or operation, which the administration deems as integral to or in the best interest of the school, and they have exhausted all efforts at a mutual resolution of the problem, they should exercise their option of choosing another school. When the dissatisfaction results in continued agitation on the part of the parent, the administration may exercise the school's right to withdraw permission for enrollment of the child or children.

Access to Student Records The student's cumulative record is kept on file in the School Office. Only parents/legal guardians, and authorized school personnel may see them.

Access to and disclosure of student records are provided according to the following guidelines.

- 1) Parents/legal guardians may view these records one working day after submitting a written request. While examining, an administrator or teacher must be present.
- 2) The school will consider a written request to amend a student record. Such a request needs to identify the proposed change and specify reasons for the change. If approved by the Principal, the student record will be amended.
- 3) Parents must provide written consent for release of student records, with the exception of disclosure to other school personnel with legitimate educational interests or disclosure upon legal requirement to provide student record information.
- 4) Release of official copies of student records is contingent upon written consent of the parent/guardian, and fulfillment of financial obligations to the school.
- 5) The school will release an elementary graduate's record upon the request of the enrolling high school, without written consent of parent/guardian. **Such release will only be made if all financial obligations to the school are fulfilled.**

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents

- 1) **Court Orders:** At the time of registration, or as the parents become aware, court orders relevant to student and/or school information must be presented to the Principal by either or both parents.
- 2) **Records:** Non-custodial parents may submit written requests for their children's records unless a court order prohibits them from doing so. School personnel may assume the non-custodial parent has a right to the student's records unless a court order to the contrary has been provided. School personnel do not need permission from the custodial parent, but they will attempt to notify the custodial parent that they intend to comply with a request from the non-custodial parent.
- 3) **Conferences and Information:** Non-custodial parents may attend regular parent/teacher conferences or arrange special parent/teacher conferences unless they have been restricted from doing so by a court order. General school information, such as lunch menus or announcements of school events, is not considered part of a student's records. The school is not required to provide such information to non-custodial parents, but may comply with requests if it is feasible to do so.
- 4) **Other Contacts:** The school will not release a child to the non-custodial parent unless asked to do so in writing by the custodial parent. If custody has not been decided, the student may leave with either parent unless a court order to the contrary has been provided.
- 5) **Joint Custody Information:** If parents have joint custody, each parent will have the same rights unless restricted by court order. The school may require a copy of the legal document indicating who is the custodial parent, and may also require identification from the non-custodial parent.

Section V---Admissions

Admission Guidelines

The Principal will make the decision concerning your child's acceptance and placement into our school. We will use the following criteria in descending order when we have a waiting list.

1. The family has current students attending St. Thomas More School.
2. The family has siblings of accepted, new students.
3. The family is a registered and active member of St. Thomas More Parish (length of registration may be a factor).
4. The family is a registered and active member of another Consortium parish.

5. The family is Catholic, non-parishioner; date of school application and availability of parish school will be considered;
5. The family has students planning to attend our K-8th grade program (this applies only to preschool and prekindergarten programs).
6. The family is non-Catholic; date of school application will be taken into account.

As a way to better acquaint them with St. Thomas More School, all parents/guardians and students will be required to meet with the Principal at school as part of the enrollment process. St. Thomas More School requires all parents/guardians to give the school a copy of their child(ren)'s birth certificate, original baptismal certificate, and health records.

Non-Discrimination Policy St. Thomas More Catholic School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origins to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at this school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Student Registration During the month of February, registration information for the upcoming school year will be made available to parents. The enrollment process will be communicated along with a list of all tuition and registration fees and all forms that will need to be provided to complete registration by a designated date.

Registration Fees

All families are required to pay at least one of the \$150 per student **nonrefundable** registration fees each year at the time of registration. This fee is expected even if students enroll during the school year. Payment of the fee secures a position for the upcoming school year.

Tuition/Student Fees Tuition/Student Fees will be reviewed and established annually by the OCSC Board of Directors. Parent/guardians will be advised of the tuition and book fees at registration. Tuition is to be paid in full either annually (due by the end of June prior to the upcoming school year) or by using one of the payment options available in FACTS.

Tuition Policy **Tuition collection is administered by the Business Office of the Omaha Catholic Schools Consortium and handled by a company called FACTS.** All parish families are expected to contribute to the parish subsidy of the school through their weekly stewardship offering made to St. Thomas More Church. St. Thomas More Catholic School strives to keep tuition within the means of our school families. Tuition payments cover approximately 40% of the costs of educating our students, while the Consortium through donations and parish support subsidizes the remainder of the costs. Tuition balances must be paid as scheduled or by the arranged time before the first day of school for the following school year. The annual rate of tuition and fees of a future academic year for the schools of the Omaha Catholic Schools Consortium is determined by the Board of Directors in January for the upcoming year and communicated to school families and others in preparation for registration procedures in February and March.

Registration fees are collected at the time of registration. Tuition collection is processed through FACTS, unless a separate arrangement has been made with the business office of the Consortium.

Payment for Kindergarten - 8th Grade tuition begins in June of the new school year using 12 monthly electronic fund transfers as arranged through FACTS through May.

Pawprints Preschool Tuition is paid through the same EFT payment method through FACTS, but runs for 10 months in August - May.

Financial Aid Financial aid is available through the following sources:

- Children's Scholarship Fund
- Parish-based Financial Aid / T.A.P.
- Knights of Columbus Scholarships
- Latino Scholarship Fund
- Consortium-based Financial Aid
- Opportunity Scholarships of Nebraska

The first step in applying for financial aid is to complete the form of the Children's Scholarship Fund. Applications for the fund typically become available in February. Data from this form will be used to determine aid from the other sources. The award decision by the Children's Scholarship will precede any decision for the awarding of financial aid from the other sources. Children's Scholarship typically announce new scholarships at the end of June.

- Financial aid decisions from the Children's Scholarship Fund will be made by the officers of the Fund.
- Financial aid decisions from the Latino Scholarship Fund will be made by the officers of the Fund.
- Financial aid decisions from Parish-based Financial Aid will be made by the Pastor or other designated individual from the particular parish.
- Financial aid decisions from Consortium-based Financial Aid will be made by the Executive Director of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium.

Regular tuition payments will be processed through FACTS. In specific circumstances, payments may also be processed through the Consortium business office.

Delinquent tuition accounts will be handled as follows:

- FACTS will mail an invoice to families and request payment of the delinquent amount.
- Families may then contact the Consortium Business Office to make special arrangements for addressing the delinquent amount and future payments.
- If no response is forthcoming from the mailing of the FACTS invoice after 20 working days, contact will be made by letter, email, telephone, or person to person.
- If no response is forthcoming from the above contacts, the tuition account will be referred to the Executive Director.
- Unless an exception is made by the Executive Director, no student will be allowed to re-enroll in a subsequent trimester if tuition is not current.

Tuition Assistance Program (T.A.P.) T.A.P. makes it possible for families to receive tuition assistance from the parish by completing the necessary application process. All families who receive tuition assistance also incur an obligation to work as part of a stated event or fundraiser. Funds earned through this program will be contributed to TAP so that future tuition assistance awards can be offered to families. **Important to remember: It is the family's responsibility to contact the TAP committee through the Midtown Catholic / St. Thomas More Parish Office at 402-556-1456 when tuition assistance is needed.** To provide objective, comprehensive, and affordable financial need analysis of each applicant that applies for tuition assistance, an independent company known as **Financial Aid Independent Review, Inc. or FAIR** is employed. Families who successfully complete the application process and qualify for assistance will be notified by the TAP Committee before school starts.

Records Required for Admission St. Thomas More Catholic School observes all applicable Nebraska laws regarding records required for admission. All students must submit:

Immunization Card

Each student MUST have a completed Immunization Card on file in the school office. These cards are inspected by the Health Department for compliance. The Nebraska School Immunization Law requires that all students be immunized and PROVIDE PROOF of immunization before the students may be admitted to classes on the first day of school. See page 38 for listing of immunizations required.

Birth Certificate

An original copy of their birth certificate

Physical

State law also requires that all out-of-state transfer students and each student entering Kindergarten and 7th Grade provide evidence of a physical examination, dental, and vision test administered within six months prior to entering that grade.

Kindergarten Admission By state statute (Neb R.S. 79-214), no child will be admitted to kindergarten unless they will have reached the age of five years by July 31st of the current year.

Preschool Admission To be eligible to enroll in the three-year-old class, your child must turn three by July 31st of the current year. Four-year-olds must turn four by July 31st of upcoming school year. All preschoolers must be fully potty trained.

Transfer Student and New Student Admission All transfer and new students shall complete an on-line Registration, set up their FACTS account, and submit their Registration Fee and Form to the St. Thomas More School Office. All registrations are subject to approval by the Principal. All applicants shall be reviewed by the Principal and assigned a priority in accordance with current admissions policy. There is to be an interview with the child and parents by the Principal and Pastor if requested. Pending the results of the interview, and on a space available basis, the parent shall be notified verbally or in writing regarding acceptance or non-acceptance. Any application for admission, which cannot be honored due to classroom size shall be placed on a waiting list, and so advised in writing. The applicant will be assigned a position on the waiting list based on the admission policy. In order to remain on the waiting list, the applicant shall re-contact St. Thomas More Catholic School at the beginning of the next fall term. It may be determined by the principal, that due to the circumstances associated with an applicant's prior school experiences, the student should be placed on a **Behavior Contract**. The purpose of the Behavior Contract is to clarify expectations of the school for the student and the parents. Students placed on a Behavior Contract are accepted conditionally and may be asked to withdraw if they are unable to comply with the mutually agreed upon contract. Applicants for admission, which do not meet the admission guidelines, shall be returned to the applicant with reasons for non-acceptance.

