

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School



Parent – Student Handbook 2019-2020

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STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Manifested by over 50 years of spiritual and scholastic service to a diverse and dynamic community, St. Thomas the Apostle School professes the inalienable right of all children to an education. Priority of admittance is given to Catholic students residing in adjoining areas because of our specifically Catholic environment.

St. Thomas the Apostle School pursues the promotion of culture and the formation of its young people. In its Catholic context, several distinct purposes emerge:

1. to develop in the community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel
2. to enable young people, while developing their own personalities, to grow at the same time in that new life which has been given to them in Baptism
3. to so orient the whole of human culture to the message of salvation that, as a result, the light of Faith will illumine the knowledge which the students acquire of the world, of life and of people (adapted from the Declaration on Christian Education of Vatican Council II)

The Mission of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is to foster a community of life-long learners, led by the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, through a transdisciplinary approach to learning, initiated by inquiry in which the students will think globally and display acts of compassion through service.

The Vision of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is to strive to assist parents, whom we recognize as the primary educators of their children, to prepare the students to contribute effectively to the welfare of society. Together we foster a world encompassing vision of the human family as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, focusing on values of unity, harmony, peace, service and justice.

The programs of religious education, academic curriculum and system of discipline are designed to bring about our goals and objectives. It is assumed that the teachers and families of St. Thomas the Apostle School believe and practice this same philosophy and will cooperate to achieve the goals of the school. Parents sign an agreement to this effect at the time of their first registration. Teachers agree to this philosophy by the signing of their yearly contracts.

Aesthetic Goals and Objectives

1. to aid the child to appreciate and respond to the beauty of the world by creative expression of his / her God given talents
2. to aid the child to appreciate and develop a taste for the fine arts

We strive to implement these goals by:

1. teaching the child about the beauty of the world and nature and the need to protect and care for it
2. exposing the child to the fine arts through the use of audiovisuals, and by participating in art and music projects

Intellectual Goals and Objectives

1. to aid the child in acquiring the sequential mastery of the basic skill and cultivate attitudes, ideas and habits necessary for life in our complex society, according to his / her age and ability
2. to aid the child in the acquisition of the skills needed to recall, organize, synthesize data and to evaluate this in accordance with his/her values
3. to aid the child in the development of his / her God given talents, creativity and interests
4. to aid the child in the development of a healthy curiosity and a lifelong thirst for knowledge

We strive to implement these goals by:

1. providing a curriculum which stresses the basic skills and presenting these to the child according to his / her ability
2. providing the child with the opportunities to learn and recall information in the lower grades, then to gradually lead him / her to the knowledge necessary to organize and synthesize data
3. providing the child with opportunities to express himself/ herself through creative writing, poetry and dramatic speaking
4. encouraging the child to develop his / her interests and hobbies by sharing these in the classroom and through positive reinforcement
5. offering learning situations which challenge critical thinking and inquiry in all subject areas

Physical Goals and Objectives

1. to aid the child in the development of good physical skills and health habits
2. to inform the student of the dangers of addictive drugs
3. to aid the child in the development of healthy attitudes towards physical change and development
4. to create in the school an atmosphere of concern and care for health and safety
5. to aid the child to value the practice of good personal hygiene and cleanliness

We strive to implement these goals by:

1. providing the students with physical education classes that endeavor to meet their needs along with the option of after school sports activities
2. providing all grade levels with units that inform of the dangers of addictive habits and including guest speakers in the upper grades
3. providing every grade level with a Family Life curriculum
4. encouraging the upper grade students to share in the safety of the younger ones by being monitors and safety helpers
5. providing classes in health which stress the need for personal hygiene, cleanliness, health and nutrition

Sociological Goals and Objectives

1. to instill in the child the basic value of self-respect as well as respect for others and authority
2. to instill in the child a love and respect for his / her culture and that of others
3. to instill in the child the qualities necessary for self-direction and leadership
4. to aid the child in developing a sense of concern for others and for social justice
5. to aid the child toward an appreciation of and loyalty to his country

6. to aid the child in the development of a sense of fair play and good sportsmanship

We strive to implement these goals by:

