



**ST. THOMAS**  

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**THE APOSTLE**  
**2020-2021**

# ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL

## FACULTY & STAFF 2020-2021

### PASTOR

Msgr. Francis Maniscalco

### PRINCIPAL

Valerie Serpe

### NURSERY/PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Zuheidy Figueroa

Patricia Lange

### KINDERGARTEN

Loretta Fecteau

Tara Kelly

### GRADE 1

Kristina Duhs

### GRADE 2

Maureen Pica

### GRADE 3

Susan Magarie

### GRADE 4

Maureen Mullane

### GRADE 5

Jean Cammarota

Lydia Manchery

### UPPER SCHOOL TEACHERS

Tyler Capozzoli

Sarah DeLalla

Jason Leigh

Melissa Murphy

### ART

Sarah Camhi

### COMPUTER

Patricia Connors

### MUSIC

Stephen Mazzitelli

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Anthony D'Auria

### SPANISH

Melissa Murphy

### AIDES

Michele Ewulu

Maryana Grgas

Wilma Hughes

Mairead Occhino

Alice Rockensies

Linda Stoothoff

### DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MaryAnn Pelligrino

### MAINTENANCE

Manuel Francisco

Ramone Guitierrez

### NURSE

Shelby Sullivan

### SECRETARY

Lorraine Klingbeil

### SECURITY

Ed Cedeno

### WEST HEMPSTEAD

### PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICES

Ann Marie Boles

Lisa Richmond

Edie Stein

### ST THOMAS SCHOOL BOARD

President: Lori Lang

Vice-President & Secretary: Maryann  
Harding

Michael Dolan Tanya Fernandez

Bill Inman Greg Kuehhas

Sal LaMagna Sean Lapham

Tami McSherry

### ST THOMAS PARENTS CLUB OFFICERS

President: Terri Hanley

Corresponding Secretary: Keri Suttmiller

In-School Officer: Shelby Sullivan

### IMPORTANT NUMBERS

SCHOOL OFFICE.....516.481.9310

SCHOOL FAX.....516.481.8769

RECTORY.....516.489.8585

RELIGIOUS ED.....516.538.7460

# OUR MISSION

## *TO TEACH, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND TO SERVE*

At St. Thomas the Apostle School, we promote a meaningful, family-oriented community of learning based on the foundation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is love and compassion.

We are an APOSTLE school, dedicated to following and integrating Jesus' message of peace, hope, and love into our daily lives. Ours is an evolving mission to meet the diverse needs of our students, parents, parish and community. As a religious academic institution, we assume a developmental role. Learning is an active, transformational process. Students, teachers, parents, and administrative staff are recognized as individuals of ever-evolving abilities and gifts.

We are APOSTLES. Our mission is a continuous pilgrimage. Our relationship to God and to each other, as expressed in Scripture, Catholic doctrine, and tradition is one of infinite possibilities. We are a school of dedication and endless commitment displayed by its faculty, administration, students, and parents on a daily basis. Within this Christian atmosphere, camaraderie and concern for each other is the thread that binds us together. A focus on basic academic skills, critical and creative thinking, global studies, environmental issues, and appreciation for the diversity among us all permeates all we undertake.

We operate on the belief that all children have the ability to learn on their level in their own time. We respect their differences of learning and provide them with opportunities to thrive in various modalities. As our students progress through the grade levels, combinations of concrete and abstract operations are utilized. All endeavors are designed to motivate productive thinkers. We capitalize on our students' strengths and work to remediate their weaknesses.

Our APOSTOLIC mission is carried out in an atmosphere of Beatitude Living. A spiritual perspective is first initiated in the home and then reinforced in the school through the efforts of Christian role models. Spiritual growth is a journey towards God. It is faith-filled action. Our children are APOSTLES, young disciples, taught to practice their religion. These actions have been demonstrated through numerous activities we have accomplished as we assist our neighbors on a local, national, and global front.

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK...

## *A MESSAGE FROM REV. MSGR. FRANK MANISCALCO*

Dear Parents,

As pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, I am delighted that you have chosen or are continuing to choose our school for your children. Together with many other Catholic parishes, St. Thomas made Catholic elementary education as an essential element of our mission. Happily, our parish continues to do so for your benefit and with your support.

As a Catholic school, St. Thomas the Apostle is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and the community He founded, the Church. This faith guides the principles on which our school functions. The remainder of this handbook describes the practical ways in which these principles are put into effect.

We hope to foster in our school an atmosphere worthy of believers in Jesus based on the commandments, which He told us are the greatest: to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Since you have chosen a Catholic school education for your children, we have the greatest hope that this faith and values-based education will be reflected in their home life as well. Thus are home and school mutually supportive.

With prayers and best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Msgr. Frank Maniscalco*

Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Maniscalco



# FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK...

## A MESSAGE FROM DR. VALERIE SERPE



Dear Parents,

As we enter a school year like no other, I ask that you focus on the following three topics:

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

- Take care of yourself so that you can take care of your child(ren)
- Take it one day at a time
- Follow all NYS, DOH, and school guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our school community
- Study the [DOH COVID-19 parent toolkit](#) to understand how to best keep your child and our school community safe

### **ACADEMICS**

- Encourage your child to do his/her best with the understanding that the pandemic has caused gaps in learning that will take some time to bridge
- Communicate often with your child's teacher to celebrate successes and head off issues before they start
- Be prepared to make the switch to remote learning if necessary
- Encourage more reading and socialization and minimize screen time after school/homework are completed

### **WELL-BEING**

- Take time to pray, attend Mass, and incorporate other practices to nurture your and your child's spirituality
- Stay flexible, practice patience, and extend compassion
- Visit our school website often to stay abreast of important information and developments
- Reach out to me, our school nurse, or any member of the STA staff should you need any sort of assistance

Please keep our faculty and staff in your prayers as I keep you in mine at all times. Stay strong and keep the faith!