Students who have been determined to have special education needs shall follow the guidelines set forth by the Archdiocese, which are on file in the Principal's office. Every effort will be made to collaborate with the public school district of residence to provide the designated services identified for a special education student in accordance with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). **All transfer students and their families shall be made aware that acceptance for admission is conditionally based upon the ability of the student to successfully acclimate to their new environment and to academically prosper. If after a sufficient time to allow for necessary adjustments to our new school setting, it is evident that the student is not progressing, the student and family may be asked to leave the school.**

Parent Participation Program (PPP) The success of St. Thomas More Catholic School depends on a spirit of cooperation and shared sacrifice of time and talent among parents and school staff for the good of the students. There are many opportunities for our parents to volunteer service to the school or parish. To list a few, but not limited to, being a room parent, attending Home and School meetings, helping with the many Home and School activities, donating bags of candy (Halloween, Christmas, Easter), helping with class field trips or celebrations, baking or purchasing an item for parent teacher conferences, volunteering in the lunchroom (needed daily), donations for teacher appreciation week, donations for More Di Gras baskets, working concessions during sporting events, coaching teams for the sports club, working at or donating to the Parish Festival (in October), and many other opportunities. Opportunities for PPP hours will be listed in the Bengal News. **Dual parent families are required to contribute a minimum of 40 PPP service hours per school year and Single parent families are required to contribute a minimum of 20 PPP hours per school year.** Every \$5.00 spent is equivalent to 1 PPP hour.

Parent Participation Hours are tracked on your FACTS Family Portal following these directions:

- Factsmgt.com
- Family Login
- Family Portal
- Once logged in, click "Family"
- Service Hours
- From there it will have you put the date, hours, description, and "Verified By" (usually people put the name of the coach or the person who ran the event).

Log the date, hours and descriptions of service hours. For each hour not completed by the end of the school year a charge of \$5.00 per hour will be assessed and payable by the last day of school. If a family cannot commit to this call to stewardship, a payment of \$200.00 for dual parent family or \$100.00 for a single parent family will be payable to OCSC. This fee is payable on the first day of school for families who will not be able to commit to volunteering or by the last day of school for any unfulfilled hours. PPP hours will be monitored by the school office and an update of your PPP hours will be noted at Parent Teacher Conferences.

All volunteers at the school must have successfully completed Safe Environment training and background check. Go to <https://omaha.cmgconnect.org> to log into their account to see if your Safe Environment certification is current. If not, register for a class and complete a background check.

The success of St. Thomas More Catholic School depends on a spirit of cooperation and shared sacrifice of time and talent among parents and school staff for the good of students. There are many opportunities for parent volunteer service to the school or parish, such as room parents, volunteering in the lunchroom, helping with class field trips or celebrations, baking for teacher appreciation days, working concessions, coaching teams for the sports club, or working at the Parish Festival. **All volunteers at the school must have successfully completed Safe Environment training and background check.** Go to <https://omaha.cmgconnect.org> to log into their account to see if your Safe Environment certification is current. If not register for a class and complete a background check.

Section VI- School Schedules and Attendance

State Requirements

The State of Nebraska requires 1032 instructional hours for an elementary school and 400 hours for kindergarten. St. Thomas More Catholic School will meet or go beyond those hours. In accordance with the State of Nebraska, St. Thomas More Catholic School has established the following policies:

- Religion classes are incorporated into the school day as an essential part of the instructional program.
- First through eighth grade classes attend Mass twice per week and for special masses at least once a week and whenever there are special all-school Masses. Kindergarteners begin attending Mass second Trimester

- All field trips are planned as part of the instructional program and therefore are considered a part of the school day.
- Special events for the students are scheduled as part of the regular school program.
- During Kindergarten Round-Up, the current kindergarten is excused from school.
- The eighth-grade class completes their attendance requirements on the day of the all-school Mass celebrating their graduations.
- Pawprints Preschool will have a graduation ceremony for the 4 and 5 year olds approximately one week before school ends for the other students.

School Day Start, Dismissal Times, and Use of the Parking Lot The school day begins at 8:00 a.m. Parents are to drop students off using their assigned drop off lane beginning at 7:40 a.m. School dismisses at 3:10 p.m. on full days and 11:30 a.m. on half days. Parents are to receive their students outside of the building. Students exit from doors their class is assigned (PK and Kindergarten – Main Door), (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th – Middle Doors), (4th and 6th – 8th South Doors). **Students should not be on school grounds earlier than 7:40 a.m., unless they are enrolled in morning Extended Care or later than 3:25 p.m. unless they are enrolled in the afternoon Extended Care Program.** Students who are at school during these times will be sent to Extended Care and parents will be charged accordingly.

The morning session of **Pawprints Preschool** begins at 8:00 a. m. and dismisses at 11:00 a. m. Afternoon session of Pawprints Preschool begins at 12:10 p.m. and dismisses at 3:00 p.m. Parents are to drop their student off using the main drop off lane.

TK - 8th Grade Extended Care Extended Care is available for students in TK-8th Grade. Hours in the morning are from 6:45 - 7:45 a.m., doors do not open until 6:45 a.m. Hours in the afternoon are from 3:10 - 6:00 p.m. Students enrolled in Before Care will meet in the gym. Students enrolled in After Care are to report immediately to the cafeteria after dismissal. All school policies including student discipline are applicable in Extended Care. Students who repeatedly conduct themselves in a disrespectful manner toward teachers and/or students during the school day and/or the before and after school program after the consequence system has been implemented, may result in removal from the program.

Extended Care services are provided before and after school on a monthly commitment basis. Accounts are billed on the 1st school day of the month with payment due within 2 weeks. If payment is not collected within the specified time, families may lose their spot in our program.

Extended Care is an active program, children will often play in nature or work on crafts. Students are allowed to participate at the level they are comfortable with. Kids may go home with normal play-based bumps, dirty shoes, hands, and clothes (but happy hearts). Pictures are taken of students to be placed in the Yearbook and to be displayed for the Extended Care students to see. This may include silly selfies, group pictures, and during indoor/outdoor activities.

The STM Extended Care Program Preschool-8th does not accept drop-ins. Students must be registered in Extended Care in order to attend.

St. Thomas More School's Preschool/PreKindergarten program has a separate Extended Care program. Registration is done on a commitment basis. Commitment forms can be accessed at stmbengals.org through the preschool tab.

PARKING LOT PROCEDURES

Parents are reminded to exercise courtesy with one another for drop off and pick up. Cars should never be left on the street without a driver ready to move it to keep traffic flowing during student drop off and pick up. Parents are to use the southern portion of the parking lot east of the school if they will be exiting their car to pick up students. **Cars parked on the lot should be moved prior to the 11:00 a.m. lunch / recess period. North Parking lot is for staff only from 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Morning Drop Off: Drivers are asked to observe the ONE WAY TRAFFIC and NO PARKING signs on the 48th Street section just south of the church on the west side of the street from 7:30-8:30 a. m. and 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. on school days. We use our two front entrances for morning drop off **which begins at 7:40 a.m.** Students at school earlier than 7:40 will need to be enrolled in morning Extended Care. Orange cones will be placed in the parking lot for parents to join the line of cars forming for drop off, starting at 7:40 a.m. **Please do not exit your car with your child.**

Families with last names A – M will use station #1. For this station, all cars enter the parking lot from 48th Street by the Bell Tower and exit going east on Grover.

Families with last names N – Z will use station #2 For this station, all cars enter the middle drive of the parking lot from 48th St. and exit from the south drive back on to 48th St. Due to the layout, cars will not be able to enter from “A” Street or traveling from the south on 48th St.

Families who carpool should use the station assigned to the family that is driving.

Cars parked on the lot should be moved prior to the 11:00 a.m. lunch / recess period. North Parking lot is for staff only from 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Afternoon Pick Up: All students are dismissed from the same doors they used to enter the building in the morning. For security purposes and to ease congestion, parents are to wait outside of the building to receive their student. Parents who want to park and get out of their car may use the southern portion of the parking lot east of the school or may wait on 48th Street, between Grover and B Streets, which is one-way going south 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. on school days. Parents using the church/school lot may only use the far south end as marked by cones. For student safety, we ask all drivers to obey these rules, especially when the weather is inclement. **Please remember to always be courteous to one another during pick up time.**

Safety Patrol Students in 6th – 8th grade are required to serve on the school’s Safety Patrol to assist crossing students both before and after school. Safety Patrol are on duty to help insure the safety of all students and deserve the respect of everyone. **All students and parents are to obey these patrol members use the crosswalk areas for safety when crossing the street.** Student Safety Patrol members are on duty at assigned street crossings near the school 7:45 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and from 3:10 p.m. to 3:25 p.m.

Lunch Program

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation from prior civic rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the federal relay service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found on line at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed

to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to the USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
Fax: (202) 690-7442; or Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity employer.

In addition to the daily lunch listed on the lunch menu, we will continue to offer students an alternate choice to the main item served. They have a choice of string cheese, yogurt, and dinner roll, a chef's salad and dinner roll, or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, string cheese and 1-bread alternate offered each day. Lunch prices will remain the same with each choice. To place their order students need to let their teacher know each morning of their choice for the day.

Students are not allowed to have fast food from outside vendors / restaurants or soft drinks (pop) in the lunchroom.

Lunch Schedule

Preschool/PreK, TK, K, 1st	11:00 - 11:25 a.m.
2 nd , 3 rd	11:35 - 11:55 a.m.
6 th , 7 th , 8 th	12:05 - 12:25 p.m.
4 th , 5 th	12:35 - 12:55 p.m.

Lunch Pricing Lunch price is reviewed each year and communicated with parents when it is set. The school attempts to keep the rate affordable for parents while maintaining a price consistent with the needs of offering and maintaining the program.

