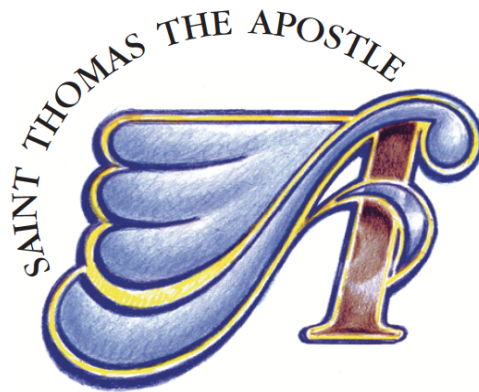


ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

2021-2022

“SETTING THE STANDARD FOR EDUCATING HEARTS AND MINDS”



Ms. Annette Pioppo, Principal

Ms. Diane Zarate, Vice-Principal

333 State Route 18
Old Bridge, NJ 08857

www.sttaob.com

Phone: 732-251-4000

Fax: 732-251-5315

SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL
PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK
2021-2022

MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Thomas the Apostle School educates minds and hearts through the integration of a challenging curriculum and a firm faith in our Lord and our God. We do this for our students by supporting diversified achievements, respectful leadership, and Christian service to God and Community.

...And where there is God

Catholic schools provide a community where students learn and grow as Jesus did in faith, knowledge and compassion for others. In this nurturing environment, students are given an opportunity to use his or her gifts and talents while learning to appreciate the contributions of others. It is in serving others that our students learn to give of themselves and practice the values they have been taught. We provide opportunities for personal prayer, and pray together as a family on a regular basis through our Masses, services, and daily prayers. Students are able to freely practice their faith and express themselves in a way which encompasses all aspects of their lives. In addition to academic excellence, students are encouraged to develop character and integrity through Christian Values. This culture helps to prepare the children to become successful and faithful in their professional and personal lives.

**Saint Thomas the Apostle is proud to receive its accreditation by AdvancED of
Colleges & Schools Commission on Elementary Schools.**

ADMINISTRATION

Pastor.....Fr. Jerome Johnson
Principal.....Ms. Annette Pioppo
Vice Principal.....Ms. Diane Zarate

DEPARTMENTS / SERVICES / OPERATIONS

School Secretary	MaryAnn Adami	Ext. 8229
School Business Office Administrator	Colleen Fritzen	Ext. 8254
Advancement and Admissions	Julie Pasquale	Ext. 8253
Before Care	Donna Delfino	ddelfino@sttaob.com
After Care	MaryAnn Adami	Ext. 8229
Parish Business Office/Finance	Michelle Loney	Ext. 8223
Nurse	Marissa Cunningham	Ext. 8230
Operations Manager/Maintenance	Scott Titmas	Ext. 8231
Food Services	Laura Brown	732-251-6361 harmonyfoods@outlook.com
Home School Association President	Katie Lenning	hsa@sttaob.com

SCHOOL HOURS: Pre-K through 8 7:45AM to 2:00PM

OFFICE HOURS: 7:30AM to 2:30PM

Contact Information

333 Route 18 South, Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Website: www.sttaob.com

Phone: 732-251-4000

Fax: 732-251-5315

Amendments to the Handbook

This Handbook is subject to change at any time. Parents will be notified of any changes. In appropriate circumstances the School Administration has the discretion to take actions other than those specified in this Handbook.

ACADEMICS

Curriculum

The school curriculum is designed to develop the physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth of the child. The faculty and staff at St. Thomas believe that all children can learn, and attempt to address all learning styles so that all students can find success. The curriculum is defined as all of the guided experiences of the student under the direction of the school and the National Educational Standards and the New Jersey State Standards are the basis for all Curriculum. Departmental instruction is provided from grades three through eight.

Middle School

Religious Studies
Literature
Language Arts
 Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary
 Speaking, Language
Mathematics
Social Studies
Science
Physical Conditioning/Health
Spanish
Digital Technology

K-5

Reading Language Arts
Mathematics
Social Studies
Science
(Gr. 1-5) Spelling
(Gr. 4 & 5) Vocabulary
Physical Education
(Gr. K-4) Music and Art
(Gr. 1-5) Computer Science
Handwriting
Spanish
Study Skills

Grading / Reporting System

The following grading system is the letter grade (grades 1 & 2) with the numerical equivalent (grades 4-8) used at Saint Thomas the Apostle School for all academic subjects.

A+	97 – 100
A	93 – 96
B+	89 – 92
B	85 – 88
C+	80 – 84
C	75 – 79
D	70 – 74
F	69 & below

Grading for Pre-K: a Progress Report is given to students in January and June.

Grading for Kindergarten: a Progress Report is given in November, followed by Report Cards for the subsequent marking periods.

Reporting Code for Kindergarten:

C – Consistently Observed

- S – Sometimes Observed**
- I – Practice and Support Needed**
- N – Not assessed during this marking period**

All grades are posted on PowerSchool. Formal, scheduled conferencing is available for parent(s)/guardian(s) once per year. Parents/Guardians may request another conference at any time.

Report Cards

The Report Card indicates the general progress of the student and is issued for grades K – 8 on a quarterly basis in November, January, March, and June.

HONORS – A’s in all major subjects and not less than a B in minor subjects.

MERIT – Not less than a B in all major subjects and not less than a C in minor subjects.

In addition, a teacher may recommend any student for Commendation in a particular subject for outstanding effort or achievement.