Peace and blessings,

*Valerie Serpe*

Dr. Valerie Serpe

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE: 8:00am-2:35pm

NURSERY/PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Half Day: 8:00am-11:00am      Full Day: 8:00am-2:35pm

3-day programs meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

SCHOOL BEGINS AT 8:00am. Students must arrive wearing their masks. Weather permitting, students will line up on socially distanced marks in the school courtyard. In the case of rain or colder weather, they will go to the auditorium and remain 6ft. apart until the start of school. TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL STUDENTS, PLEASE DO NOT DROP YOUR CHILD OFF PRIOR TO 7:30am as supervision does not start until that time.

## **WALKERS**

School crossing guards are stationed at the intersection of Westminster Road and Argyle Road, as well as Westminster Road and Hempstead Turnpike. Students may cross only at these points.

## **LATENESS**

A student is considered late if he/she arrives after 8:00am. Students who arrive late must report to the security desk for a late pass. Lateness will be recorded in the NYS attendance book, permanent record card, and student report card. Six or more incidents of lateness will influence the personal growth section of the report card. It will also impact membership on Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, and any other aspects deemed appropriate by the Principal.

## **LEAVING SCHOOL DURING THE DAY**

No student may leave the school during school hours unless the parent submits a written note in advance. At the time of the early dismissal, the student must be accompanied by a parent or one designated by the parent. The supervising adult is required to sign the student out at the security desk to ensure the student's safety.

## **DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

At the start of the school year, parents are to inform the school, in writing, of how their child will be dismissed - bus, walking, or car-pickup. If it becomes necessary during the course of the year to pick up a child who is normally transported by the bus, a letter must be sent to school with your child that morning indicating the change. FOR THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE CHILDREN, WE WILL NO LONGER ACCEPT TELEPHONE REQUESTS FOR PICKUPS UNLESS IT IS AN ABSOLUTE MEDICAL EMERGENCY.

## **STAR AFTER-CARE PROGRAM**

The STAR aftercare program is a service for our students and parents that provides supervision for students in Pre-K - Grade 8. The program focuses on creative play, physical activity, and learning support in a pleasant, relaxed, and safe environment. The emphasis is on extended family-style interaction and friendship. The goal is to alleviate the pressure of single parents or of both parents working outside the home. **Therefore, participation IS limited to these families during the pandemic.**

STAR begins when school ends and students must be picked up no later than 5:30pm. Any parent pick up after 5:30pm will incur a **\$25 late fee**. Student's need to bring a snack for STAR or money to purchase one.

## **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation is a school district service with the guidelines determined by them. Therefore, it is suggested that all questions and concerns be referred to your district transportation office. Applying for transportation, a parental obligation and responsibility, is an annual process due April 1st.

## **BUS CONDUCT**

In order to ensure safety and to maintain respect, students are to observe the following regulations while riding the bus: courtesy and cooperation with the driver and other riders, use of respectful language, and care for the property of the bus. Students must remain seated at all times and refrain from eating or drinking on the bus. Cell phone use, picture taking, and playing music are strictly forbidden. Repeated incidents of misconduct may result in a suspension or complete revocation of bus privileges, which is the right reserved by the school district and bus company. Difficulties that arise on the bus should be reported to the bus driver, department of transportation, as well as the Principal. For insurance purposes, students are not permitted to ride a bus to which he/she is not entitled.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

In the event that school is closed due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, the information will be announced via:

- The School Messenger System. Parents/guardians will be notified via email, voicemail, and text message to contact information provided on the Emergency Contact Card.
- Channel 12 - Cable TV
- The school's website at [www.stthomasschool.net](http://www.stthomasschool.net)

The decision to close school in inclement weather rests primarily with the West Hempstead School District. If the West Hempstead School District is closed due to inclement weather conditions, St. Thomas will not be in session. If the West Hempstead School District determines a delayed opening, St. Thomas's opening will also be delayed. A delayed opening necessitates that students arrive between 9:40am and 10:00am for a 10:00am start of school. This applies to students who ride the bus and who travel by car. If St. Thomas has a delayed opening, parents who reside in the other school districts must check with their respective school district to see if transportation from the school district is in effect. If an excessive number of snow days are used, make-up days will be announced in

accordance with diocesan directives. On a given day, if school is already in session, an early dismissal in inclement weather is highly unlikely due to uncertainty of supervision at home.

## **APPLICATION & ADMISSION**

### **ADMISSION PROCESS**

Preference for admission is extended to children whose parents are active members of the parish, who are moving into the parish, or have siblings in attendance. Students will be accepted if they reside out of parish providing there are vacancies. Non-Catholic students are welcome at STA and will be accepted if there are vacancies. Children of other faiths are expected to be present for and participate in religious classes and celebrations.

Students seeking admission to St. Thomas the Apostle School must submit all academic records, including standardized test scores (where it applies) prior to filing an application. Students must demonstrate readiness and ability to embrace our program.

All new applicants must bring the following information to school when registering:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Baptismal Certificate
3. Record of Immunizations with corresponding dates
4. History of any medical illness, surgery, physical or speech handicap
5. IEP'S or 504 Plans (if child has a plan in place)

### **REGISTRATION FEE & AGE REQUIREMENTS**

An annual registration fee of \$250.00, per family, will be collected. Please note that \$10.00 of the registration fee will be applied to the TAP (Tuition Assistance Program). St. Thomas the Apostle School has established the TAP fund for families who experience the loss of a parent or guardian who is the primary source of financial support for students enrolled in our school.