Lunch Tickets Student lunches and milk usage is recorded when they receive a lunch or milk. An automatic notice is sent through FACTS when their account is below \$5. Parents are able to monitor their family accounts through FACTS. Additional amounts may be purchased throughout the school year by sending a check made out to OCSC for the amount of lunches needed in an envelope with your student's name and their teacher's name or homeroom number to the school office. You can also stop in or call the school office and use a credit card to make a payment.

Free and Reduced Lunch - Free and reduced-price lunches are available to families who qualify. Application forms are available in the school office. Students who received Free or Reduced Lunches in the previous year at St. Thomas More School begin the school continuing with this benefit. New Applications must be returned for the New School Year as soon as possible and within 30 school days.

Lunch Volunteers Parents can earn PPP hours by volunteering in the lunchroom assisting the kitchen staff in the serving and cleaning-up after lunch. **All volunteers at the school must have successfully completed Safe Environment training and background check. Volunteers are not to be disciplinarians of students.** Should a discipline problem occur in the lunchroom, it should be brought to the attention of the **certified staff member** on duty.

Recess It is important for everyone to have physical activity as a part of their day. Students in all grades will have regular recess periods that will be held outside (weather / space permitting).

St. Thomas More School employees are solely responsible for the safety and supervision of students during recess. For the safety of our students, volunteers and other visitors are not permitted to approach or engage students during recess for any purpose. When attempts are made by volunteers and/or visitors to interact or engage students during recess they will risk the right to be a guest of the school in the future.

Weather and Emergency Dismissals

Hot Weather: Classrooms are equipped with window air-conditioning units, so special dismissals due to heat should not be necessary.

Snow Days: In the event of snow or ice storms, St. Thomas More Catholic School will follow the Catholic Schools Office policy concerning closings. The decision to close school will be announced on most local radio and television stations before 7:00 a.m. and typically identified as *Omaha Catholic Schools*.

Emergencies: If there is an emergency during the day, which requires an early dismissal, it will be communicated with parents using Remind and announced in the local media. Students will need to be picked up at the designated time.

Tardies Students reporting to school after the 8:00 a.m. tardy bell has rung (morning session) will be considered tardy. The number of times tardy will appear on the child's report card. Habitual tardiness, **more than five times per trimester**, will result in notification to the parent and require the establishment of a correction plan. (this does not include absences for doctor and dentist appointments.) For chronic tardy problems of **more than 10 per trimester**, additional tutoring may be recommended so that students are able to meet learning standards. When a student misses two hours anytime during the school day for any reason, he/she will be marked absent for ½ day. **If the parent anticipates that their child is going to be tardy in arriving at school, the parent/guardian must notify the school and send a note explaining the child's late arrival before the child will be admitted to class.**

Absences **Student absences for any reason require parents to call the School Office by 8:00 a.m. at 402-551-9504 each day of absence.** When the student is able to return to school, he/she must bring a written note, with a parent signature, listing the date of the absence and the reason for the absence. **When a student will be absent from school due to a planned reason, an e-mail should be sent to their teacher prior to the absence giving the reason for the absence and the dates the student will be out of school.** Parents do not need to call each day of planned absences once they have submitted a note. If the teacher is given enough notice, when possible, lessons that will be missed may be sent home to be done during the time the student is gone.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, the parents will be contacted before the student is allowed to leave school. The call will be made by a staff member. The child will never call home directly. Parents should make sure at least two reliable persons are listed as emergency contacts on their student's registration in cases when the parent is unavailable. These should be people who can come to the school if it is necessary. If a student has to leave school early, he/she must present a written note, with parent signature, to the homeroom teacher who will send it to the office. All students leaving school early should check out at the School Office before doing so. If you usually pick up your child after school and find that you will be late, please contact the school office so that we are able to inform your child. Younger children can become very anxious if they are not picked up at their usual time.

Excessive Absences / Truancy The progress of student learning depends on regular attendance and punctuality. Absences can prove to be a serious detriment to student progress. **This should be kept in mind when scheduling family vacations and medical or dental appointments.** As directed by state statute 79-209, if the child is absent **ten days or more per year**, archdiocesan schools are obliged to report the student's information to the Catholic Schools Office for subsequent reporting to the county attorney. When students are absent **twenty days per year** or the hourly equivalent, the attendance officer is required to file a report with the county attorney of the county in which the student resides. This requirement applies to all absences.

Truancy is the violation of Nebraska's Compulsory Attendance Law through absences from school. Excessive absences may be interpreted as truancy by the county attorney. Parents should be aware of the following guidelines and procedures.

When a student's absences exceed six days or equivalent hours per trimester the school shall:

- 1) Notify parents of the potential for charges of truancy.
- 2) Work with the parents in documenting a plan to limit excessive absences.

Upon 10 absent days the school will serve written notice to the parent or guardian, warning him or her to comply with the Nebraska Compulsory Attendance Law and advising him or her that failure to do so will be reported to the county attorney. Upon the next failure to meet the conditions of the plan, the school shall file a report with the county attorney.

Make-up Work Students are responsible for making up work missed as a result of a tardy or absence.

- 1) **Planned absences** – Students are responsible for contacting all of their teachers prior to the planned absences to get any work they can make up while they are absent. All homework should be turned into teachers on the day they return. Students should also ask each teacher for any other work they may have missed and discuss when it is due.
- 2) **Unplanned absences** - Upon the day of their return, students are required to visit with each teacher to determine what effort they must make to complete missed assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests in a timely manner. Students will have the same number of days they were absent + 1 day to make up work. Students are to receive missed instruction and complete all work as soon as possible.

Section VII---Academics

Accreditation

St. Thomas More Catholic School is accredited by the State of Nebraska. As an accredited school, we are in compliance with all the numbered provisions under Title 92, Chapter 10 as regulated by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Curriculum

St. Thomas More Catholic School follows a standards-based curriculum prepared by the Archdiocese of Omaha Catholic School Office that provides clear expectations for education standards as well as specific Nebraska Standards relating to each essential program standard. Curriculum Night is held in the fall to provide information to parents about the curriculum their child will learn in core subjects (Religion, Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, and in “specials” Art, Media Center / Library, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish (6th – 8th).

Textbook Loan

St. Thomas More School participates in the State of Nebraska Textbook Loan Program. By enrolling my child in at St. Thomas More parents hereby authorize the administrator of the school to act as their designated agent for purposes of requesting and borrowing textbooks, pooling per child allocations when requesting textbooks, and representing me in all other matters under 92 NAC 4 (Rule 4).

Multicultural Education It is the policy of St. Thomas More Catholic School to utilize the resources of curriculum, instruction, in-service, counseling, and guidance to reflect the racial, ethnic, language and cultural heritage of both historical and modern-day United States of America by observing the following objectives:

- 1) To select materials and methods that will eliminate bias and stereotypes in our schools.
- 2) To conduct in-service programs for our faculty and staff that will assist them in understanding a multicultural approach and to reflect this in their teaching and administrative duties.
- 3) To encourage all students to grow in self-esteem and to understand and develop their academic and human potential.
- 4) To guard against grouping of students that reflects racial, ethnic or cultural bias.

Assessments

Renaissance Star Assessments (STAR)

Star Assessment is a computer-adaptive assessment comprehensive that helps to accurately measure students' reading and math achievement and growth. Star Benchmarking Assessments can be given as often as three times a year (fall, winter, and spring). Benchmarking helps educators plan and deliver the most appropriate instruction by giving them reliable data and information about each student. Star Assessments can also be used to set and track student progress toward individual goals. Individualized goals can be measured as often as weekly and allows teachers to monitor student progress toward those goals. The Star Assessments program then provides instructional resources that teachers can assign to address individual needs. Some of these assignments may be worked at home or students may participate with others during class time. The goal is improved learning on targeted standards. Additionally, these assessments are designed to determine how well our curriculum is aligned to the Nebraska standards in math and reading/language arts – a requirement for accreditation.

Report Cards PK and Kindergarten report cards are issued as a paper card. Report cards for 1st – 8th grade are issued each trimester in both paper form and are available on-line using our **FACTS** student information system grading program. Parents are provided a log-in and password to this Student Information System so they can monitor student academic progress throughout the year. Parents/ Guardians are urged to take an active interest in their student's school behavior and academic progress letting the student understand that the school and parents have a shared goal of assisting them in achieving success. It is important that the student be commended for accomplishments and encouraged to work on areas that they are being challenged by.

Progress Reports Progress Reports are e-mailed to parents mid-trimester for 1st – 8th grade students. Parents are asked to study these carefully and discuss them with their student. A conference with the appropriate teacher may be indicated and should be arranged. If there are any questions, please **contact the appropriate teacher directly** to help to clarify understandings of the progress report and to discuss what positive responses that can be taken to redirect the student towards more productive achievement.

Classroom teachers will periodically update parents on activities and topics being covered in classes. Students will often bring home completed homework papers and tests to show their parents; sometimes these will need to be signed and returned. **Parents should remember to check the contents of their child's backpack frequently so as not to miss important information. Papers are typically sent home on Thursdays.**

Grade Scale for Kindergarten – 2nd Grade

E = Exceeds Grade Level Expectations

S = Satisfies Grade Level Expectations (S+ and S- are included)

N = Needs Improvement to Meet Grade Level Expectations

Grade Scale for 3rd – 8th Grade

A+ 100-98%

B+ 92-91%

C+ 84-83%

D+ 77-76%

F Below 70%

A 97-95%

B 90-87%

C 82-80%

D 75-72%

A- 94-93%

B- 86-85%

C- 79-78%

D- 71-70%

Honor Roll Calculated from grade point average (GPA) for seventh and eighth grade students at trimester reporting. The following designation will be used:

Suma Cum Laude 4.00 to 3.9

Magna Cum Laude 3.89 to 3.70

Cum Laude 3.69 to 3.5

Eighth Grade Graduation All eighth grade students who fulfill graduation requirements are expected to participate in the graduation ceremony held in May. At the end of each year the cost of graduation (which includes flowers, diplomas, graduation gowns, and other incurred expenses) will be totaled and distributed evenly among the graduates. This graduation fee must be paid prior to the eighth graders' last full day of school along with all other outstanding fees and tuition for each eighth grader to participate in the graduation ceremony.