1. providing positive reinforcement for good work and behavior as occasions arise
2. providing units of study on various cultures and their contributions toward the betterment of mankind
3. providing the children with opportunities for leadership, responsibility and to be of service of others
4. applying Christian moral standards as the criteria in solving life situations and world issues
5. including in our curriculum the study of our democratic system of government as well as the lives of those who have contributed to the betterment of our country
6. providing opportunities to experience competitive sports and teaching the child the value of both winning and losing well with a Christ like attitude

Spiritual Goals and Objectives

1. to aid the child in the realization of the personal love God has for him / her
2. to aid the child in the study and development of our Catholic faith and value system
3. to aid the child in the development of a loving relationship with God through prayer, the sacraments and the Liturgy
4. to aid the child in the development of a deep and true devotion to our Blessed Mother
5. to aid the child in the development of a love and loyalty to the Church which embraces his own parish and the total community of man
6. to help the child understand, appreciate and live the meaning of a "faith community"

We strive to implement these goals by:

1. helping the child to grasp the loving and personal relationship of God to himself by the prayerful use of Sacred Scripture, special devotions and the celebration of the Liturgical Seasons
2. providing opportunities for personal and communal prayer
3. providing a well-rounded religious education program
4. providing opportunities for the child to learn the role of our Lady in salvation history
5. providing the child with the experience of being a part of the school community in an atmosphere of faith, love, trust and justice
6. making the child aware of his / her God given capabilities, talents and dignity

THIS HANDBOOK, ALTHOUGH COMPREHENSIVE, MAY NOT CONTAIN ALL OF THE RULES AND POLICIES THAT APPLY TO CERTAIN INSTANCES IN THE SCHOOL. ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE HAS THE RIGHT TO AMEND THIS DOCUMENT AS DEEMED NECESSARY BY THE ADMINISTRATION. PARENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED OF ANY AMENDMENT ON THE SCHOOL'S PLUS PORTAL PAGE OR VIA EMAIL.

INTRODUCTION

An interesting and challenging experience awaits you as a student or parent of the school. To answer some of your questions concerning the school's policies, the school has prepared this Parent-Student Handbook. Please read it thoroughly and retain it for future reference. The policies stated in this handbook are only guidelines and are subject to change at the sole discretion of the school, as are all other policies, procedures, or programs of the school. From time to time, you may receive updated information concerning changes in policy. However, the school has the right to add, delete or revise any school policy or procedure with or without notice. This handbook is not a contract, express or implied, and none of the policies or provisions should be construed as such. If you have any questions about the school's policies, please ask the principal for assistance.

OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICY

The school has an open admission policy. No person, on the grounds of race, color, disability or national origin, is excluded or otherwise subjected to discrimination in the receiving of services. Nor does the school discriminate in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, disability, age, gender, or national origin.

The school will give preference to the members of the parish. When the school cannot accept all applicants, those students not accepted shall be encouraged to enroll in the Religious Education Program.

Each year families are invited to reregister contingent upon several factors including but not exclusive of, space availability, your participation in the 20 volunteer service hours, and your family's Mass attendance record. Sibling acceptance will be based on the same criteria of new family requirements.

According to the standards of the Florida Catholic Conference and the policy of the Archdiocese of Miami, a pupil entering Pre-Kindergarten-2 must be two years old by September 1st of that year. Pre-Kindergarten-3 must be three years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering Pre-Kindergarten-4 must be four years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering Kindergarten must be five years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering 1st Grade must be six years old by September 1st of that year.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

A student's enrollment and/or graduation from school does not confer a legal status nor does it serve to regularize an undocumented student. Although the Archdiocese of Miami may assist with the completion of an I-20 form, the school does not guarantee or confer any privileges or rights available to documented legal residents. Parents should consult with immigration legal counsel if they have any questions as to immigration status.

ACCREDITATION

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is fully accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference and the National Council for Private Schools Accreditation. It also holds membership in the National Catholic Education Association.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The school is committed to promoting a safe, healthy, caring, and respectful learning environment for all of its students. As such, bullying is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Therefore, this policy prohibits any unwelcome verbal or written conduct or gestures directed at a student by another student that has the effect of:

- (1) physically, emotionally, or mentally harming a student;
- (2) damaging, extorting or taking a student's personal property;
- (3) placing a student in reasonable fear of emotional or mental harm;
- (4) placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; or
- (5) creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or the Catholic mission of the school.