Age requirements for registration are as follows:

- N/PreK Program – Nursery students must be 3 by December 1<sup>st</sup> of the registration year.
- Pre-K students must be 4 by December 1<sup>st</sup> of the registration year.
- Kindergarten – A child must reach the age of 5 on or before December 1<sup>st</sup> of the year of registration. Performance on a readiness test must indicate that a child is sufficiently mature for Kindergarten.

### **TUITION POLICY**

The tuition obligation has the force of a contract between the parent/guardian and the school. It takes effect on the due date of the first tuition payment. Tuition is an annual charge and does not fluctuate during a specific school year. Tuition is paid directly to the Facts



Tuition Management Program. Your prompt payment of tuition is necessary in order to meet our monthly expenses. A late fee will be incurred for late payments. A reminder notice from the Facts Tuition Management Program will be sent once your account goes into arrears status. The school office will contact families whose tuition remains outstanding after two missed payments. A failure to respond to the letter can result in your child's dismissal from our school. Financial rearrangements to meet your individual needs must be arranged through the Pastor and/or Principal.

## **TUITION SCHEDULE**

### **PART-TIME NURSERY/PRE-K PROGRAM**

Half Day (8:00-11:00am)	3 Half Days (M/W/F) - \$2525	5 Half Days (M-F) - \$4207
Full Day (8:00am-2:30pm)	3 Full Days (M/W/F) -\$4477	

### **GRADES PK-8**

	<b>PARTICIPATING CATHOLIC</b>	<b>NON-CATHOLIC</b>
1 Child	\$5941	\$7306
2 Children	\$9901	\$11246
3 Children	\$11392	\$12738
4 Children	\$12813	\$14159

“Participating Catholic” tuition eligibility for Grades PK-8 requires that:

- a child must be a baptized Catholic
- at least one parent must be baptized Catholic and a registered member of St. Thomas parish or home parish
- the family must show support of the parish through the use of weekly envelopes totaling at least \$520.00 per year or \$10.00 weekly

The use of the envelope system or Faith Direct offers the simplest ways to provide proof of support along with a record of the contribution. After December 31st of each calendar year, a review of the record will be made to verify whether families have met the contribution requirements during the previous calendar year. If the minimum is not met, parents must pay the subsidy fee.

Parishioners of other parishes must provide to St. Thomas the Apostle School evidence of having made a contribution of at least \$10 per week or \$520.00 yearly to their home parish. This can be done by providing a copy of the annual contribution statement that parishioners receive from their home parish or by a letter from their pastor.

## **TUITION ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

It is imperative that tuition payments be kept current. Late fees are charged for all late payments.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - TOMORROW'S HOPE FOUNDATION**

Tomorrow's Hope Foundation provides tuition assistance grants to those who meet the criteria set forth by an independent auditor. Grant applications are available on their website at [www.tomorrowshopefoundation.org](http://www.tomorrowshopefoundation.org) or may be accessed through the STA website under the Admissions tab. Grants are not carried over from one school year to the next. You must reapply for aide each year.

## **COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS**

The school assumes that each parent has full parental custody and residential custody of their child/children. If this is not the case, it is the responsibility of the parents to provide the school with legal documentation.

Non-custodial parents will be mailed all notices only if requested. Requests must be submitted each school year. Please fill out a Non-Custodial Information Form and return it to school as soon as possible in order to ensure that you are informed of upcoming events. It is our commitment to do our very best to see that both parents are informed of the child's educational activities.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

### **SCHOOL NURSE**

The West Hempstead School District provides full-time services of a registered nurse to St. Thomas School. All children are provided with health services in accordance with state requirements.

**Physical Exams** - Students in Kindergarten, Grades 1, 3, 5 and 7, as well as all new admissions, are required to undergo a physical examination by a healthcare practitioner not more than 12 months prior to the first day of the new school year. The physician exam must be provided to the nurse within 30 days from when your child begins school. If your child has an appointment within the first 30 days of school, please notify the nurse.

**Immunizations** - Students' proof of immunization must be submitted to the health office prior to admission. Without proof of immunization, the school reserves the right to delay and/or deny admission to school. New York State Public Health Law requires exclusion of any student who has not received all age appropriate doses of vaccinations by the 14th day of school. A student is considered "in process" if the student has received the first dose of a vaccination series and has documentation of upcoming immunization appointment(s). A student classified "in process" may attend school.

**Health Care** - In case of an accident, all children will receive first aid by the school nurse. The parent(s) will, or emergency contact if unable to reach parent(s), will be contacted. School personnel are authorized by state law to administer first aid only. In case of illness,

the nurse will contact the parent(s), or emergency contact, to pick up the child. If neither parent nor emergency contact can be reached, the nurse will keep the child under observation until such time as the parent can be reached. If emergency treatment is required, the nurse or designee may first activate emergency medical services and then notify the parent(s). A school staff member will accompany the student until the parent arrives.

**Medication Policy** - The school nurse may not administer medication (including over the counter medications) unless the parent and physician complete the proper documentation. Forms are available upon request. Medication must be in the original bottle, labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, dosage, and frequency of dosage. Medication must be delivered to the school nurse by a parent and picked up at the end of the school year. Medication not picked up shall be discarded. No student is permitted to bring medication to school for self-administration.

**Communicable Diseases** - All communicable diseases (COVID-19, strep, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.) must be reported to the health office promptly upon diagnosis. Once diagnosed with a communicable disease, the student must stay home from school until cleared by their healthcare provider to return and submit a note stating such.

**Allergies & Asthma**- If your child has a documented food allergy or asthma, please submit an emergency action plan filled out by your child's doctor along with the prescribed treatment. If your child has chronic or seasonal, allergies, this **MUST** be noted by a physician as many of these symptoms are similar to symptoms of COVID-19. Students will be excluded from school for these symptoms unless noted by a doctor.