High School Placement Exam The Catholic High Schools Placement Exam is given in January to 8th grade students planning to attend a Catholic high school in the fall. Additionally, a pre-exam is also given to 7th grade students also typically in January. Contact the Catholic high school of your choice to register your child for these exams.

Homework Homework is an essential part of any school program. Age appropriate grade level homework assignments will be given to measure a student's understanding of the skills and information taught in the classroom as special enrichment material to enhance the student's learning. Teachers assign work that the child is capable of performing on his/her own. Parents may assist their student in understanding their homework, but it is important that they refrain from actually doing it. **Parents can best support their student's homework efforts by ensuring that it is completed daily and by providing an atmosphere at home for study. Students will need a quiet and spacious study area free from distractions such as radio, television, and cell phones.** A regular schedule should be established and followed faithfully. When students do not have a specific assignment, they should be encouraged to read for pleasure or spend some extra time on a particularly difficult subject.

Classroom teachers will inform parents of their specific grade level policies on homework early in the school year. It is to be expected that children entering junior high will experience a significant amount of additional homework. However, if you find that your child is spending an inordinate amount of time on homework, you should contact the classroom teacher. A conference may help discover if a problem exists. When homework is not completed on time, the student's grade may be lowered. In an effort to encourage the student to complete missed assignments and improve performance, time after school may be assigned at all school levels.

Homework Overtime

In an effort to help with students who have missing assignments in the Junior High (6th – 8th Grade), a daily "Homework Overtime" is held in an assigned Jr. High classroom after school 3:15 - 4:00 p.m.. This will also allow students to ask questions on homework they do not understand. Students who were absent will still be given the standard amount of time to turn in assignments outlined in the Family Handbook (the number of days absent, plus one additional day) before a "Homework Overtime" is required. For any questions about the process, please contact your student's homeroom teacher. Further action will be taken for students who repeatedly fail to complete their homework.

Homework Overtime process used:

1. Parents will be notified by their student's teacher by e-mail or phone call when their student has a Homework Overtime obligation.
2. The student will attend Homework Overtime on the next day.
3. If a student skips "Homework Overtime" for any reason, they will receive an after school detention for the next two days.

It is important that parents support the school in making sure their student follows this procedure to help insure their child's success.

Student Assistance Team (SAT)

To assist students experiencing academic difficulties, the school uses a SAT Team to help them improve. The SAT Team can include the parent, and when appropriate, the student, in a positive, problem solving, intervention process. It assists students by ensuring that the school and community are doing everything possible to make the student's school life successful. Students are most successful when there is a strong spirit of cooperation between home, school, and community. Based on this shared responsibility, the SAT meets to explore possibilities and strategies that will best meet the educational needs of the students, and support teachers and parents. The SAT includes the most important people in the student's life, parents or caregivers, teachers, counselors, specialists, and school administrators.

How does the SAT Process Work? Students are typically referred by the classroom teacher, but any member of the school staff and/or parent may request support from the SAT for a student whose learning, behavior or emotional needs are not being met under existing circumstances. The classroom teacher(s) would have already notified the parent regarding these issues. **Prior to the first SAT meeting, teachers would have implemented some classroom modifications that enhance learning for students.** A modification may be as simple as a change in seating location, a daily assignment sheet, or an increase in the use of visual teaching aids. Sometimes a simple change can make a big difference for a student. Any modification that has been tried or is currently in place will be discussed with a parent at the SAT meeting. Using this information, the team can suggest further steps to help the student.

What happens at a SAT Meeting?

- The student and parents (when appropriate) meet with a group of teachers, resource teacher and/or administrators.
- The team discusses the student's strengths, concerns, gathers pertinent history and information and discusses present interventions and outcomes.
- The team brainstorms interventions and chooses actions to complete a plan of action for student success.
- A facilitator leads the group through a process, which results in a written six week plan of action.
- At the end of the meeting, a follow-up date will be scheduled to review progress.

What happens when poor performance persists? If the student is capable of completing the work and adequate progress towards meeting the requirements of the contract is not seen within six weeks, the student may be excluded from school-sponsored extracurricular activities for the remainder of the trimester. If progress is still not being made, further consequences will be considered. Most importantly, we want to work together to inspire and motivate our students to excel.

What happens if it appears a student could benefit by repeating a grade level? When poor academic progress suggests that a student might benefit from retention of a grade, parents will be notified prior to the end of the second trimester. Through a conference with the parents, teacher, and Principal, a decision will be reached based on the maturity level and the academic achievement of the child. If a parent decides to send their child to the next grade against the recommendation of the administration. Final approval on this decision rests with the Principal.

Summer School Recommendations Parents of students who are recommended for summer school will be notified during the last trimester of the school year. When this recommendation is made, it is the parent's responsibility to follow the recommendation.

Special Education Recognizing that individual differences exist among students, St. Thomas More Catholic School makes reasonable adjustments and accommodations to help students develop skills affecting academic growth. Differentiation of instruction is one strategy employed by teachers so that students receive effective instruction. Teaching staff will gather to review student progress when concerns are warranted by the Student Assistance Team (SAT). SAT meetings are a required component of planning for formal testing through the Omaha Public School District or other agencies. When developmental delays and/or behavioral impairments exist to the degree that academic progress is impaired, the school administration, after consultation with parents, will help initiate a referral to an appropriate agency or resource if necessary.

After diagnosis by qualified personnel, suggestions for helping the student will be implemented by school staff as determined by an accommodation plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These plans will be reviewed and revised as needed annually. If this assistance does not result in significant progress within a specified time, the school administrator will continue to assist parents in identifying a more helpful educational situation for the student.

Our school has speech and resource teachers to meet the needs of students on IEP's. Additionally we have a full time resource teacher to work with students who are below grade level.

Religious Instruction and Non-Catholic Students St. Thomas More Catholic School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, or religion in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. While accepting students of many faiths, it is understood that students enrolled in St. Thomas More Catholic School will participate in all faith liturgies and practices, and be held accountable for all religious instruction on the Catholic

faith. This includes the learning of prayers and the completion of all assignments and assessments. Attending Mass is considered an important part of learning in a Catholic school.

Field Trips Student learning can be enhanced by traveling to an educational site outside the school building for field trips. Field trips are privileges afforded to students; no student has an absolute right to attend a field trip. Students can be denied participation if they fail to meet academic or behavioral requirements. Since they are of an educational nature, students will be held responsible to attend and participate in field trips as a class when they are scheduled. In order to attend a field trip, a student must have a signed parent permission form. These are sent home with the student prior to the field trip and must be returned to the teacher by the designated date. The permission form includes all information the parents need to be aware of including destination; date and time of departure from school and arrival back at school, teacher or person in charge of the students, cost involved, educational purpose of the trip, and method of transportation. If the student does not return a signed parent permission form or pay the assigned fee he/she will not be allowed to attend the field trip. The student will be assigned to a supervised location at school for the duration of the trip.

Parents who volunteer to chaperone or drive on field trips must successfully complete Safe Environment training and background check. Drivers need to also have completed a **Driver Information Form** on file in the school office and submit a copy of their insurance card and driver's license. Parent drivers should take the agreed upon most direct route to and from school to the place of the field trip, and must be sure that each child is seat-belted in an appropriate seat in their vehicle. All parent helpers need to be fully aware of their responsibilities and should not bring any additional children with them.

Library / Media Center The Library / Media Center is a learning center designed to introduce students to methods of obtaining information for intellectual, physical and spiritual development. Students check out books, view reference materials, periodicals, biography, fiction and nonfiction, and engage in research and literature appreciation. Students learn how to become effective and ethical consumers and creators of information and technology. It is our center for encouraging life-long appreciation and love for literature and reading. We will strive to equip our students and staff with current and relevant technology opportunities and skills. Students are responsible for their appropriate usage of all equipment / books in the Media Center.

Extra-curricular Activities and Clubs St. Thomas More School offers a variety of extra-curricular activities throughout the year including:

Legion of Mary Jr. - A parish based after school program dedicated to prayer through the Rosary. Students in 4th - 8th Grade meet weekly to pray and plan Christ centered activities.

Band Program – An Archdiocesan provided program for an additional cost for students in 5th – 8th Grade

Bible Bowl – 4th – 8th Grade Bible knowledge team

Book Bowl – A Jr. High book reading / knowledge bowl team.

Norris Athletics – A partnership with Norris Jr. High to allow our Jr. High students to participate in swimming and track and field at Norris Jr. High

STM Athletics – A variety of Parish based sports including Baseball / T-Ball, Basketball, Football, Soccer, Softball, and Volleyball.