Homework

Homework is assigned to reinforce concepts and skills that have been presented in class and to prepare for the next lesson. At times, homework assignments are designed to foster the student’s creativity through research or enrichment projects. The following are suggested for times for daily assignments:

Pre-K and Kindergarten	5-20 minutes
Grades 1 – 2	20-30 minutes
Grades 3 – 4 – 5	30-50 minutes
Grades 6 – 7 – 8	50-120 minutes

These reflect written and study times and do not include long-term assignments or projects. Assignment books are required for all students in grades K through 4.

Students should be provided with a quiet atmosphere free from distractions while completing their homework. Parents/Guardians should not do the written homework or projects. However, they should point out principles involved, give illustrations, and make suggestions.

Parents and Guardians are encouraged to see that homework assignments are completed neatly and returned promptly to school. Absence from school does not excuse a student from his/her responsibility to complete homework assignments. All requests for homework should be made in the morning. Assignments are picked up via the school office by a parent/guardian, or given to a sibling or classmate at dismissal. If a student forgets his/her homework, it may not be brought to the school by the parent/guardian. Homework assignments are also posted on each teacher’s website.

National Junior Honor Society (Grades 6, 7, & 8)

Each chapter is required to publish its qualifications for membership which is based on the five pillars of the NJHS:

- o **Scholarship:** Per national guidelines, at a minimum, students must have a cumulative GPA of 93
- o Students who meet the scholarship requirement will have an opportunity to complete an application detailing their accomplishments in and commitment to **Service, Leadership, Character, and Citizenship.**

Placement Criteria for Math (Grades 7 & 8)

Optimum class sizes and extended class time, 300 minutes per week, enables all students to receive quality instruction. Proper placement assures a better foundation for higher-level math classes, and has a positive impact on both self-esteem and grades. Presently, two learning levels are available.

- **General Math:** These classes provide more time on task to achieve a deeper understanding of concepts.
- **Accelerated Math:** These classes are available for the student with an innate ability to grasp concepts quickly with limited individual assistance. On the 8th grade level, this course is taught as a High School Algebra I course of study. The student is totally responsible for his/her work and should not require any additional remediation.
- **Pre-Algebra** is taught to all students in grade 7
- **Algebra** is taught to all students in grade 8

IXL Program

A web-based program, IXL is a **requirement of our math and language arts programs for grades 1-8** in addition to classroom instruction. It is a student's responsibility to report his/her inability to access this online program.

Promotion

Students in grades K – 3 who have not successfully completed two basic skills (Reading, Mathematics, and Language Arts) will be considered for remediation. Students in grades 4 – 8 who have not successfully completed one or more basic skill(s) or one basic skill and one content subject (Religion, Social Studies, Science, Health, Spanish) will be required to complete thirty (30) hours of summer school from either a formal school-based program or tutoring.

Religious Studies

Religious instruction is an integral part of the educational program for all students. It is the aim of the school to help each student strive to become a living witness to the message of Christ. To attain this objective, school Masses are held once a month. The students are given opportunities to actively participate in making their class Masses creative and meaningful at each grade level. Parents are always invited and are encouraged to attend liturgical functions. Prayer services may be planned by students and teachers and are held in the classroom or in the church.

Sacramental Preparation

St. Thomas' teachers are responsible for sacramental preparation for the Sacraments of First Communion, First Penance, and Confirmation with the Parish Religious Education Program (St. Thomas PREP).

Standardized Testing

Three times per year, St. Thomas the Apostle School administers the MAP online testing to students in grades 1-8. MAP is a series of standardized achievement tests designed to assess student achievement in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, vocabulary, spelling, and other areas. The results are nationally norm-referenced, meaning that students' scores reflect their achievement in comparison to all students who took the test nationally.

Students absent from school when standardized tests are scheduled will be tested within the time allowed by the Diocese of Metuchen if possible. Standardized test results will be entered on each student's permanent record card. A copy of the results will also be sent home for parent review after the second and third test, usually in February and May.

ADMISSIONS

Saint Thomas the Apostle School admits students of any race, color, creed, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available to the students. Students wishing to register for Kindergarten must register in accordance with the age requirements of his/her sending school district.

Photocopies of the following documents must accompany the child at the time of registration:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Record of Immunization and Health Form
3. All sacramental certificates, if applicable

Physical examinations by the family doctor are required of all new students. All returning students must provide these documents in kindergarten, third, and sixth grade. A record of the annual dental visit is requested each September. When students transfer from other schools, parents/guardians must provide copies of their academic and health records.

The school will maintain records on all students. Information included in these records may not be released without written parental/guardian consent. All new students admitted into grades 1-8 are accepted on a probationary basis for a six-month period. This will give the student time to acclimate successfully – academically, socially, and developmentally.

Should the student's time at St. Thomas not be a positive or productive one, the student may be asked to withdraw. It is always our hope that we develop a strong relationship with the parents/guardians to work in the best interest of the child.

ALLERGY POLICY (LIFE-THREATENING)

In order to minimize the incidence of life-threatening allergic reactions, St. Thomas the Apostle will maintain a system-wide procedure for addressing life-threatening allergic reactions and maintain an Emergency Health Care Plan (EHCP) for any student whose parent/guardian and physician have informed the school in writing that the student has a potentially life-threatening allergy.

Policy Procedures:

In order to minimize the incidence of life-threatening allergic reactions, St. Thomas will:

- Provide training and education for all employees.
- In conjunction with the student's parent/guardian and primary care provider and/or allergist, maintain an Emergency Health Care Plan (EHCP) for any student identified with a potential life-threatening allergy.