## **REPORTING ABSENCES**

Regular attendance is necessary for success in learning. New York State Law requires that a parent or guardian write a note of excuse each time a student is absent or late. Please call the school to report your child's absence by 9:30am on the day of the absence. A note reporting absence must be written in addition to the phone report and submitted upon return to school. After 2 consecutive absences, a note from a healthcare provider is required upon return to school. A child who is absent or late for any reason other than illness or death in the family will be marked as an unexcused absence. Absences due to transportation or vacation are considered unexcused absences. Kindly arrange vacations around the school calendar.

## **PARENT EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE THE CORRECT TELEPHONE NUMBER, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL ADDRESS ON RECORD AT ALL TIMES. If phone number, address, or email address changes, please notify the school immediately. Emergency contact information is also extremely important and should be updated with any changes throughout the year. Contacts will be notified in the order in which they are listed on the electronic survey.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Discipline in a Catholic school is based upon values as well as respect for self and others. Achieving self-discipline and the recognition that each action results in a positive or negative consequence are the goals to which each student should aspire while at St. Thomas the Apostle School. The cooperation and involvement of students, teachers, parents, and administrators are critical to the achievement of our disciplinary goals.

Each classroom will have a behavior plan that aligns with the school's mission statement. All students are expected to:

- Speak and act in a respectful manner at all times
- Accept all peers and their unique gifts, talents, and academic abilities
- Respect the personal space of each individual
- Behave in a safe manner at all times and in all places
- Complete all assignments to the best of their ability and within the assigned time period
- Refrain from gum chewing and eating in non-lunchroom areas without teacher permission
- Refrain from inappropriate displays of affection
- Observe all classroom and school behavior guidelines
- Observe all bus rules (K-8)
- Wear the complete uniform on regular school days and gym days (K-8)
- Wear appropriate attire on Dress Down Days (refer to Uniform Policy)

All students will be given age-appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior, which includes a demerit-based discipline plan. Students who fail to live up to grade-level expectations may be issued a demerit or immediate detention as a consequence of their behavior. Parents will be notified when a student is issued a demerit or detention. Students in Grades 6-8 will also be required to follow the rules in the STA Upper School Handbook, which will be provided in conjunction with this handbook. Students may be removed from clubs, sports, NJHS, Student Council, school functions, or any other school activity as a consequence of inappropriate behavior.

## **DEMERIT & DETENTION PROGRAM**

- Students will be given one warning related to a behavior choice unless the infraction is serious and warrants a demerit or an immediate detention. After an initial warning, a demerit will be issued.
- Parents will be notified via email, a signature-required note, or a call home that a demerit has been issued.
- Students accumulating 3 demerits in a marking period will be assigned an in-school detention. Parents will be given at least a 24-hour notice regarding the detention, and must acknowledge that they are aware of the detention by a note or email. Detentions may not be postponed or rescheduled without the Principal's permission.

- Students will be assigned an immediate detention for behavior that is considered disrespectful to an adult, for fighting, or for exhibiting behavior that is seen to be in blatant disregard of school safety and value-based behavior expectations.
- A student-parent-teacher-principal conference will be required upon a student serving a third detention. A third detention may result in an in-school suspension or in a student being prohibited from participating in a non-academic activity.
- Administration has the right to impose disciplinary consequences for any conduct in or out of school that is detrimental to the reputation of St. Thomas the Apostle School or any member of the St. Thomas the Apostle School community.

## **SUSPENSION**

A suspension may be issued for very serious matters when administration determines that a student must be removed from contact with fellow students. Parents and administration must be in dialogue prior to the start of a suspension. Parents who do not agree to the suspension may be asked to transfer the student from St. Thomas the Apostle School.

## **EXPULSION**

Expulsion is used only as a last resort after all other measures have been exhausted or upon the recommendation of the Pastor or Diocese.

- Circumstances of crime, scandal, morality, or danger to the health and well-being of the school community may necessitate this extreme disciplinary action.
- A student in possession of a weapon or a “look-a-like” object that could be used to harm another person or be perceived dangerous will be subject to disciplinary action deemed appropriate by the school authorities including, but not limited to, suspension/expulsion from school and referral to appropriate legal authority.
- Gross disrespect, sexual harassment, negative attitude, leaving the school property without permission, continued disregard for school rules, physical assault, violent actions disruptive of school or school activities, destructive pranks, and stealing or defacing school or personal property are all considered serious offenses.
- Discipline will be firm and consistent. We are aware of the fact that when disciplinary measures are taken, they will be effective only to the extent that we have parental cooperation.

## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

St. Thomas the Apostle School is committed to fostering an atmosphere where bullying and the acceptance of bullying are seen as inappropriate and wrong. Bullying goes against our Catholic values and the teachings of Jesus. STA students are expected to treat their peers with respect, empathy, and compassion. Students who experience any form of bullying or are a witness to bullying are encouraged to report the incident to a member of the school staff or to their parent. Immediate intervention is important if a negative behavior is to be changed.

Bullying is defined as any form of harassment, intimidation, taunting, and/or discrimination related to race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, academic/athletic ability, disability, gender or sex. Bullying is an act that may occur on school property, on the bus, at school related functions, or in the classroom. Bullying may take the form of oral communication, physical contact, or be conducted via phone/electronic technology. Bullying is intended to harm, one-sided, repetitive, over a period of time, meant to diminish self-worth of the intended victim, and continued even after an initial warning or after the victim has expressed his/her objections.

St. Thomas the Apostle School is committed to documenting and investigating each reported incident of bullying, taking an account of all parties' views, protecting the reporter as much as possible, offering advice and support to the victim and to the offender, keeping all parties informed throughout the investigative process, utilizing a system of sanctions/punishments which will correspond to the seriousness of the offense. Sanctions for bullying may include detention, suspension, counseling by a trained mental health provider, or expulsion.