Wits Clash - a Jr. High knowledge team

Youth Choir – a vocal music choir that sings at school Masses, monthly parish Masses, and occasional concerts

Section VIII—Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct St. Thomas More School's Code of Conduct is to provide guidelines for the community so that students, parents, and staff will live and grow in their love of Jesus Christ and His teachings. The rules and their consequences are intended to assist parents, students, faculty, and staff in this task. The cooperation of all involved is required to fulfill our mission and charisms of courage, holiness, intellect, leadership, and service. Discipline is a system of rules and regulations that govern the conduct of the students and staff enabling them to create a positive, productive learning environment. Just as academic learning is an on-going process, so too is the

mastery of discipline skills so each student will ultimately become self-disciplined and self-directed. Positive methods of discipline will be used and encouraged. Appropriate behavior in school is a responsibility to be shared by students, parents, and staff, and the St. Thomas More Catholic School community. Self-discipline skills will be taught to students and integrated with all other instruction throughout the school day. The school has a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process based on our charisms of Courage, Holiness, Intellect, Leadership, and Service. Students are expected to follow the PBIS process as directed by teachers and staff. *Love and Logic* is the basic guide for student discipline. *Love and Logic* provides instruction for management techniques to assist students and teachers in the development of positive teacher-student and peer relationships, motivating students to maximize their “on-task” behaviors, and the development of problem-solving and behavior management techniques that will empower students to own and responsibly manage their behavior. Teaching social skills is imperative in helping students achieve success in school and beyond. By giving students the basic tools for social interaction, we are shaping their success experiences in the classroom, with their peers, and their future.

Section IX --- Behaviors and Consequences

St. Thomas More Catholic School has a school wide discipline system based on Love and Logic designed to maintain our mission and goals. This system provides an age appropriate, respectful, self-discipline system based on a Christian philosophy on a continuum from grades Kindergarten through 8th. Our discipline policy allows consistency and continuity that will enable the students to have opportunities to accept personal responsibility necessary for growth socially, academically, spiritually and physically. To preserve privacy, parents will only be notified about the behavior and corrective measures of their own student(s). Please note: **Students can be held accountable for conduct inside or outside of school that is detrimental to the school, environment, the school image, staff, or goes against our Catholic Christian beliefs.** Positive discipline will be used and encouraged. Appropriate consequences for specific misbehaviors will be determined by the Teachers, Principal, and the Executive Director. Each issue will be dealt with on an individual basis. Legal authorities will be contacted when a violation of local, state or federal law occurs.

Levels of Consequences Consequences for disrespectful and irresponsible behavior include, but are not limited to, the following:

Demerits and Detention 4th – 8th Grade When a demerit is issued, the student will be required to take his/her card home for a parent/guardian signature. If the card is not returned with a signature, the parent will be contacted by the student’s teacher. When a student has accumulated 4 demerit card signatures in a trimester, their teacher will contact their parent that he/she will be required to serve a short term (1/2 hour) detention. When a student has accumulated 5 demerit card signatures in a trimester, their teacher will contact their parent that he/she will be required to serve a long term (1 hour) detention. Students in detention may be required to write an explanation for the situation in which the detentions were assigned describing how they could have handled the situations in a more appropriate manner. Students who fail to serve any of a detention will receive additional time to be served. Students who miss several detentions will have additional disciplinary obligations

If a student accumulates 6 demerit card signatures in a trimester, he/she will have an office referral where they will set up a plan for future success and service to make up for past misbehaviors. The principal will be communicate the plan with their parent. If a student accumulates six demerit card signatures in a trimester, he/she will receive an office referral and will be required to serve a long-term detention. Each subsequent demerit in a trimester will result in a long term (1 hour) detention. Further disciplinary action to be determined by the teacher and/or the principal. The teacher and/or principal will determine when a violation requires a demerit.

Detention TK – 3rd Teachers will notify parents prior to any student staying after school to serve a detention. Short-term detentions are served for 15 minutes after school (3:10 – 3:25 p.m.) on the day after the infraction occurs. Long-term detentions for primary students are served for 30-minutes after school (3:10 – 3:40 p.m.) on the day after the infraction occurs.

Behavioral Conference A behavioral conference is a meeting between school personnel and the parent/guardian of the student who is experiencing behavior problems. Failure of a parent/guardian to attend a scheduled conference without an acceptable excuse may result in re-evaluating whether St. Thomas More is your student's best school choice.

Disciplinary Written Assignment The Disciplinary Written Assignment will be assigned by the teacher or principal to the student to assist them in accepting responsibility for their actions and developing a plan for appropriate behavior. Sincerity, spelling, grammar, and age-appropriate quality of work will be evaluated; insufficient work will be returned to the student for revision.

SAT Team A conference with a team of teachers can be convened in a case when a student repeatedly shows disregard for the rules of St. Thomas More Catholic School, despite disciplinary action. The team will be made up of teachers, the Principal, the parent, and possibly the Pastor and Executive Director. Creation of a Behavior Contract may be implemented at this time.

Behavior Contract Once the student and parents meet with the Principal and or / Intervention Team, he/she will enter into a Behavior Contract with the school. The Behavior Contract will detail the acceptable behaviors for the student and the outcomes expected of him/her. Students who breach the Behavior Contract will be reviewed by the Principal and or SAT Team for possible expulsion or withdrawal of the student from St. Thomas More Catholic School.

Suspension Suspension is the temporary exclusion of a student from school and school activities. Parents are notified prior to the suspension. The length of the suspension will be determined by the principal and may vary depending on the circumstances. Suspensions may be imposed for periods of time when the student's presence in the school presents a danger to himself/herself or others and/or until all the facts can be ascertained

The following procedures may be followed for suspension:

1. The student will be removed from the situation and taken to the Principal.
2. The Principal will investigate by discussing the circumstances and situation with person(s) making the complaint of misbehavior and the student accused of the misbehavior.
3. If suspension is necessary, the parent/guardian will be notified by the Principal to the reason(s) for the suspension, the length of the suspension and the conditions for returning to class. The student will be expected to complete all missed schoolwork and may be responsible for writing a Disciplinary Written Assignment.
4. The decision to suspend a student, in-school or out-of-school, is the sole responsibility of the Principal. Notification of the Executive Director may be provided.
5. While in school suspension students may not be allowed to participate from all school-related activities and parish team activities.

In-School Suspension (I.S.S.) Students in I.S.S. will report to the school office, and will not be allowed to participate in class activities, most often completing school work in the office. While in I.S.S. the student will be responsible for all class work missed, and may need to write a Disciplinary Action Assignment. While in I.S.S., the student may lose their privilege to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) Students in O.S.S. are not allowed to attend school or any school related activities during the time they are in suspension. He/She is still expected to complete all assigned classwork which must be turned in when they return to school.

Expulsion Expulsion is the permanent exclusion of a student from the school and school activities. The decision to expel a student rests with the Principal and Executive Director. In many circumstances, documentation of preliminary attempts to help a student redirect inappropriate behavior will be on file, and the parent will have been notified of the disciplinary actions that might result, although this is not mandatory. The decision to expel a

student should not come as a surprise to anyone involved, unless the actions were so severe that the student received immediate expulsion. (Possession of drugs or weapons, committing or threatening a criminal act, extreme disrespect, etc).

1. Upon expulsion, the student's parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the measure being taken, the reasons for the expulsion, and their right to appeal.
2. The expulsion may be reconsidered by the Principal and Executive Director when an appeal for a special hearing is made by the parent. Any appeal must be submitted in writing to the principal within 72 hours of notification of the expulsion. Appeals are to be heard by the Principal and Executive Director.

Discipline Response by Grade Level

Primary: Kindergarten - 2nd Grade

Offenses are but not limited to hitting, disrespect, inappropriate language, and disobedience of school and general safety rules. Student behavior is communicated to parents and administration via e-mail, conversations, and meetings.

Intermediate: 3rd - 5th Grade

Each student is provided a **Demerit Card** the first day of each trimester. These cards are carried by the students when they attend all of their classes. Offenses that may earn a demerit include but are not limited to:

1. Dress code infraction, twice in one week
2. Tardy to class (3 times in 1 week)
3. Disturbance in hall
4. Misbehavior in cafeteria/on playground
5. Not having card
6. Not prepared for class, missing supplies
7. Missing or incomplete assignments (3 times in one week)
8. Disruption in class
9. Not following directions
10. Papers or forms lacking an adult signature
11. Disobedience (not following directions or school rules)
12. Assignment book not signed 2 days in a row.

Students are provided new clean Behavior Cards at the beginning of each trimester. Detentions for demerits will be assigned as follows:

- After a student receives 3 demerits or marks on the Demerit Card, that student will receive a 30-minute detention.
- After 4 marks, an hour detention (or 30-minutes for two days)
- After 5 marks, a parent will be called for a conference and/or a meeting will be held with the Principal. Further consequences to be determined.
- Excessive demerits or severe violations of the rules may require a visit with the principal.
- Homework Room will also be implemented when a student fails to come to school with completed homework.

Junior High: 6th - 8th Grade

Merit / Demerit Cards – Rules and Regulations

Positive Points

Positive Points are a way of acknowledging students for engaging in positive helpful behavior. They can be awarded for a variety of reasons. One positive point will be awarded weekly for each of the following:

- Prepared for class all week (books, materials, pens, pencils, etc.)
- All assignments have been turned in on time and done correctly (this includes any paper needing a parent signature)
- Wearing proper dress / following uniform code each day

Students who have earned negative points may have the opportunity to earn a positive point back by correcting the infraction.

Positive Points may be redeemed for the following:

- Erase negative points (1 positive = 1 negative)
- Extra privileges such as homework passes, extra recess, Spirit Days, etc.

Negative Points

Two negative points will be earned for the following infractions:

- Not prepared for class
- Missing assignment, assignment not done correctly, no signature
- Dress code violation (Please review the handbook for the proper dress code)

*If any of the above items become a repetitive behavior the teacher may assign more than two negative points.

6 Negative points = 1 Demerit. Within each trimester points may be carried over to the following week. At the end of the trimester all students will receive a new demerit card and will start fresh.

Demerit Process

1. For each demerit assigned a parent signature will be required on the student's card. Clean-up detail may also be required if the demerit was issued for damage to school property.
2. When a student accumulates 4 demerits in one trimester, the student will have a 30 – minute detention to serve and the parent will be notified.
3. When a student accumulates 5 demerits in one trimester, the student will have a one-hour detention to be served in one afternoon unless otherwise arranged and the parent will be notified.
4. When a student accumulates 6 demerits in one trimester, a meeting with parent, teacher, and principal will take place to establish a Behavior Modification Process.