General School Procedures:

At all levels, the school nurse, in conjunction with the student's parent/guardian and the primary care provider/allergist will prepare an Emergency Health Care Plan (EHCP) for any student with a life-threatening allergy. This EHCP will be updated annually and reviewed with the school nurse, the student's parent/guardian, and the primary care provider and/or the student's allergist. The EHCP will include the student's name, the life-threatening allergen(s), the warning signs and symptoms, what to do in case of an emergency, and phone numbers of parents, doctors, and allergists. The EHCP will be available in the nurse's office.

The school nurse will review the student's EHCP with the parent annually, or in the event there are any changes in the child's medical condition, classroom, or action plan.

ALLERGY POLICY (LIFE-THREATENING) Cont'd

The school nurse will be responsible for notifying the classroom teachers about the nature of the life-threatening allergies faced by students. This notification will include an explanation of the severity of the health threat, a description of the signs and symptoms to be aware of and what allergen(s) (food, materials, etc.) to avoid.

If the parent is in agreement, information about the child's life-threatening allergy will be distributed to the designated staff members. Staff will be reminded that all medical information is confidential and shared on a need to know basis. Teachers are responsible for keeping an updated substitute folder containing their student's EHCPs.

Epi-Pens (belonging to the school and those prescribed to the students) will be stored in the nurse's office. At the beginning of each school year or upon adding a staff position, all staff (including substitutes) will be informed by the school nurse of the locations of the EpiPen. With parental permission, students are allowed and encouraged to carry their EpiPen on their person as permitted in the medication policy.

Employee Training and Education

Initial employee training and education will include (but not be limited to):

- A description/definition of severe allergies and a discussion of the most common food, medication, latex, and stinging insect allergies.
- The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, and the correct use of an epinephrine auto-injector (Epi-Pen).
- Specific steps to follow in the event of an emergency. Medical response – Dial 911 – location of emergency Epi-Pen.

Classrooms

Teachers must be familiar with the EHCP (Emergency Health Care Plan) for students in their classes and respond to emergencies as per the emergency protocol documented in the EHCP. In the event of a suspected allergic reaction (where there is no known allergic history), the school nurse will be called and the school's Emergency Response Plan activated. The emergency medical services will be called immediately.

- A parent of guardian of a student with food allergies is responsible for providing all food for his/her own child.
- Sharing or trading food in the classroom or cafeteria will be prohibited. Proper hand cleaning techniques will be taught and encouraged before and after the handling/consumption of food.

School Field Trips **Due to Covid restrictions all field trips are temporarily on hold.*

The school nurse will recommend to the Administration the appropriateness of each field trip and consideration of safety of the student with life-threatening allergies.

- Protocols for field trips will include timely notification to the nurse.
- Medications including an Epi-Pen and a copy of the student's Emergency Health Care Plan must accompany the student.
- A cell phone or other communication device must be available on the trip for emergency calls and will be most likely in the possession of the responsible teacher or staff member.

- In the absence of accompanying parents/guardian or nurse, another trained individual will be assigned the task of watching out for the student's welfare and for handling any emergency. The adult carrying the Epi-Pen will be identified and introduced to the student as well as the other chaperones.

ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT

In accordance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) and Federal Regulation 40 CFR Part 763, we are required to notify you that an Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) is currently in place. The AMP file contains all necessary documents insuring compliance, covering activities such as periodic surveillance and a 3-year re-inspection. The AMP file is available for your review at any time. It is located in the St. Thomas School main office.

The Designated person for all asbestos related issues for Saint Thomas the Apostle School is Ms. Joanne Kowit (Principal).

ATTENDANCE

Absence

If a student is unable to attend school, parents/guardians must call the nurse's office (ext. 8230) or the main office (ext. 8220) before 9:30 A.M. The parent/guardian should give the student's name, homeroom teacher's name, and reason for absence. If a parent/guardian forgets to call, the school will call the home to confirm the student's absence. A student who has been absent from school must, upon returning, present a written excuse, signed by the parent/guardian, stating the reason for the absence and the exact dates of the absence. Failure to do so will result in a call home by the school nurse. If the child is diagnosed as having a contagious disease, it is to be reported immediately to the office and a doctor's note must be sent with the child upon returning to school. Children should not be sent to school if ill (fever of 100F, vomiting, diarrhea, unidentified rash) before they leave home. Children are only to be sent back to school 24 hours after the fever has broken and the symptoms have ceased (without the help of medication). Any student who leaves school before 11:00 A.M. for any reason and does not return will be marked as a full-day absence. Frequent absences for no apparent reason may result in the nurse calling the Truant Officer. These absences may cause a child to be retained or not graduate.

Lateness

Lateness is recorded in the office daily. Students who arrive after 7:45 A.M. are considered late. Students arriving after 7:45 A.M. must report to the school office to get a late pass.

Early Pick-Up: Appointments/Personal

Early dismissal from school for medical/personal appointments is discouraged, however, if there is reason a child must leave school early for an appointment or personal reasons, a note stating the time of dismissal should be presented to the homeroom teacher who will send it to the office. The student will meet the parent/guardian in the school office and record the time of the student's dismissal. If the dismissal is due to a medical appointment, a note from the doctor's office should be given to the homeroom teacher upon returning. **Unless it is an emergency, please do not pick up your child(ren) between 1:30 and 2:00 P.M. if a note was not presented to the homeroom teacher in the morning. This is to minimize frequent calls into classrooms, which interrupt lessons.**

Vacations

Parents/Guardians who plan a vacation during the school year must accept scholastic progress for their child(ren) during their absence. Teachers will not be expected to plan assignments for the duration of a vacation. Reading is always a good alternative to homework. Students will be responsible for any work missed while away from school.