### **DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE**

To respect our bodies is a Gospel mandate. To abuse our bodies is to abuse a gift from God. Students possessing or using drugs or alcohol while in school or while engaged in school activities are considered a serious threat to the well being of St. Thomas the Apostle School and will be suspended from school. Parent notification will immediately take place. Students found using or possessing drugs or alcohol will be required to attend a program designated by the Principal in order to remain in school. Selling or passing drugs or alcohol, however, will be considered grounds for immediate expulsion, action taken by the Principal and Pastor.

### **SAFETY REGULATIONS**

Fire, bus, and all other safety drills, required by State Law, are faithfully held. Students are expected to follow procedures for such drills at all times. Failure to comply with conduct code during all safety drills will result in disciplinary action according to the judgment of the Principal.

### **VIOLATIONS OF SAFETY**

The possession or use of items such as guns of any kind, knives, slingshots, lighters, firecrackers, and other items we deem to have the potential of jeopardizing the student or others, will result in severe disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

### **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property.

### **DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT**

The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) was signed into law in September 2010 and became effective July 2, 2012. All children have the right to attend school in a safe, welcoming, and caring environment free from harassment and

discrimination. The Dignity Act ensures this for all New York State public school students. Although religious and private schools are exempt from the Dignity law, much of what has been signed into the Dignity Act has been and continues to be practiced in our Diocesan schools.

Codes of conduct exist for students, staff and volunteers and policies are in place to create a safe environment in our schools free from harassment, discrimination, or any form of abuse.

Awareness and prevention training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers in our schools, and all students are provided with age appropriate instruction that 1) defines abuse, 2) makes clear how to report abuse, and 3) provides training on personal safety skills.

The school curriculum and programs are built on strong Catholic principles that underscore the goal for our students to be more like Christ in their thoughts, words and deeds. Instruction in civility, citizenship and character education is standard curriculum in our schools, with a strong emphasis on principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of the laws and rules, courtesy, and dignity and respect for all.

Faculty, staff, and student behavior is expected to conform to values consistent with the Catholic faith.

## **UNIFORM POLICY**

The uniform bears witness that one attends a Catholic School. Our appearance reflects an inner reality and appropriate dress is encouraged at all times. Unless otherwise specified, students are asked to wear the complete uniform daily.

STA reserves the right to enforce conformity to the dress code and haircut regulations. This code applies to the beginning through final days of the school year. We anticipate that all parents will cooperate and support the dress code and regulations of St. Thomas the Apostle School. Parents must agree to follow any changes to the Uniform Policy should they occur during the school year at the discretion of the Principal and/or Pastor.

Uniforms must be purchased through Flynn & O'Hara Uniform Company. Contact information is available on their website at [www.flynnohara.com](http://www.flynnohara.com).

## **GIRLS**

### Nursery/Pre-K

- Light grey St. Thomas tee shirt with logo
- Navy blue mesh shorts
- Navy sweatshirt and sweatpants with school logo
- Sneakers (no light up sneakers)
- White socks

### Kindergarten - Grade 5

- Uniform plaid jumper
- White Peterpan collar blouse (short or long sleeve)
- Navy cardigan sweater with logo
- Grey school pants are optional

### Grades 6 – 8

- Uniform grey skirt (Skirt should be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee.)
- White button-down collared shirt (short or long sleeve)
- Navy v-neck pullover sweater or sweater vest with logo

Shoes: dark color (laced, buckled, or loafer style shoes) and rubber-soled. No boots, sneakers, or sandals.

Socks: navy blue knee socks (or navy blue tights in cool weather).

## **BOYS**

### Nursery/Pre-K

- Light grey St. Thomas tee shirt with logo
- Navy blue mesh shorts
- Navy sweatshirt and sweatpants with school logo
- Sneakers (no light up sneakers)
- White socks

### Kindergarten - Grade 5

- Uniform grey pants
- Navy polo shirt with school logo (short or long sleeved)
- Navy cardigan sweater with school logo

### Grades 6 – 8

- Uniform grey pants
- Navy tie w/white stripes
- White button-down collared shirt (short or long sleeved)
- Navy pullover sweater or sweater vest with school logo

Shoes: dark color (laced or loafer style). No boots, sneakers, or sandals.

Socks: navy blue

## **GYM UNIFORM**

May be worn to school only on days when a child has gym.

## **BOYS AND GIRLS**

### Kindergarten – Grade 8

- Light grey St. Thomas tee shirt with logo
- Navy blue mesh shorts
- Navy sweatshirt and sweatpants with school logo
- Sneakers (no light up sneakers)
- White socks

St. Thomas School sweatpants and sweatshirts may be worn over shirts and shorts in cold weather.

All baseball caps are to be removed and hoods lowered upon entering the building and may be replaced upon leaving the building.

## **UNIFORM & HAIRCUT REGULATIONS**

- All students' haircuts should be neat and appropriate for a Catholic School
- Extreme fad styles and extremes in height, color, and/or length are considered inappropriate



- No fake nails or polish other than a pale, natural pink. Nails must be kept at a short length for the safety of all students.
- Colored, dyed, or streaked hair is not permitted
- Appropriate hair cuts only, no extreme styles, no spikes, no tails, no zero buzz. Boy's hair length should be above the eyebrow, no longer than mid-ear and collar length.
- No make-up, excessive jewelry, large dangling earrings, nose rings, or colored nail polish.

### **DRESS-DOWN/UP POLICY**

Special Dress Down and Dress Up Days will be announced by the Principal. Clothing worn on these days must be modest and respectful of a Catholic School. Any attire deemed inappropriate will result in the parent being called to bring in a change of clothing.