I. Definition

a. **Bullying** is the willful and repeated harm inflicted upon another individual which may involve but is not limited to: teasing, name-calling, slurs, rumors, jokes, false accusations, intimidation, stalking, innuendos, demeaning comments, pranks, social isolation, gestures, cyber-bullying or other verbal or written conduct. Cyber-bullying includes the following misuses of digital technology: teasing, intimidating, or making false accusations about another student by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital images or website postings (including blogs and social network sites). Bullying reflects a pattern of behavior, not a single isolated incident.

b. This definition includes students who either directly engage in an act of bullying or who, by their behavior, support another student's act of bullying.

c. Scope

a. This policy prohibits bullying that occurs either:

- i. on school premises before, during, or after school hours;
- ii. on any bus or vehicle as part of any school activity; or
- iii. during any school function, extracurricular activity or other school-sponsored event or activity.

d. Reporting Complaints

a. Each student and parent has a duty to report any bullying to the school immediately. If a student experiences (or a parent witnesses or learns of) any incident of bullying, the incident must be promptly reported to the school principal. The principal will provide the student/parent with the Bullying Complaint Report Form which must be completed, dated and signed by the complaining party so that the school may initiate further inquiry, when appropriate.

e. Disciplinary Action

a. Any student found to have violated this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include: temporary removal from the classroom, loss of privileges, detention, counseling, parent conference, suspension, expulsion, and/or notification to appropriate authorities. The disciplinary action may be unique to the individual incident and may vary in method and severity based on the principal's discretion.

False reports or accusations of bullying also constitutes a violation of this policy and may subject the offending party to appropriate remedial action which may include, but is not limited to, the assessment of costs incurred by the School in its investigation and review of any reports deemed to have been made in bad faith.

CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Florida law provides that any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible for the child's welfare must report such knowledge to the Department of Children and Families. The school will cooperate with all child protective investigations by DCF or the local law enforcement agency. Reports should be made to Florida's Department of Children and Families by calling the Abuse Hotline at: 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).

Child protective investigations by DCF or local law enforcement agencies sometimes include interviews of students at school and may occur without advance notice. When it is reasonably possible, the school will seek to notify the parents that their child has been asked to participate in a child protective investigation. The school may also request the presence of a school staff member during investigative interviews on school property. However, please note that, under Florida law, DCF and local law enforcement have the discretion to conduct unannounced interviews and to disallow school staff member's presence during these interviews.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

From time to time, parents may have questions regarding school policy or situations regarding their own child. St. Thomas the Apostle has developed a procedure for handling these concerns in a respectful and timely manner.

1. Seek facts for yourself, not rumor
2. Communication must be addressed as a parent specific to his/her child. Do not include other parents in your private family matters. Meetings will be scheduled on a family basis. There will be no group meetings.
3. Discuss the matter with the adult who witnessed the incident. If there was not an adult present, the matter should be taken to the teacher first. The reporting must be within 24 hours.
4. after meeting with the specific individual, contact the school administration if grievance is not resolved
5. if there is a spiritual problem, contact the rectory for assistance
6. if the concern involves another student or family, please contact the principal.

In most cases, the problem can be resolved with little difficulty. The school administration does not ignore or retreat from parental concerns. Decisions are made with the best interest of the entire school. If a parent does not agree with the final decision, St. Thomas the Apostle will issue an administrative withdrawal for the students. In the event that any Saint Thomas the Apostle email is forwarded and/or posted in response to your concern, the school will ask that you find a solution at another school environment. The interest of St. Thomas the Apostle School is in remedying problems and maintaining a solid Christian school environment according to our stated philosophy.

TESTIFYING IN DIVORCE OR CUSTODY PROCEEDINGS

The Catholic Church recognizes marriage as a Sacrament. In the Union of Christian spouses, the sacrament of Matrimony celebrates the relationship of Christ to the Church. Therefore, the school strongly supports the sacrament of matrimony as the foundation of family life and of the domestic Church. In recognition of the importance of the matrimonial sacrament to the Catholic faith, parents agree not to compel the attendance, testimony, or deposition of any school or church employee in any divorce, custody, or other legal proceedings which may in any way involve the dissolution of marriage or the determination of parental/custody rights.