Illness or Injury

Should a student be injured or become ill, the parents/guardians will be contacted. No student will be permitted to go home before this contact is made. If parents/guardians cannot be reached and the illness or injury is serious enough to require medical attention, the principal or nurse will consult the student's emergency care authorization form and arrange for the treatment authorized therein.

ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

St. Thomas the Apostle Athletic Association has been established to conduct and organize adult-supervised programs of sports and activities for students in grades five through eight. Our objective is to impart to our youth the ideals of honesty, loyalty, responsibility, courage, good sportsmanship, respect for authority, and to enrich their lives as they grow into happy, healthy young adults. Its success is measured not by their victories and records, but by the extent to which our athletes improve their skills and become better citizens.

Requirements for Participation in Interscholastic Sports:

1. Physical examinations no more than 364 days prior to trying out for any sport.
2. Completion of:
 - a. STA medical form not older than 364 days on file with the school nurse.
 - b. parental questionnaire
 - c. permission form
 - d. emergency information form
 - e. concussion awareness form
 - f. sudden cardiac arrest form
3. The approval of school nurse.
4. Each student is responsible for maintaining academic standards and acceptable conduct levels at all times. If an athlete receives any disciplinary action, the guidelines, as set for the in the Athletic Association By-Laws, will be adhered to. The Administration always reserves the right to allow or deny participation in an extracurricular activity.
5. A student must attend school for a period of 3 hours to participate in a competitive event on the same day. Certain exceptions (i.e. funeral, doctor's appointment, etc.) can be made if a student presents a note *at least one day in advance* requesting permission to participate. NO one will be allowed to participate if an early dismissal is necessary due to an illness or injury.
6. A child must be able to participate in the Physical Education class in order to be eligible to try out and/or participate in any sport, regardless of a note from a physician indicating otherwise.

CELL PHONES

Please refer to the St. Thomas the Apostle School Acceptable Use of Technology Policy Handbook.

CLASSROOM PARTIES

Teachers are responsible for all classroom parties. STA recognizes the importance of one's birthday, but for safety reasons, **parents are never allowed to send food in to share with other students.** Students may dress down and classroom teachers will provide recognition and additional "perks." If a child's birthday falls on a weekend, holiday, or during vacation, he/she is free to choose a half-year date or another day of his/her choosing.

DELAYED OPENINGS

If the opening of school is delayed, the announcement will be made through the alert system and also on the front page of the school website (www.sttaob.com). School is usually delayed for two hours, and all students are to be in class by 10:00 A.M. Children who ride the bus should report to their bus stop two hours later than their usual pick-up time.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is not the same as punishment. Instead, discipline has to do more with **teaching**. Learning right from wrong, how to respect the rights of others, which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, helps a child feel secure, loved, and self-confident. Self-discipline means knowing how to control impulses and how to successfully deal with normal stresses of everyday life. It is important that a child sees school and home as a team, working in his/her best interest. Christian discipline implies a following of Christ. The child becomes a disciple by developing the Gospel values of respect and integrity.

The following system of consequences has been developed to modify, inhibit, or change behaviors, which interfere with the well-being of each of our students and the learning process.

Demerits/Warnings

The following is a list of infractions that would require a teacher's attention. If the infraction is severe, or requires multiple warnings, a demerit will be given:

1. Purposeful disregard for property
2. Lateness to class
3. Failure to pick up after oneself in the classroom/cafeteria
4. Inappropriate language
5. Inappropriate or unkind behavior toward another student
6. Inappropriate hair style/cut*
7. Being out of uniform. Students are expected to look clean and neat (i.e. shirts tucked in, proper skirt length).**
8. Disrupting class
9. Disorderly conduct (i.e. Liturgies, hallways, fire drills, crisis drills, class trips, schoolyard, assemblies, etc.)
10. **Taking pictures or video of any person without permission**
11. Inappropriate use or misuse of technology (including cell phones).
12. Lateness to school (see policy under Attendance)
13. Excessive jewelry***

*Extreme hair (color, length, or style) will not be allowed. It will be up to the Administration to determine the appropriateness of the hairstyle. Girls may not wear their hair in a manner that covers their eyes. Boys' hair must be above the collar, ears, and eyebrows. (See full policy under Uniform)

**Girls: Skirts/jumpers no shorter than fingertip length (arms extended straight down at side determines the appropriate length. (See full policy under Uniform)

***Only girls may wear earrings (See full policy under Uniform)

The Administration reserves the right to judge the appropriateness of any student's hairstyle, dress, shoes, use of make-up, and/or jewelry. Girls may only wear stud earrings and they can only be located in the lobes. Only clear nail polish may be worn. If a child is not in proper uniform, demerits will be issued.

Detention:**Grades K-4**

Serious or multiple infractions and/or disrespectful behavior to another student or faculty member or staff may result in lunch detention. The primary means of discipline is “time out” from playtime. The students will be given ample warning when rules are not being followed.

Grades 5-8

Severe infractions or an accumulation of five (5) demerits (warnings) will require an in-school detention. Detention for grades 5-8 will be held before school from 6:30 A.M.-7:30 A.M. (unless the student is notified to the contrary) for the violation of class or school regulations. A detention slip will be issued and must be signed by a parent/guardian and returned to the teacher.

Additionally, certain behaviors or conduct may result in suspension or dismissal from St. Thomas: Blatant disrespect, fighting, cheating on a test, cutting class, bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, theft, destruction of property, possession of a weapon, use or possession of any illegal substance, any serious infraction deemed so by the principal and Office of Schools for the Diocese of Metuchen.