### **BACKPACK POLICY**

Students in Grades K-8 should have age and size appropriate backpacks. Rolling backpacks will not be allowed for any student due to the potential for injury.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **ASSESSMENT CARDS**

The assessment card reflects the program objectives that have been specifically defined as learning tasks for your child's grade level. It provides the parent and student with information about strengths and needs as related to the learning tasks in each subject area. The report is meant to encourage the development of student potential so that the child can become an attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving individual. Assessment cards are issued three times a year. The Diocesan assessment cards for Pre-Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade are available on our school website, listed as "Assessment Cards" under the PARENTS tab.

## **EVALUATION**

Students must fulfill the required objectives in each subject in order to progress to the next grade.

## **SUMMER UNIFORM**

May be worn for the first and last six weeks of school. See calendar for specific start and stop dates.

### **BOYS AND GIRLS**

N/Pre-K - same as winter uniform

Kindergarten – Grade 8

- Khaki shorts
- Navy, short-sleeve polo shirt with school logo
- Navy or white socks
- Sneakers (no light up sneakers)

Grades 1-7: Any student receiving a final grade of 1 (one) in ELA (English Language Arts) or Math will be required to attend summer school or receive 15 hours of tutoring by a certified teacher in the subject area needed. A signed certificate of successful completion must be presented to the Principal. The student may be required to be re-tested in August in order to proceed to the next grade level.

### **APPOINTMENTS/CONFERENCES**

An appointment is necessary in order to see any teacher and the Principal. An appointment can be requested in advance by e-mail or by phone and will be honored as soon as possible. This process is designed to ensure time for a conference of quality and to ensure the learning process for the students. WITH MATTERS DIRECTLY RELATED TO INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, PARENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONFERENCE WITH THE TEACHER BEFORE SEEING THE PRINCIPAL. An appointment to see the Principal can be scheduled by telephone or e-mail. During the pandemic, conferences will take place via Zoom or Google Meet.

### **NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY**

Membership in the National Junior Honor Society is limited to pupils in Grades 7 and 8 who have met the requirements in scholarship, service, citizenship, character, and leadership, as set forth by the society and our school. Guidelines are under separate cover and are distributed to all qualified pupils at the beginning of Grade 7.

### **GRADUATION POLICY**

In an effort to maintain academic excellence, a diploma will be awarded to pupils in Grade 8 upon the successful completion of an academic course of study, which requires the achievement of a minimum grade of 2 in each of the major subject areas including Physical Education and Spanish. If a failing grade (a grade of 1) is attained, the diploma will be awarded in late August upon the successful completion of tutoring with a certified teacher or a certified summer school experience.

### **RELEASE OF STUDENT RECORDS**

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Rockville Centre voluntarily comply with the provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

### **RECESS**

During the pandemic, students in Grades N-5 will eat lunch in their classrooms behind polycarbonate barriers. Grades 6-8 will eat in the cafeteria with 6 ft. of distance between each student. Recess will take place in the courtyard with masks. During inclement weather, K-5 will bring personal recess bags from home and play independently, 6ft away from their peers, with masks on. Grades 6-8 will remain in the cafeteria. Students will remain in a pre-designated area with 12ft. of distancing between pods and only interact with other students in their pod.

Recess periods will take place as follows:

11:35am-12:05pm Grades 1-3 and 5

12:05pm-12:35pm Grades 4 and 6-8

## **HEALTH & WELLNESS**

St. Thomas the Apostle School is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being and the ability to learn by supporting healthy eating habits and physical activity. This is to coincide with New York State and Diocesan Standards for Health and Nutrition integrated throughout pre-school to eighth grade.

The spirit or mission statement of our health and wellness policy is to foster and encourage all members of the school community in serving healthy alternatives when food is served at special events, fundraising days, and classroom activities. While STA will put its best efforts toward providing students with a balanced offering of food, snacks, and beverages in order to promote healthier eating, we believe that students and their parents ultimately bear the responsibility of making the appropriate choices regarding their eating habits. Health & wellness is a lifelong learning process. STA is committed to doing all we can to ensure our students are provided with the proper learning environment.

St. Thomas establishes the following Health and Wellness Policy to enhance the learning and development of lifelong wellness practices:

## **HOLIDAYS & SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE CLASSROOM**

With health and safety in the forefront of our minds, during the pandemic parents will not be able to be present in the classroom, nor will they be able to send in any food items for holidays or special events. Instead, in coordination with the teacher, parents may send in a pre-prepared craft or activity for the class. Parents may also send in goodie bags with their child, barring anything edible.

## **VIRTUS TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS**

In the course of school activities, a major concern is the safety and well-being of our entire community - especially our children. Many steps have already been taken to help our Diocese function with confidence that we are providing service that supports this. The Diocese of Rockville Centre welcomes VIRTUS and the *Protecting God's Children for Adults* program. The Diocese of Rockville Centre has mandated that every individual that volunteers for the school in any capacity must attend a VIRTUS Live Training Session and complete a background screening. St. Thomas the Apostle School supports this mandate. Therefore, in order to volunteer in the school in any capacity, chaperone and/or attend on any field trip, you must attend the Live Training VIRTUS course and complete the background screening at least 48 hours prior to the event. For those who are not yet trained and screened at the beginning of the school year, opportunities to do so will be offered. The training and background check should be completed as soon as possible in order to participate as a volunteer during the year.