In the event that a parent or legal guardian breaches this policy, any school or church personnel who are required to attend legal proceedings may be represented by an attorney. In addition, any and all legal fees and costs incurred by the school will be charged and become the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

COMPUTER USE

The school may provide its administrators, faculty and students with access to computers and various information technology resources including email and Internet access in order to enhance the teaching and learning environment of the school and to improve the school's operations. Students must use these resources in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner in accordance with the mission of the school and the Catholic teachings. Therefore, students must abide by the following general rules of conduct:

1. Respect and protect the privacy of others;
 - a. Use only assigned accounts and passwords;
 - b. Do not share assigned accounts or passwords with others;
 - c. Do not view, use or copy passwords, data or networks to which you are not authorized;
 - d. Do not share or distribute private information about yourself or others.
2. Respect and protect the integrity, availability, and security of all electronic resources;
 - a. Observe all network security practices;
 - b. Report security risks or violations to the school principal;
 - c. Do not vandalize, destroy or damage data, networks, hardware, computer systems or other resources;
 - d. Do not disrupt the operation of the network or create or place a virus on the network;
 - e. Conserve and protect these resources for other students and Internet users.
3. Respect and protect the intellectual property of others;
 - a. Do not infringe on copyright laws including downloading or copying music, games or movies;
 - b. Do not install unlicensed or unapproved software;
 - c. Do not plagiarize.
4. Respect the principles of the Catholic school;
 - a. Use only in ways that are kind and respectful;
 - b. Report threatening or discomfoting materials to the school principal;

- c. Do not access, transmit, copy or create materials that violate the school's code of conduct (such as indecent, threatening, rude, discriminatory or harassing materials or messages);
- d. Do not access, transmit, copy or create materials that are illegal (such as obscene, stolen, or illegally copied materials or messages);
- e. Do not use the resources to further any other acts that are criminal or violate the school's code of conduct;
- f. Do not use the resources for non-educational purposes such as visiting chat rooms, social websites or networks like My Space or Facebook;
- g. Do not send spam, chain letters or other mass unsolicited mailings;
- h. Do not buy, sell, advertise, or otherwise conduct business or political campaigning without prior written approval from the school's principal.
- i. Do not engage in any form of cyberbullying.

Supervision and Monitoring

The school and its authorized personnel may monitor the use of information technology resources to help ensure that users are secure and in conformity with this policy. The school reserves the right to examine, use, and disclose any data found on the school's information networks in order to further the health, safety, discipline or security of any student or other person or to protect property. It may also use this information in disciplinary actions and may furnish evidence of a crime to law enforcement.

Unacceptable Use of Outside Technology

The school expects students to use information technology (including, but not limited to, the Internet, email, instant messaging and text messaging) in a responsible and ethical fashion in compliance with all applicable laws and with Christian moral principles, both in and out of the school setting. Accordingly, students may not post, place, upload, share, or communicate any images, photographs, statements or inferences relating to or including profanity, vulgarity, indecency, illegal use of drugs, illegal use of alcohol or other illegal or illicit activities. Additionally, students may not use information technology for the purpose of defaming, threatening, teasing or harassing any other student, staff member, parent, faculty member, or other person. This includes, but is not limited to, communications on social networks such as Instagram, My Space and Facebook. In addition, this rule applies to communications both during the school year and while students are on vacation or summer breaks. Students are responsible for all materials and communications made on personal websites and social networks and the materials and communications should be consistent with Christian moral principles, including any materials or communications posted on their sites by other individuals. Moreover, any unauthorized use of the school's name (or common names associated with the school) or any likeness or image of the school or its employees or agents is strictly prohibited.

Consent

Many technological devices used at school have the capacity to generate audio recordings, video recordings, photographs, and other similar reproductions of images, likenesses, and/or sounds. The use of any such recordings and reproductions is governed by school policy. Parental/guardian execution of this Handbook constitutes an express consent and waiver as to any such recordings and reproductions incidental to the use of any technological devices on school property or at school events.

Consequences for Violations

A violation of these rules may result in disciplinary action, including the loss of a student's privilege to use the school's information technology resources and any additional consequences at the principal's discretion including expulsion.

DISCIPLINE

Manners

Our students are living models of Catholic education and their manners are constantly being observed by those outside our immediate community. Even the uniforms worn by them reflect the educational priorities, not only of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School but of Catholic education in general.

- Teach your students the rules of good etiquette in greeting people properly. Full uses of the words "please," "pardon me," and "thank you," and standing when addressing a guest are expected.
- Sitting and standing properly with pride and showing common courtesy and respecting faculty and each other are expected as well.
- Students must be taught to step aside for an adult, offer to carry books or packages, or other such courtesies.