Having gone through the aforesaid process, if a student continues to act in ways that are inappropriate for one attending Saint Thomas the Apostle School, the parents/guardians will be required to remove their child. Once a student has served a suspension, he/she is automatically on probation. Very serious consideration will be given as to whether this student will be allowed to attend Saint Thomas the Apostle school for the next school year.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In the event of a school closing due to inclement weather or emergency, the following procedures will be followed:

- Our website (www.sttaob.com) will include information of early dismissal and emergency closings.
- A detailed instant alert will be sent to parents’ emergency phone numbers and e-mails. Please keep this contact information current.

Please DO NOT call the Pastoral Center or School.

At the start of each school year, all parents must update their contact information in the PowerSchool Enrollment Portal as part of their re-registration process. Included in this update should be the information for any adult that is granted permission to pick up your child(ren) in the event of an emergency. If the school needs to close early for any reason, your child(ren) will be dismissed following their “usual” dismissal instructions (bus, walker/rider, etc.), unless instructed to do otherwise. In the case of an emergency closing, our After Care program will not be available, so arrangements must be made for your child to be picked up from school at dismissal. Please remember also that during an emergency dismissal, it is difficult to get through on the phone lines to the school. Please DO NOT change your child’s/children’s route home at the last minute. Sometimes the buses leave before you have the opportunity to get through to the school. Please talk to your child regarding emergency plans so that they are aware of their route home, and please be sure that their homeroom teacher is aware of this, as well. Our first concern as a school is the safety of the children should an emergency arise.

FAMILY SERVICE INITIATIVE (FSI)

STA’s tuition includes a discount for parents (husband/wife) or guardians who participate in our Service Initiative. If families do not choose to volunteer, *or do not make arrangements to cover their hours, an additional \$700 per year will*

be added to your tuition to cover lost revenue. These hours include a choice between Bingo, Lunch Aides, Athletics, PREP Teachers, Substitute Teachers (must be a certified Substitute Teacher), or Teacher Aides.

There are people registered in the Parish who can be privately contracted to work bingos for a fee. **After you receive your schedule.** contact the bingo coordinator, Angelica Gangemi, in the Parish Office at 732-251-4000 ext. 8210 if you are interested in contact information for a replacement. *STA does not pay Bingo replacements.*

Our five weekly Bingos have historically grossed between \$250,000 and \$300,000 per year. This represents an approximate subsidy of \$700-\$900 for each child enrolled in St. Thomas the Apostle School. The success of our weekly bingos through the years borders on miraculous when compared to the same kind of efforts by other schools and parishes. Generating this additional money allows our tuition to remain within reach for our families. Good service by adequate staffing plays a large role in the success of our Bingo program.

Bingo Requirements: Each family is responsible for working 7 Bingos per year.

Bingo Schedule: Tuesday and Thursday: 11:00AM
 Friday: 9:00PM and Midnight
 Sunday: 5:00PM

Upon registration each year, parents are given the opportunity to select the day that is most convenient. A schedule of Bingo staffing teams is compiled after registration. Bingo staffing assignments for the new school year begins on July 1, and ends on June 30.

A minimum of three (3) Bingos must be completed prior to January 1. Missed Bingos without replacement will be charged at a rate of \$100 per Bingo.

Anyone who encounters a conflict with their scheduled day/night should call the Chairperson and request a schedule change. If a different day/night is requested, the Coordinator must be informed.

Alternate opportunities include*:

Lunch Time Volunteers: Requires helping in the cafeteria and during recess. The number of hours required to fulfill the Service Initiative varies.

PREP Teacher: This requires an interview and confirmation with the PREP Director, Deborah Yesis.

Teacher Aide: Teacher Aides are in integral part of the learning experience and an important addition to our classrooms. This position requires an interview with the Principal and a commitment of at least one day per week. *Based on availability.

Substitute Teacher: This position requires NJ Certification for Substitution, and you must be called in to substitute for a minimum of 8 school days. *Not guaranteed and based on availability.

*Please fill out a Volunteer Application, which is available in the school office. All volunteers must adhere to the guidelines set forth for volunteers by the Diocese of Metuchen.

FIELD TRIPS **Due to Covid restrictions all field trips are temporarily on hold.*

Field trips of educational value are planned by the teachers and students of each grade and are usually arranged by the teacher. Unless otherwise specified, school uniforms are to be worn on all field trips. A permission form must be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the school before any student may leave the school grounds and accompany a group on a field trip. Permission slips will require the signature of a notary in the event the destination is outside of the

state of New Jersey. Students who do not have permission to participate in a specific field trip are expected to attend school during regular hours that day, otherwise they will be marked absent for the day. Students are expected to follow all school ruled with regard to behavior and dress code while participating in any school sponsored event.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

St. Thomas the Apostle School participates in the following programs:

- New Jersey State Textbook Program
- New Jersey State Technology Program
- New Jersey State Security Aid Program
- Title IV – Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act
- Title VI – Block Grant
- Title II – Eisenhower Professional Development Program
- Nutrition Program – Milk
- Fire Prevention Program, Smoke House
- Old Bridge Alliance Program – LEAD (Law Enforcement Against Drugs – Grade 5)
- Footprints for Life (Grade 2)

Rainbows for God’s Children: St. Thomas the Apostle Parish offers a program available for students who have suffered a loss either through death, separation, or divorce.