Specific Behaviors That Are Not Allowed and Possible Consequences The following list is not all-encompassing and the school reserves the right to enforce and amend it as necessary. At any time when the seriousness of the infraction warrants, the principal may directly assign a more severe consequence depending on the circumstances. Parents will be notified in such circumstances. **Severity or frequency of infraction may lead to immediate suspension or expulsion.**

Violations Against Persons and Property:

Teacher or Staff Assault – Causing or intending to cause personal injury of an **adult associated with the school**. Student's intent may be inferred from the words and acts of the student. Personal injury includes the infliction of pain for which first aid or medical attention may need to be sought.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 day suspension and possible expulsion
- 2nd Offense – 3-5 day suspension and possible expulsion
- 3rd Offense - Expulsion

Student Assault – Causing or intending to cause personal injury of **another student**. Student's intent may be inferred from the words and acts of the student. Personal injury includes the infliction of pain for which first aid or medical attention is sought.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 demerits and possible detention, suspension, or expulsion
- 2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension or expulsion
- 3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

Fighting – Mutual physical contact with repetitive blows. More serious fights involve serious injury to a student or results in disruption of a large number of students.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 2nd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 3rd Offense – expulsion

Minor scuffles that do not result in serious injury or any disruption of the school.

1st Offense –1-2 demerits and possible detention or suspension

2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension

3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension

Written, Verbal or Non-verbal Abuse of a Student or Adult Associated with the School

Threatening – indicates an intention to do harm

1st Offense –1-2 day suspension

2nd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

3rd Offense – expulsion

Non-threatening – abuse that is disrespectful

1st Offense –1-2 demerits and possible detention

2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension

3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension

Harassment of a student or adult associated with the school on the basis of ethnicity, sex, age, religion, national origin, marital status, or disability. Examples include:

(a) unwelcomed, intentional touching or grabbing of another’s intimate parts, or the pulling of, pulling off, or lifting of clothing covering the intimate parts;

(b) explicit offensive sexual references or gestures;

(c) name calling or taunting which includes, but is not limited to names such as slut, bitch, fag, cat calls or offensive noises or whistling;

(d) language of any kind which is disparaging, demeaning, or threatening, including graffiti or profane jokes, the spreading of sexual gossip, and comments about a person’s body or unwanted verbal or written sexual comments;

(e) staring or leering with sexual overtones;

(f) inappropriate photographing with a cell phone camera, etc;

(g) any other verbal or physical conduct which creates a hostile school environment.

1st Offense –1-2 day suspension or possible expulsion

2nd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

3rd Offense – expulsion

Bullying includes any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof that is intended to cause distress upon a student or adult associated with the school. If it is determined that a student is engaging in bullying behavior, the principal will implement discipline necessary to stop such behavior. Which may result in suspension or expulsion.

Cyberbullying is willful and repeated harm through electronic media. Student activity on the Internet whether on or off site may be subject to school discipline if the behavior affects the school environment. Forms of cyberbullying:

(a) Flaming – online fights

(b) Harassment – repeated offences

(c) Cyberstalking – repeated threats

(d) Denigration – disparaging messages

(e) Exclusion – leaving others out, ignoring

(f) Trolling - stirring up conflict or starting conflict

(g) Impersonation – passing off as others

(h) Outing and Trickery – revealing secrets, detrimental labeling

St. Thomas More School can and will define what is okay and what is not when online under direction of the principal. The First Amendment / Freedom of Speech does not apply in school matters. When students implicate

themselves by participating in or becoming associated with cyberbully, their involvement will also be fully reviewed to determine the extent of involvement and the appropriate forthcoming consequence.

Depending on the severity of the offense, any of the following consequences may be applied at any time.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 demerits and possible detention
- 2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

Sexual Assault includes sexual assault in the first degree or second degree as defined in Nebraska Statutes 28-319 and 28-320. Sexually assaulting or attempting to sexually assault any person is a violation of this Discipline Code (regardless of whether the alleged assault takes place on or off school grounds) if a complaint has been filed by a prosecutor in a court of competent jurisdiction alleging that the student has sexually assaulted or attempted to sexually assault any person.

- 1st Offense – expulsion

Possession of weapon includes a knife, firearm, lighters and matches, firework, ammunition, lead pipe, chuck-sticks, throwing star, dart, brass knuckles, unauthorized tools or chemicals or other dangerous weapons. Final determination of whether an object falls under this definition of a weapon rests with the school principal. Law enforcement may also be contacted.

- 1st Offense – 1-5 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 2nd Offense – expulsion

Willfully Causing or Attempting to Cause Damage to Property includes any student who willfully causes damage or attempts to cause damage in any way to any property, real or personal, is subject to disciplinary action. The parent or guardian shall be liable to the school for all property belonging to the school or loaned to the student. Examples include: graffiti, defacing parish or school property, books, equipment, or facilities.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 demerits and possible detention, suspension, or expulsion
- 2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

Theft/stealing or attempting to steal property belonging to students, staff, parish, or school

The parent or guardian shall be liable for all related losses.

- 1st Offense – 1-2 demerits and possible detention, suspension, or expulsion
- 2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension or possible expulsion
- 3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

Academic Integrity Essential to the mission of St. Thomas More Catholic School is the teaching of character traits throughout our curriculum and activities. Character is moral strength. Integrity is the firm adherence to a code of moral values. Honesty is the uprightness of character or action implying a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way. It is impossible to build community when deceit is involved.

Academic Integrity Looks Like:

- Students doing their own homework,
- Students turning in tests that reflect their ability and effort,
- Accepting responsibility for NOT studying or poor organization of time,
- Respecting yourself and your God enough to represent you and your work honestly.

Academic Integrity Does Not Look Like:

- Obtaining a grade dishonestly,
- Obtaining the school work of another,
- Misrepresentation of work,
- Abuse of confidence,
- Perversion of truth,

-Providing information in the form of answers for other students.

Sufficient evidence by a teacher of a lack of academic integrity on the part of a student causes a loss of trust and a tainted reputation. In addition to the consequences below, the student may be allowed to repeat the work or retake a different version of a test or quiz.

1st Offense – 1-2 demerits and possible detention

2nd Offense – 1-2 day suspension

3rd Offense – 3-5 day suspension or possible expulsion

Technology

At times teachers will instruct students to research on the Internet. Students' access to the Internet will be limited solely to those websites that will facilitate their search for identified information as directed by the teacher. The Student Technology and Internet Agreement will be provided for parents and students to sign. The media teacher will be discussing this agreement statement with all students using the computer to insure their compliance with this policy.

Student Technology and Internet Agreement St. Thomas More School will provide computer internet access resources for students when such information is consistent with our Catholic moral beliefs, educational philosophy, and goals of the school. Student use of technology is a privilege that can be retracted based on inappropriate usage both in school and out of school. The school supports research and education as well as collaboration with other individuals and groups. The Internet provides a connection to this global community, promoting educational excellence. Teachers will blend thoughtful use of network resources and the internet throughout curriculum, utilizing them to facilitate innovation and communication.

By providing valuable electronic field trips, educators are building a community of life-long learners. Parents and teachers will assist the students in making moral decisions regarding the use of technology. To ensure quality use of school networks and the internet, guidelines have been established. To participate in computer / internet usage students must follow the established rules and sign an Internet Agreement form to acknowledge their understanding of technology / internet responsibilities.

Training Students will be required to participate in basic awareness training sessions in their Media Center classes prior to utilizing the network, internet, e-mail, and Sycamore Education systems.

Network Rules The user will abide by the following rules:

- Users will log in and logout correctly
- Users will use safe search engines as directed by their teacher
- Users will not lend their network or e-mail passwords or privileges to others. Users will not borrow these resources from others.
- Users will respect copyright laws.

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Transmission and/or storage of material that is subversive or has the potential of causing physical harm to the user or others.
- Transmission and/or storage of material that is obscene, vulgar, abusive or otherwise offensive.
- Fraudulent messages (messages sent under an assumed name or with an intent to obscure the origin).
- Harassment (the persistent annoyance of another user),
- Attempts to access or destroy the data of another user or degrade the performance of the district's computers, including but not limited to computer viruses, altering system software, altering or deleting user files, and to erase history on any computer.
- Users are prohibited from using the school network services for personal or private financial gain.

Security Students accessing the school network services must assist in maintaining a secure system. Users of the school network services must adhere to the following security procedures:

- There is no guarantee of privacy or confidentiality of data files and e-mail messages. While reasonable effort will be made to keep information secure, users must remember that others may access electronic information.

- The school has the obligation to ensure that its computer resources are used properly and within established guidelines. In pursuit of that goal, the school reserves the right to monitor the system at any time without notice for signs of illegal or unauthorized activity and may access electronic files of users at any time without notice.
- Addresses, phone numbers, passwords or personal information that would violate user privacy or the privacy of others should never be revealed.
- Users will not access files belonging to others without permission from the owner.
- Users noticing a security or ethics problem must notify the teacher immediately without alerting others.
- Users are prohibited from engaging in any activity that is intended to circumvent school network services or computers.