A complete packet can be obtained through our Religious Education Office. Until the proper documentation requirements stated in the packet are met, you will be unable to volunteer in any capacity. There are no exceptions to this rule. To report possible child abuse call 1-800-342-2720.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **CELL PHONES AND PERSONAL ELECTRONICS**

Students are not allowed to use personal electronic devices including toys, gadgets, cameras, I-pods, or cell phones anywhere on school grounds during the school day as well as in after-school programs and activities. Cell phones must be turned off and kept in their book bags during the school day and while on school property. If I-pods or games are used coming or going on the bus, they must also remain in the book bag during the school day. There is no need for a cell phone during the day. In case of emergencies, school phones are available with proper permission. Electronic devices, which are not where they belong, will be taken and will be returned only to the parents. Under no circumstances is the school responsible for breakage or loss of any personal electronic device.

### **MEDIA COVERAGE**

During the school year, St. Thomas the Apostle School administrators, faculty, or their approved representatives, which may include the media, may take pictures or videos. Media can be used for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: school newsletters, presentations, special event press releases to local newspapers, and the school website, which is accessed through the Internet. No student's full name will be used on the Internet. Signature of the handbook agreement indicates your permission for STA to use your child(ren)'s image for the purposes listed above.

## **PARENTAL ROLE**

The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children. The Catholic school exists to assist parents in the Christian formation of their children. In this handbook, the term parent refers not only to a student's natural or adopted parent but to a student's non-parent legal guardian or to any person or agency authorized to act in place of parents. Parents are expected to display an attitude of respect and support toward the school, the staff, and the educational process by supporting the school's mission and commitment to Christian principles; supporting the school's policies as outlined in the school handbook. If a parent repeatedly or seriously violates proper school protocol, displays inappropriate or disruptive conduct toward students, or displays disrespectful, disruptive or harassing behavior towards teachers or toward school, parish or diocesan staff, the school may take corrective action. Such corrective action may include, at the discretion of the Principal and Pastor, restriction or termination of the parent's access to school or parish property or dismissal of the parent's child or children. The school may impose other appropriate corrective action, without prior recourse, based upon the nature of the parent's conduct and the surrounding circumstances.

## **NYS MANDATED REPORTING**

In accordance with NYS law, all teachers, school personnel, and volunteers supervising children are mandated reporters. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment when in their professional capacity, they are presented with reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment. If you suspect something, log it and report the incident to the Principal. If the Principal is not available, please contact the Nurse. If you prefer, you can call Child Protective Services directly. You may wish to visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at [ocfs.ny.gov](http://ocfs.ny.gov) website for additional information.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Students must be advised that confidentiality may not be maintained if the matter involves health, life or safety. In which event, staff must report appropriately. Confidential information of the Department of Education must never be transmitted or forwarded to outside individuals or companies not authorized to receive that information. Reasonable care must be taken regarding discussion or disclosure of confidential and sensitive information in non-secure situations, such as messages left on voice message systems, public telephone conversations, and conversations in open areas.

## **CUSTODY ISSUES**

Unless or until documentation is presented otherwise, both parents have the same rights with regard to their child. Upon notification as to custodial issues, parents will be asked to provide any and all court documentation regarding custody. The documents should be provided to the Principal for appropriate forwarding and review.

## **HANDBOOK POLICY & AMENDMENTS**

St. Thomas the Apostle retains the right to amend this handbook for just cause at any time. In light of unique situations, which may arise in the educational process, and because it is impossible to foresee all school issues that arise, the faculty and administration reserve the right to address and to take appropriate action for any such situation not specifically referenced in this manual. In addition, in view of the unique and essential religious mission of the school, it is expressly understood that the school may take actions in cases where moral offenses occur which reflect adversely on the school, the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre, or the Roman Catholic Church, or which interferes with the ability of the school to perform its religious mission to effectively maintain the intimate working relationship of the school and the community of faith.

The school may modify this handbook after reasonable notice to the parents/students of the effective date of any changes. Any section headings are for convenience of use and shall not affect the interpretation of any provisions. If the school should elect not to take action in a particular situation, this shall not be construed or interpreted as a waiver or preclude the school from action in a subsequent situation of the same or similar kind.

PARENTS AND STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN THE HANDBOOK AGREEMENT FORM STATING THEY HAVE READ THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OUTLINED IN THIS HANDBOOK AND THEY AGREE TO ABIDE BY THOSE RULES. The Handbook Agreement Form will be distributed with the handbook and must be signed and returned to school by October 1st. Failure to have a signed form on file will not prevent the school from enforcing its policies, but may result in disciplinary action being taken and/or prevent a student from enrolling (or continuing enrollment) in the school.

## **STUDENT TECHNOLOGY USE & BEHAVIOR POLICY**

St. Thomas the Apostle School has established a technology network with access to the Internet for its students. This network has been established for limited educational purposes only. By agreeing to this policy the student(s) and the parents and/or guardians of the student(s) fully agree to the following:

- There is NO RIGHT TO PRIVACY when using the school's technology resources. Administration, faculty, and other authorized persons have the right to review any and all material saved, transmitted, accessed, or momentarily in use by the student in accord with the policy set by the school's administration. The school's right to review is extended to any use by the student's parents and/or legal guardians of the school's computer resources in accord with the school's policy for review of student records and/or work.
- There is NO ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH when using the school's technology resources, which is viewed by the administration as a limited educational forum; and student behavior is expected to conform to values consistent with the Catholic faith both inside and outside of the school setting.
- All access to the school's technology resources will be permitted only under the supervision of a member of the school staff. The student agrees that all information transmitted through the use of the school's technology resources (e-mail, web page, publication, or other Internet postings) will be sent or received only under the direct, immediate supervision of a member of the school's staff and with the explicit permission of that staff member. The student agrees to stop using any and all of the school's technology resources whenever requested to do so by a member of staff or other authorized person.
- The student agrees never to transmit via the school's technology or personal technology resources the personal information (name, age, gender, address, phone number, e-mail address and the like) of himself or herself as well as that of any other person. The student agrees never to arrange for a meeting with any person at any time using the technology resources. The student agrees to notify a staff member immediately if he or she is asked for personal information, views inappropriate materials, or in any other way feels violated, harassed, uncomfortable, or accosted through the school's technology resources.
- The student agrees never to access, transmit, or retransmit material which promotes violence or advocates destruction of property, including, but not limited to, access to information concerning the manufacture of destructive devices, such as explosives, fireworks, smoke bombs, incendiary devices, and the like.
- The student agrees never to access, transmit, or retransmit any information containing sexually oriented material, which means any pictures or writings that are intended to stimulate erotic feelings by the description or portrayal of sexual activity or nude human form.
- The student agrees never to use the school's technology resources for commercial purposes. The student will never buy nor sell anything using the school's technology resources.
- The school's system will never be used for political lobbying, although it may be used to communicate with elected representatives to express opinions on political issues.