HEALTH SERVICES

The School Nurse administers the following health services to the students:

- Maintains health records for all students in Pre-K through 8th grade
- Conducts hearing screening for grades K-4, 6, and 8
- Conducts vision screening for grades K-8
- Conducts scoliosis screening for grades 5-8 with parental permission
- Administers emergency and basic first aid for all students

Medication

All medicine (prescribed as well as “over the counter”) must be sent to the nurse’s office. Only the nurse will dispense medications. If the nurse is not present, the parent/guardian will be called to come in and dispense the medication. The students must not keep medications in their possession. In very serious cases, inhalers may be kept with the student. However, notification must be sent to the nurse and homeroom teacher.

If a student brings medication to school, the following requirements must be met:

- Prescription medication must be clearly identified as to the name and type of medication
- Must be in the original container
- Must include the child’s name, drug identity, dosage instructions, doctor’s name, and prescription date.
- A note, dated and signed by the parent/guardian, must accompany the medication, giving the child’s name, dosage amount, specific dosage times, and other instructions, if necessary

Non-Prescription Medication

All non-prescription drugs are to be handled the same as prescribed drugs. The form for the nurse to administer these medications may be found on the school website:

- Aspirin
- Tylenol/Advil
- Antihistamines
- Cough medicine
- Cough drops

The above will be administered only upon receipt of a written note from a doctor or the parent/guardian.

Emergency Contact Information

It is very important that we have up-to-date information on each student. At the start of each school year, all parents must update their contact information in the PowerSchool Enrollment Portal as part of their re-registration process. Included in this update should be the information for any adult that is granted permission to pick up your child(ren) in the event of an emergency. Please be sure that there are two available persons to be reached if you are not at home. It is absolutely crucial that we know whom to contact about your child when you cannot be reached. Please notify the school office immediately if you have a change of address, phone number, or email address during the school year. Notify the principal if there is a change in family status. Notification of custody must be presented to the principal in written form.

LUNCH

The St. Thomas the Apostle School Cafeteria is run by Harmony Foods. They abide by the school's policy of maintaining a *peanut safe* environment, which means that **no food containing peanuts will be allowed in the building**. Students may pre-order lunch, purchase items a la carte, or bring lunch from home. An envelope is sent out the first week of school with the child's name and grade. A calendar is enclosed with lunch choices for each day. You must provide your own drink. No canned sodas are allowed in school. Milk can be purchased through the school. Milk order forms can be found on the website. Whether your child orders lunch or not, the envelope should be returned as it is used each month. If your child chooses to bring his/her own lunch, lunch boxes should have proper identification on them. NO child is permitted to go without lunch on any day. If lunch is provided for a child without payment, a bill will be remitted to the parent/guardian.

MISSIONS

Students are encouraged to give spiritual and financial support to the missions through the Diocese of Metuchen Holy Childhood Association. During the year, various classes may sponsor special projects to assist the needy children of the world. The students occasionally participate in "dress up" or "dress down" days that may be related to the Mission programs.

PERSONAL and SCHOOL PROPERTY

St. Thomas will not be responsible for loss or damage to personal property. All personal property should be labeled for identification purposes. Vandalism to school property is a serious offense. Students are responsible for cleaning, repairing, or replacing any school property that they abuse and may be subject to disciplinary action. In addition to disciplinary action, any willful damage done to school property must be repaired or replaced at the expense of the

offender. Parental cooperation is definitely needed in order to teach the children respect for school property, material furnishings, books, equipment, and the building itself. This policy also pertains to buses.

All articles of clothing or personal items subject to loss should be clearly and permanently labeled. Students should seek assistance regarding lost and found items at the office.

PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN

In compliance with the 2002 New Jersey School Integrated Pest Management Act, the entire School Community of St. Thomas the Apostle School will be kept informed of the school's IPM plan and the use (if any) of pesticides through written communication using letters and notices provided to us by Western Pest Services. The IPM Coordinator will maintain the product label and material data sheet, when available, of each pesticide that may be used on school property. The label and data sheet is available for review by a parent, guardian, faculty, or staff member if the St. Thomas the Apostle School Community. The IPS Coordinator is also available to parents, guardians, faculty, and staff members for information and comment. The time and place of any meetings to be held to adopt the school IPM plan will be made available to the Saint Thomas the Apostle Community. Policies and procedures are available in the Administrative Office.

SAFETY

Parents/Guardians should not convene in the parking lot area or in front of the school doors during drop off or dismissal. For the safety of the students, drivers are not to drive beyond the cones on the parking lot before or after school. Students transported to or from school by bus must abide by the regulations established by the Superintendents of Township Schools. Rowdy behavior, bad language, leaving seats, fighting, etc. will not be tolerated, and a detention form will be issued. The principal has the right to deny school bus transportation for a reasonable amount of time if a child's behavior on a bus continues to jeopardize the safety of the other children. Parents/guardians will receive written notification or a phone call from the principal.

Fire and school security drills are conducted at least once a month. When the alarm sounds, designating a fire drill, all talking should cease at once. Students should leave the building as rapidly as possible without running. Students are not permitted to close windows and doors. The teacher will do this. These instructions are important, for in case of emergency, it is necessary to hear all directions. According to the Crisis Management Plan, we are in communication with the Old Bridge Township Fire Department. A Crisis Management Plan is updated each year, and we practice frequently.

STUDENT RECORDS

A cumulative record is maintained for each pupil from his/her entrance into school through eighth grade. Such records pertaining to the individual student may be used for the benefit, promotion, or welfare of the student. All material is kept in a file and is forwarded to the high schools.

TECHNOLOGY

Please see the St. Thomas the Apostle School Acceptable Use of Technology Manual. A copy of this manual can be found on the school website at www.sttaob.com.

TEXTBOOKS

Each student is responsible for all issued books and supplies, even if they are damaged, lost, or stolen. If a book is damaged or lost, it must be paid for by the student before another will be issued. Payments should be made to the School Business Office Administrator. The teacher will then issue another book. If the book is found at a later time, the school will refund the money.