Consequences Network access is a privilege, not a right. It entails responsibility. Any user violating school rules or state and federal laws is subject to the loss of privileges and any other disciplinary options. Data files or messages related to or in support of illegal activities may involve law enforcement agencies. Consequences for misuse or abuse of network services may include any or all of the following:

- Verbal or written warning
- Loss of credit for the network related assignment or unit
- Loss of computer privileges within the school
- Loss of privileges to use the network and/or the internet
- Referral to the administration for discipline and/or parent conference

Student Use of Social Networking Sites

Students are not allowed to access social networking sites at school whether on school computers or personal communication devices including smart watches (which are not allowed at school). Allowing children under the age of 16 to use social networking and gaming sites can present safety and other challenges for parents and schools. Too often these sites contain inappropriate content, language, and may contain some pornography. Parents must decide whether the benefit outweighs the risk to use social networking sites.

If parents are going to allow their children to use Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Snap Chat, Instagram, Wiki sites, or whatever the latest social networking sites are, Donna Rice Hughes at protectkids.com offers the following rules as a guide:

1. Instruct your children to never give personal information over the internet.
2. Secure the family computer by installing a firewall, anti-virus and anti-spyware software.
3. Be aware of photos your child is posting online.
4. Inquire about your child's on-line activities and friends.
5. Instruct your child never to plan a face-to-face meeting.
6. Restrict access to social networking sites by using privacy settings.

Students who choose to use social networking sites take a risk of violating the rights of other students and of damaging their own reputations. If the activity of students using social networking sites in any way negatively reflects on St. Thomas More Catholic School, its students or staff, the student(s) involved will receive the appropriate consequences for the specific misbehavior as determined by the school administration. Depending on the nature of the occurrence, consequences may include any level of consequence listed in this handbook.

Liabilities St. Thomas More School will not be responsible for financial obligations incurred by users of the school's network or Internet system. The school will not accept responsibility for how students use knowledge of the Internet nor the quality of the information obtained. Any damages a user may suffer, including loss of data, will not be the responsibility of the school. All users shall assume full liability, legal, financial, or otherwise, for their actions.

Internet and Social Media Strategies for Students

- Talk with parents / guardians about rules for going online and do not break them.
- Email and text messages are never really private. Messages can be recovered and others may be watching.
- Internet Service Providers have rules about online behavior. Consequences for breaking rules can include home accounts cancelled and prosecution.
- Limit your Internet time to keep a healthy balance between times online and personal activity.

- Never violate the safety or rights of others by sharing private information about others even if you mean it as a “joke”.
- Don’t post full name, address, phone number photos and other personal information.
- Don’t leave cell phones and laptops out of your sight.
- Don’t chat with strangers online or agree to meet someone you only know online.
- Don’t open messages and attachments from people you don’t know.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Students may not use cell phones or any other electronic devices including smart watches and fitbits at school. Student who fail to follow this rule will have their device confiscated and held until it can be released to a parent/guardian. Appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken for students who repeatedly fail to follow this rule. St. Thomas More School is not responsible for lost, missing, or broken personal items. Students who do not follow this policy and then report cell phones as stolen, damaged, or lost, cannot expect extensive search and recovery.

Tobacco / Nicotine / Vaping Students are not allowed to use or be in possession of any tobacco, nicotine, or vaping products or devices of any kind. The possession of these items in any form by a student during the school day on school property or at a school-sponsored extracurricular activity will be reported to the principal who will administer disciplinary action. Parents will be notified.

Substance Abuse When there is a question of chemical substance (drugs, alcohol, and inhalants) misuse or medication misuse or overdose, the principal and involved teachers will work with the student and the family toward bringing about a complete recovery and elimination of the drug abuse of the student involved. It is the school’s moral and legal obligation to act in accordance with all laws, and in the best interest of the student(s) involved. Therefore, the following guidelines will apply:

- 1) Any case involving the selling or distribution of illegal drugs will be turned over to the police for investigation and they will determine if prosecution is warranted.
- 2) Any case involving the possession or misuse of drugs or alcohol on the school premises or at school-sponsored activities will be reported to the principal.
- 3) The parents or guardians will be notified immediately and requested to come to the school.
- 4) After a conference with the parents or guardians and student, the disciplinary action, ranging from a five-day suspension to immediate expulsion will be decided.
- 5) During the time of the suspension, it will be required that the parent or guardian enroll in some type of family therapy with the student.
- 6) At the completion of the suspension, the student will return to school with a contract to continue therapy until the therapist releases the student (family).
- 7) If the existing contract is not honored, or there is a recurring offense, immediate expulsion will be warranted.
- 8) Harassment or interference with witnesses could also result in expulsion.
- 9) The student and/or family may appeal these disciplinary actions in writing to the principal or the pastor.
- 10) After meeting with the family and reaching a consensus, the Executive Director’s and principal’s decision is final.
- 11)

Section VII—Dress Code

Our school uniforms may be purchased at Dennis Uniform 726-740 N. 109th Ct. Omaha, NE 68154, Phone 408-496-9911 or at DiGiorgio’s Sportswear 14111 Q Street Omaha, NE 68137 Phone 402-894-5627. While uniform shirts, shorts, and pants do not have to be purchased at these stores, they must be of the same style. They are the only stores where the school skirts, skorts, and sweaters may be purchased. Both vendors will place a permanent school monogram of the St. Thomas More logo on any white or navy uniform polo shirt for a small fee. The school encourages students to proudly wear their school logo on their uniform shirts. In adherence to our philosophy, proper dress will enhance the learning environment. Personal appearance, cleanliness and hygiene should reflect an attitude of self-worth and school pride on the part of the student. It is the parents’ responsibility to know and ensure their students follow the uniform code for students in Pre-School through the eighth grades. Students who are out of uniform will receive demerits and/or may lose privileges. This may include not being eligible for Spirit Days / dress down days.

Uniform Guidelines

- All uniforms must be consistent and color fast. Uniform items may be purchased from any vendor, but must be consistent with the St. Thomas More School dress code and must meet administrative standards. Plaids on girl's skirts must be identical with the plaid available from Dennis Uniform Company and DiGiorgio's Sportswear.
- Additional uniform restrictions will be applied by the administration in response to changing styles and fads if they become disruptive to the learning environment.
- The administration will be the final judge in the enforcement of this code.

Violations of the Dress Code Students out of uniform **will receive demerits and/or may lose privileges.** This may include not being eligible for Spirit Days / dress down days.

Young Ladies The uniform for girls is the Campbell plaid shift (jumper) (Pre-School-3rd grade) and Campbell plaid box pleat skirt or skort (4th-8th grades.) Shifts (jumper) /skirts must be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee. Girls may wear navy slacks (Pre-School-6th grade) or khaki slacks (7th & 8th grade) in place of the plaid shift, skirt or skort. (Slacks must be similar to those sold by Dennis Uniform—no cargo, corduroy, wind pants, ankle, capri, etc.). A plain dark colored belt must be worn by students in 1st – 8th Grade. If blouses are worn, they are to be long or short sleeved, tailored, and collared. Navy or white knit/polo shirts may be worn as long as they meet the same standard (no non-school logos). Shirts must be tucked in at the waist. No t-shirts with writing or designs that show through the shirts are allowed.

Young Men The uniform for boys is solid navy slacks (Pre-School – 6th grade) and khaki slacks (7th & 8th grade). (Slacks must be similar to those sold by Dennis Uniform—**no cargo, corduroy, wind pants, etc.**) A plain dark colored belt must be worn by students in 1st – 8th Grade. Shirts are to be long or short sleeved, tailored, and collared. Navy or white knit (polo) shirts may be worn as long as they meet the same standard (no non-school logos). Shirts must be tucked in at the waist. T-shirts with writing or designs that show through the shirts are not allowed.

Shorts Uniform navy (Pre-School – 6th grade) and khaki (7th & 8th grade) walking shorts may be worn by students from **the beginning of the school year until October 15 and from April 15th to the end of the year**, in addition to other times as determined by the administration. Shorts should be knee length. Shorts must be similar to those sold by Dennis Uniform—no cargo, corduroy, nylon, etc. All shorts originally made with belt loops must be worn with a plain dark colored belt. Shorts are to be worn with uniform blouses/shirts.

Sweaters / Sweatshirts A navy cardigan sweater with the St. Thomas More crest emblem worn with a white or navy collared shirt underneath may be purchased from Dennis Uniform or at DiGiorgio's Sportswear. New for 2019-2020 is a grey 1/4 zipped pullover sweatshirt with the St. Thomas More logo that may be purchased only from DiGiorgio's Sportswear. This also must be worn with a white or navy collared shirt underneath We advise parents to have a sweater or sweatshirt for their student. **These are the only sweater / sweatshirts that may be worn as part of the school uniform. Students are not allowed to wear other sweatshirts, coats, or hoodies on uniform days.**

Socks Socks are to be **plain with no logos** in white, gray, navy, or black. Girls may wear tights or leggings in the same colors only. Socks that are visible from the top of the shoe must be worn at all times.

Shoes Athletic shoes are required for gym class and may be worn at other times. They must be neat, clean and in good condition. Shoes with laces must be properly tied. Please avoid wearing dark soled shoes that leave marks on our floors. During cold and/or wet weather, appropriate boots should be worn for recess; however, no boots may be worn in the classrooms. Shoes must have a solid sole and cover the entire foot - no sandal type shoes may be worn.

Hair Hairstyles must be simple and not obstruct students' vision. Our uniform vendors sell girls bows and headbands that match our school uniform. Hair must be kept neat and clean. If a style or extreme hair coloration causes a disruption in the learning environment as determined by the principal, it is considered inappropriate.

Boy's hair must not cover their eyes and must be above the collar. The Principal will provide final determination of questionable hairstyles/color. Students are not allowed to have facial hair.

Fingernails Finger nails are to be kept clean and cut to a reasonable length. **Girls** may wear only clear or very light undetectable nail polish. Black, dark, or bright nail polish is not allowed.

Jewelry Jewelry should be kept simple and appropriate. Dangling earrings are not allowed. Necklaces and bracelets will be limited to religious styles. Students may not wear jewelry on any visible pierced body parts other than the ear. Boys may not wear earrings. Students may wear watches, but may not wear digital / internet connected smart watches.