- The student agrees never to tamper with any software and/or hardware including software or hardware that guard the school's network from unmanaged Internet use. The student agrees never to tamper with any security system that protects the school's technology resources.
- The student agrees to use only the software and/or hardware permitted by a member of staff for express educational purposes. The student agrees never to use the school's technology resources to gain unauthorized access to another technology network (hacking).
- The student agrees never to transmit (download or upload) any computer file, application, or other computer resource to or from the school's technology network. This includes the unauthorized installation of software from a CD-ROM, flash drive, or other media.
- The student agrees never to use inappropriate, obscene, profane, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language. The student agrees never to post false information or engage in personal, prejudicial, or discriminatory attacks. Student behavior is expected to conform to values consistent with the Catholic faith.
- The student agrees never to harass another person by use of any of the school's technology resources. Harassment is defined as any action that distresses or annoys another person. The student agrees to stop immediately any and all behavior that is construed by another as unwelcome.
- The student agrees never to use any of the school's technology resources to plagiarize. Plagiarism is defined as taking the idea or writing of others and presenting them as one's own.
- The student agrees to respect the right of intellectual property of other people and to respect all copyright laws. The student agrees that if he or she is unsure whether copyright law is being respected, he or she will bring this question immediately to the attention of a staff member.
- The student agrees never to participate in illegal activity using the school's technology resources. The school will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through the schools resources.
- The school will not be held responsible for the actions of a student who is in violation of any of the terms of this policy. This responsibility is extended to, but not limited to: loss of data or interruptions of service, the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the school's system, or any financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the school's technology resources.
- The school reserves the right to establish rules and regulations regarding the use of the school's technology resources, and behavior is expected to conform to values consistent with the Catholic faith both inside and outside the school setting.
- A student found in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline including, but not limited to, temporary removal from the school's system, permanent removal from the system, or other appropriate disciplinary action in accord with the rules and regulations of the school, including suspension or expulsion, and/or legal action.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING**



- Student behavior is expected to conform to values consistent with the Catholic faith, both inside and outside the school setting, relating to use of and participation in social networking. Any technology use or use of social networking sites to display any wording or images of any student engaged in any activity, which, in the sole discretion of the school administration, is inappropriate, crude, vulgar, or a violation of values consistent with the Catholic faith, or is illegal in any respect, will be subject to disciplinary action, including, without limitation, suspension, expulsion and/or legal action.
- Any technology use by any student, in school or at home, which includes viewing or distributing any images, wording, messages, or material which are, in the sole discretion of the school administration, obscene, harassing, racist, inflammatory, malicious, fraudulent or libelous will be subject to disciplinary action, including, without limitation, suspension, expulsion and/or legal action.

## **BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE POLICY**

The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy is an addendum to the Technology Use and Student Behavior Policy. St. Thomas the Apostle School has the right to protect its network and technical resources. Thus, any network user who brings his/her own personal device into the school building is required to adhere to the Technology Use and Student Behavior Policy.

- The student takes full responsibility for his or her personal devices. The school is not responsible for the security or care of personal devices.
- The student is responsible for the proper care of his or her personal devices, including any costs of repair, replacement or any modifications needed to use the
- The school reserves the right to inspect and/or confiscate a student's personal devices if there is reason to believe that the student has violated school policies, has used such devices in connection with any inappropriate conduct, or in any way poses a danger to himself, herself or others.
- The student will comply with any teacher's request with regard to personal devices and will only use devices in an area that is visible to and under the supervision of a school faculty and/or staff member.
- The student may not use the devices to record, transmit or post photos or video of a person or persons on the school campus. Nor can any images, audio and/or video recorded at school be transmitted or posted at any time without being reviewed by and with the permission of the administrator (principal) at the school.
- STUDENTS ARE NOT TO CALL, TEXT MESSAGE, EMAIL, OR ELECTRONICALLY COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS FROM THEIR PERSONAL DEVICE, INCLUDING OTHER STUDENTS, PARENTS, GUARDIANS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. Students may only use cell phones in an emergency with the consent of the responsible adult in charge.
- Personal devices used in school are not permitted to connect to the Internet through 3G, 4G, or other content service providers. Devices used in school must access the Internet via the school's content filtered wireless network.
- Students will only use appropriate educational applications on their devices under the direction and supervision of teacher and/or staff member.
- Personal devices shall be charged prior to bringing it to school and shall be capable of running off its own battery while at school.

- Cell phones and other devices will be taken from the student if used without permission of the responsible adult in charge, and will be held in the office until picked up by the parent/guardian of the student.
- Please note that, unless specifically directed to do so, students are never required to bring in personal devices to school. All students will continue to be able to utilize the school technology equipment for educational purposes, and will not be left out of the instruction practice.

We teach. We build community. We serve.