The following are textbook regulations:

- Every textbook should be covered and kept covered throughout the year to protect it from damage.
- The stamp inside every book is to be completed with the student's name and condition of the book immediately upon receiving the book.
- No writing or marking in textbooks is allowed at any time.
- To protect the book bindings, no papers, rulers, etc. should be placed inside the book.
- Torn pages should be mended immediately.
- Books should be kept dry.
- The habit of lending and borrowing books should be discouraged.

TRANSFER ON GROUNDS OF PARENTAL NON-COOPERATION

Normally a child is not to be deprived of a Catholic education or otherwise penalized for actions of parents/guardians. However, the principal may recommend the transfer of a student when parents have been persistently and overly uncooperative regarding school policies, regulations, or programs. A transfer may also be recommended when parents have interfered in matters of school administration or discipline to the detriment of the school's ability to serve their own or other children. All disciplinary actions will be taken based on age appropriateness of the student(s) involvement.

TUITION COLLECTION POLICY

St. Thomas the Apostle School believes that our tuition payments are an investment in your child's education and the formation of their religious foundation. Therefore, the School Board accepts responsibility for the recommending to the Pastor and Principal policies concerning the amount of tuition, the manner of payment, and, in general, the development of this tuition policy. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the School Board to ensure that adequate financial resources are available for the school and that enrollment is as available and affordable as possible to all families.

Fees

- The Annual Registration Fee are due at the time of registration, and is paid through Smart Tuition, our tuition management company. The purpose of the Registration Fee is to secure your child(ren)'s place in our school. This fee is non-refundable.
- No student is allowed to attend class until this fee is paid in full.
- The payment of Tuition allows your child to receive education at St. Thomas the Apostle School. We place a high value on the instruction that we provide, therefore fees are in place in an attempt to cover the costs of this education. Tuition Fees are paid wither by a one-time annual payment directly to the school, or by, either monthly payments, quarterly payments, or a one-time credit card payment through our tuition management company, Smart Tuition. There are also payable fees that are associated with extracurricular activities.

Tuition Payments

There are three methods of payment for the annual tuition:

- **Full Payment:** Under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is paid on or before August 15. This option is paid through the Smart Tuition Management Plan.

- **Monthly Payments:** Under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is paid monthly through the Smart Tuition Management Plan. This plan is an automatic payment plan made through your checking or statement savings account, or through your credit or debit card (fee applies). Those under this plan authorize Smart Tuition to deduct through their financial institution automatic monthly payments. Payment plans must begin no later than July 20.
- **One Time Credit Card Payment:** Under this plan the entire amount of tuition is paid through the Smart Tuition Management Plan. This plan is an automatic payment made through your credit card. Those under this Plan authorize Smart Tuition to deduct a one-time credit card payment.
- All payment plans must begin no later than August 1. Smart Tuition charges an annual enrollment fee of \$48.00. St. Thomas the Apostle School does not reap any financial benefit from the Smart Tuition Management System. Cancellations and withdrawals are considered under our tuition refund policy as per this policy letter.

Late Registration

- Families registering after August 1 are expected to fulfill their tuition obligation according to the tuition policy stated above.
- Tuition for students registering on or after the first day of school is prorated over the number of school days they will attend according to a formula established by the Administration.

Late Payments

It is the responsibility of each school family to keep the Administration informed of their need to make any changes in their preferred tuition payment plan or adjustments in the amount of tuition paid. Without such information the following policy will apply when tuition payments are received late

- School families who choose the monthly payment plan and miss a monthly payment due to insufficient funds are assessed a \$35.00 missed payment fee by Smart Tuition, as well as incurring a fee from their own financial institution. The missed payment is reattempted by Smart Tuition within 20 days. Two missed consecutive attempts by Smart Tuition are considered grounds for dismissal from St. Thomas the Apostle School. Repeated, even not consecutive, missed payments are considered grounds for dismissal from St. Thomas the Apostle School.
- School families who choose the full payment option must pay the school the full annual tuition no later than August 15, and this is paid through Smart Tuition. Tuition refunds for the later withdrawal of the student under this plan are subject to our tuition refund policy.

Non-payment of tuition and fees may result in the following action: The account will be sent to a collection agency, including all collection costs, agency fees, and court costs, in addition to the amount owed. Non-payment or a default judgement against your account may be reported to a credit bureau and reflected in your credit report.

Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance is available through the Diocese of Metuchen. Prospective parents should make any requests for such assistance in January, and the deadline to apply for assistance is March 31. Should funds become available, each request will be judged based on information provided and other data obtained by the Administration. For the sake of your family's security and peace of mind, and for the general financial stability of our school, we encourage parents or guardians to contact the Principal as soon as possible when they are experiencing economic difficulties. The application for tuition assistance is completed online, and can be found on the Diocese of Metuchen website at www.diometuchen.org.

Non-Admission Due to Tuition Payment Delinquency

The Administration will inform any school family failing to pay their tuition according to their agreement with the school or who have been unwilling to make suitable arrangements with the school that their children are not allowed admittance

or re-admittance to St. Thomas the Apostle School. Once financial restitution is made, re-admittance under these circumstances is conditional. Enrollment in Smart Tuition or full payment of tuition for the year will be required. Any student delinquent in payments of any type will not receive report cards, transcripts, letters of recommendation, or be promoted or graduated from St. Thomas the Apostle School.