Make-Up Students may not wear makeup, except Jr. High girls who are allowed to wear **non-visible** foundation.

Tatoos Temporary or permanent tattoos on any visible body part(s) are not allowed.

Clothes for P.E. **Separate gym attire is required for students in 3rd – 8th grade.** Students are to wear a **gold spirit shirt with the “Property of St. Thomas More” logo sold through the school and black shorts**, which are to be as long as their uniform shorts. Other casual attire is not acceptable. Gym shoes must be an athletic-type of shoe that does not leave a mark on the floor. Students are to change back into their uniform following P.E.

Spirit / Jean Days / Dress-Up Days Out of uniform days will be announced and defined by the principal.

Spirit / Jeans Days For Spirit Days students may wear a school spirit shirt and jeans. Students may not wear leggings. When Spirit Days are held during shorts season, students may wear **school appropriate** school uniform length non-athletic jean or dress shorts. Typically these days are held as part of a fundraiser and required students to bring an item to participate. The weekly newsletter will provide dates and additional details when these days are scheduled. If students do not follow the guidelines for appropriate dress on Spirit / Jeans / Dress up Days they will not be allowed to participate in the next one.

Dress-Up Days On dress up days students may wear dress-up (nice) clothes, but **NO** t-shirts, wind pants, jeans, shorts, sports clothes, or sweatshirts. Skirts must be the length of uniform skirts. **NO** flip-flops or slippers may be worn at any time. Shoulders and waists must be covered and shirts must be of sufficient length to reach the top of the waist band. All non-uniform apparel must be of a modest nature. The administration reserves the right for final clothing approval.

Section VIII--- Health and Safety

School Nurse St. Thomas More Catholic School contracts with the *Visiting Nurses Association* (VNA) for a school nurse. The nurse is responsible for maintaining student health records, state health reporting, and staff training. The nurse is on-site a designated number of hours per year. Additionally, the school contracts with Creighton University School of Nursing to conduct student health screenings.

School Counselor St. Thomas More Catholic School has a counselor who works with students in their classrooms, consults with teachers, and sees students individually. A student can be referred to the counselor by a parent, teacher or Principal, or the student may initiate the contact. The counselor will contact the parent if he/she thinks that the child should be referred to an outside agency for further counseling. The counselor can provide parents information that may be helpful to their child's development, and lists of appropriate community agencies and resources. The counselor may come into classrooms to teach all students, working together with classroom teachers to deliver curriculum in the areas of academic and career planning, as well as personal and social skills development.

Child Protective Services When there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse / neglect has or will occur the state law mandates a referral to the authorities. In this case, a verbal report needs to be provided to either Child Protective Services (CPS) or to our local Law Enforcement agency. Keep in mind that if the child has physical indications/injuries or there are immediate safety issues, law enforcement (not CPS) has the authority to take immediate protective custody if necessary. The state and the Catholic School Office mandates that schools cooperate with CPS and law enforcement personnel in order to conduct their investigations.

By state statute 28-710 the child abuse mandatory reporting provisions define abuse or neglect as knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causing or permitting a minor child to be:

1. Placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health;
2. Cruelly confined or cruelly punished;
3. Deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care;
4. Left unattended in a motor vehicle if such minor child is six years of age or younger;
5. Sexually exploited by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such person to solicit for or engage in prostitution, debauchery, public indecency, or obscene or pornographic photography, films or depictions.

Immunizations & Physical Exams Parents are required to ensure that their student complies with the Nebraska School Immunization Rules and Regulations **before they can be allowed to attend classes.** Exception to the immunization requirement is made only if a medical reason is documented by a physician assistant or nurse practitioner or for valid religious objections as determined by the principal. Before attending classes or at registration, the school must obtain the student's birth date, social security number, and immunization history. Students who are not in compliance with the immunization requirement or have not provided a qualified waiver, may not attend St. Thomas More School until they have complied with the immunization policy. The 2024 - 2025 Nebraska School Immunization Rules and Regulations require students to have the following immunizations **before attending classes.**

Preschool

- 4 doses of DTaP, DTP, or DT vaccine
- 3 doses of Polio vaccine
- 3 doses of Hib vaccine or 1 dose of Hib given at or after 15 month of age
- 3 doses of pediatric Hepatitis B vaccine
- 1 dose of MMR or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age
- 1 dose of varicella (chickenpox) or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age. Written documentation (including year) of varicella disease from parent, guardian, or health care provider will be accepted.
- DT vaccine,
- 4 doses of pneumococcal or 1 dose of pneumococcal given on or after 15 months of age

Kindergarten, 7th grade, and out-of-state transfer students:

- 3 doses of DTaP, DTP, DT, or Td vaccine, one given on or after the 4th birthday,
- 3 doses of Polio vaccine,
- 3 doses of pediatric Hepatitis B vaccine or 2 doses of adolescent vaccine if student is 11-15 years of age.
- 2 doses of MMR or MMRV vaccine, given on or after 12 months of age and separated by at least one month,
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age. Written documentation (including year) of varicella disease from parent, guardian, or health care provider will be accepted. If the child has had varicella disease, they do not need any varicella shots.

Additionally for 7th grade only

- 1 dose of Tdap (must contain Pertussis booster).

Head Injury A report will be made and parents contacted when their student receives a head injury. The report will contain a list of symptoms associated with head injury and concussion. Parents will be encouraged to contact their doctor if the student displays any of those symptoms.

Communicable Diseases Evaluation of each situation involving a student with a communicable disease will be on a case-by-case basis. In the cases of some diseases, state law will be applicable. In cases in which blood borne pathogens are possible, the emergency response procedures provided by the Catholic Mutual Group will be followed. Based upon information on Contagious and Infection Diseases from the Visiting Nurses Association, made effective 12/10/98, Title 173, Chapter 3 states criteria for minimum isolation and control measures for specific diseases. Since the incubation period, symptoms of illness, and infection periods are unique to each disease, appropriate responses to infections vary. St. Thomas More Catholic School will follow these guidelines.

Medications Parents who need to have their student take a prescribed medication during school hours must send a written, signed, and dated permission statement from a physician, along with the medication, clearly marked, and in its original container (including inhalers). The medication will be kept in the school office where it will be administered to the student. Students are not allowed to self-administer medications. **It is the parent's responsibility to provide medicine that is in date.**

School policy dictates that no student is to be given any medication without a written order from a physician. This includes aspirin, acetaminophen or any other type of pain reliever. The school cannot provide any medication, including pain relievers or cough medication, for students. If a student needs to take cough drops, a note from the parent must be sent to school for the classroom teacher. The cough drops must be turned over to the classroom teacher for dispensing as needed.

Asthma In addition to an inhaler, students who suffer from asthma must have an asthma action plan that has been updated at least annually on file in the office. Designated school personnel have been trained to implement the Emergency Response to Life-Threatening Asthma or Systematic Allergic Reactions (Anaphylaxis) protocol mandated by the Nebraska Board of Education in Rule 59. Trained responders will be available to provide an EpiPen injection and Albuterol nebulizer treatments to any student or school employee should an emergency arise in the school building or grounds while school is in session.

Tobacco Policy / Vaping St. Thomas More Catholic School building is a tobacco-free building in accordance with the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act (1979—LB3440). There are no designated smoking or tobacco use areas inside the building. **No one is allowed to use any tobacco, nicotine, or vaping products or devices of any kind on the premises.**

Fire, Lock Down, and Disaster Drills In order to insure the safety of the students, plans have been developed in case of either a fire or tornado emergency. These plans are practiced periodically throughout the year to be sure that the students are aware of the procedures.

The tornado shelters have been inspected and approved by the Omaha/Douglas County Office of Civil Defense to be sure that they are safe for the students. In case of a tornado warning that extends beyond the school day, students will remain at school until the warning expires or a parent collects them.

Asbestos Notice Our building materials contain asbestos. There is no danger to anyone as long as the material is not disturbed. Parents may view our state approved management plan by sending a written request to the school office.

Cooperation with Law Enforcement In cooperating with Law Enforcement Personnel or other Governmental Agents requesting access to students, St Thomas More administrators will grant such access in accord with the expressed wishes of the student's parents or legal guardian whenever possible while respecting the authority and directives of Law Enforcement Personnel. Exceptions to parental wishes must be made in the case of warrants for arrest, police investigations of alleged crimes, and in the case of suspected child abuse as defined in Nebraska

statutes. Step by step procedures for these occasions are contained in the Catholic School Office with guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Omaha.

Safety and Security School staff work to insure the safety and security of our students during school hours whether they are in the school building or on the grounds. One of the procedures followed is to keep all doors to the school building locked during school hours. **All visitors are to check in with the school office upon entering the building.** Parents should drop off any items at the School Office and not take them directly to classrooms. **All visitors to classrooms during the school day need to have a visitor pass and be Safe Environment Background Checked and Certified.** There will be no waiting for students in the school lobby.

Visitors will be admitted to the school office after a visual review of the person on security camera. Many cameras are located near all entrances/exits and inside the school building for added security. On occasion there may be a function at school that will require one of the main doors to be unlocked. During these times additional measures will be activated to ensure the safety of students.

Safety Plan In the event of a school emergency, the school will initiate our Safety Plan to insure the safety and security of the students and staff. A manual has been written and updated to provide procedures for a number of possible emergency scenarios that could occur in the school building and surrounding areas. These plans specify designated people, who will be called upon to assume roles of responsibility, and designated off-site evacuation locations. The manual does not cover every possible development; therefore, it may not always be in the safety interest of the students and staff to follow every procedural step. The Plan is a guide to follow that allows for rational judgment by those who assume the roles of responsibility at the time of each emergency.