Delinquent Tuition from Previous Years

Any unpaid tuition from previous years prevents re-enrollment in St. Thomas the Apostle School. Under these criteria a parent must pay *all* previous outstanding tuition and fees prior to enrollment, and said parent is automatically placed on probation for one school year due to financial difficulty.

UNIFORMS

St. Thomas the Apostle School has a uniform policy for Kindergarten through 8th grade students. The regular uniform requirements can be found on the Flynn & O'Hara website (www.flynnohara.com) or by calling 800-441-4122, and the gym uniform requirements can be found on the InOrbit Apparel website (www.inorbitapparel.com).

Important General Information

- The navy fleece is optional; however, no other sweater or sweatshirt may be worn in the building. It may be worn with both the regular uniform and the gym uniform. **All fleeces are required to have the student's name on the inside of the jacket.** Embroidered names or monograms (in white) are allowed, even encouraged, on the outside of the fleece.
- All students should have their name on the inside of their clothing (especially outerwear), backpacks, and lunch bags.

All students in grades Kindergarten through 8th must be in full adherence to the dress code upon entrance to school each day. The dress code is in effect from September through June. **All uniforms must be purchased through Flynn & O'Hara and InOrbit apparel.**

Pre-School: Boys and girls are *not* required to wear a uniform. They should wear safe, comfortable, closed-toe shoes at all times, and clothing that allows for tumbling and playtime. An extra set of clothing should be kept in a clear plastic bag in the classroom, with the child's name on the outside.

Kindergarten and Grade 1: Belts and uniform shoes are not required with the summer or winter uniforms.

Girls and Boys Winter Uniforms:

Girls: Navy plaid kilt, no more than 3 inches above the knee (fingertip length) or navy pants. Knee socks must be navy. Tights may be gray or navy.

Boys: Navy Pants, dark socks.

Girls and Boys: Gray short- or long-sleeved golf/polo shirt (only the top button may be open), appropriate shoes (see next page), navy fleece or varsity sweater (optional). Please embroider or mark the student's name on the fleece/varsity sweater.

Kindergarten students ONLY: Solid black or white sneakers with black or white laces or Velcro. Please do not use laces if your child cannot tie his/her own shoes. "Dress shoes" shown on the next page are optional for kindergarten students.

Girls and Boys Optional Spring/Summer Uniform:

Girls: Navy skort with knee-high, ankle, no-show, or crew socks in solid navy or white. **Skorts/shorts may not be shorter than fingertip length.**

Boys: Navy shorts with no-show, ankle, or crew socks in solid navy or white. Shorts with belt loops require a solid color, dark leather belt. Belts are not required for shorts with elastic waists.

Girls and Boys: Long- or short-sleeved gray golf/polo shirt (only the top button may be open), **solid-colored** black or white sneakers with black or white laces (optional only with the skirt or shorts).

Hair Length, Earrings, Make-up, Nail Polish

The School expects the students to be clean and neat at all times.

- Boys haircuts: Not on the collar and not covering the ears or eyebrows. Specifically, hair must be short and combed.
- Girls may not wear their hair in a manner that covers their eyes.
- Both boys and girls may not wear their hair in a manner that covers their eyes. Extreme/Unnatural hair dye is not allowed.
- Only girls may wear earrings, and they must be studs or small hoops (only in the lobes). This also applies to dress down days, as well.
- Only clear nail polish is ever allowed.
- No eye make-up is ever allowed (All grades)
- No tattoos are allowed (All grades)

Grades Kindergarten-8th Physical Education Uniform

The gym uniform must be purchased through InOrbit Apparel (inorbitapparel.com)

Girls and Boys

- Navy sweatpants or navy knee-length mesh gym shorts (spring/summer only)
- Gray t-shirt
- Black or white socks
- Solid black or white sneakers with black or white laces or Velcro. Please do not use laces if your child cannot tie his/her own shoes.
- Navy fleece (optional)

**Gym uniforms that have been purchased through Flynn & O'Hara prior to September 2019 are acceptable.*

Students may wear gym uniforms to school on their gym day unless directed to do otherwise.

Girls Shoes



Loafers



Bucks



Mocs



Mary Janes (navy or black)

Boys Shoes



Loafers



Bucks



Mocs



Dress Shoes

Grade 8 ONLY – Girls and Boys Additional Choices



Boat shoes (dark color)



Black Tasmin Uggs



Solid black Bobs/Toms

Dress Down Day Attire

On days when students do not have to wear school uniforms, the following dress code is still in effect:

Girls:

- Pants – capri length or fingertip length shorts, or jeans (without holes or torn) are acceptable. **Spandex or stretch pants may be worn only with long, loose fitting, mid-thigh length shirts.** Skirt lengths must follow the uniform guidelines.
- Shirts **MUST** have sleeves. **NO** bare midriffs or cut-out shoulders.
- Casual shirts with printed sayings other than brand logos are **NOT** permitted.
- Low-cut shirts may not be worn.
- Shoes (heels of moderate height for Middle School) or sneakers (clean and in good condition) are permitted. For safety reasons, all shoes must have a back, and open-toed sandals are not permitted.

Boys:

- Pants, shorts, or jeans are permitted (no jeans that are faded, torn, or in disrepair may be worn).
- Sleeved shirts: Tees, dress shirts, or golf/polo shirts are permitted. Shirts should be appropriate for school.
- Shirts with printed sayings other than brand logos **are not permitted.**
- Shoes or sneakers (clean and in good condition) are permitted.

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE

The Parent/Student Handbook signature page must be signed by **both parents/guardians** as well as by any student in grades 3-8 and returned to your child's homeroom teacher by the first Friday of the school year. Please submit one signature page **per child**.