As their role models our staff is expected to behave in a professional manner at all times and set the example for the students.

Conduct

Students and Parents are expected to behave consistent with the mission, philosophy and spirit of the school and the moral teachings of the Catholic faith as determined by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Miami. Because the school cannot anticipate all conduct that violates this policy, it reserves the right to take any form of (1) student disciplinary action, including expulsion, and/or (2) restrictions against any behavior that violates this policy, even if not specifically stated in this handbook.

Articles Prohibited in School

Only those items needed for classroom use should be brought to school. Items that are hazardous to the safety of others, interfere with school procedures or are not needed in class will be impounded. Impounded items will be returned to the parent, if requested.

Skates, skateboards and the like are not allowed at any time at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School. We also do not allow rubber balls (basketballs, volleyballs, etc.) to be brought from home, unless a coach or teacher requests them. We discourage the children from bringing any kind of toy, large or small, to school. This interferes with the students' concentration and the purpose of school. However, a teacher may allow a share day or may request games for rainy days or recess time.

Students are not permitted to bring cellphones, IPADs, magazines, CD's, IPods, Apple watches, cameras, videos, radios or any other electronic device to school, unless requested by the teacher for a classroom project. In case of special projects or activities, the teacher will indicate the time to bring these items to school.

Cellular phones are prohibited in the classroom.

Cheating Policy

Cheating is a form of stealing. It is taking work or thoughts from another person. Students may feel pressure to cheat because of parental, peer or teacher expectations. Students may also cheat because they have not taken the proper responsibility to be prepared on their own. We want our students to do their best.

Anyone caught cheating, plagiarizing, copying homework, class work or exams, or giving such material to other students, will receive a 59% to be averaged into the subject involved, regardless of the assignment.

Discipline Program

Discipline in a Catholic School is to be considered an aspect of moral guidance and not a form of punishment. The purpose of discipline is:

1. to promote a classroom conducive to learning
2. to promote character training
3. to guide students in the following of Christ and Gospel values

For this reason, we have set up a system whereby the students effectively remind that order and organization are absolutely necessary in a teaching-learning situation. Using the same means, students are also aware that disrespect, inappropriate behavior, property damage, and nonconformity to rules will not be tolerated.

If an action is serious enough as determined by the teacher and the Principal, immediate and direct measures may be taken in accordance with Archdiocesan policy. It is also the policy at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School to notify parents and, at times, to bring them in immediately on a discipline action. We strongly believe parents are the primary educators and examples, and parents need to be aware of their child's behavior.

Students in 1st through 8th grade will follow an demerit system. Inappropriate student behavior will constitute in an infraction. Inappropriate behavior can include, but is not limited to, the following:

Inappropriate Behaviors

- disruptive behavior in the classroom, hallways, assemblies, recess, or cafeteria
- unexcused tardy without a pass or a teachers' note
- copying homework or class work
- littering
- lack of preparedness for class
- dress code violation
- writing or passing notes in school
- unacceptable behavior in Church during school Mass and other school-related activities
- gum chewing at any time
- eating or drinking outside of the lunch area when not authorized
- visiting or loitering in classrooms, restrooms, the church, or any other non-designated area without permission and/or a pass
- lack of cooperation towards a teacher including refusing to complete an assigned punishment or submitting parent's signature as requested
- improper language (written/verbal)
- forging a signature
- stealing
- truancy

- disrespect towards teachers, adults in charge, and fellow students
- writing or damaging school property
- not reporting for a detention

***Reasons for infraction is up to the discretion of the teacher and/or Principal.**

***Reason for a suspension and/or expulsion is up to the discretion of the Principal and the Department of Schools.**

A demerit will be issued for inappropriate behavior as deemed by the teacher, staff, and/or Principal. Upon issuance of a demerit, a notification will be sent to the parent via Plus Portal as well as a Demerit report which requires a parent signature. The disciplinary steps for card removal are as follows:

Grades 1-5

- 1st Demerit - Warning
- 2nd Demerit - Notice of possible detention sent to parent
- 3rd Demerit - Detention – written notification sent home
- 4th Demerit - Parent/Teacher Conference
- 5th Demerit - Detention
- 6th Demerit - Suspension

Grades 6-8

- 1st Demerit - Warning
- 2nd Demerit - Detention
- 3rd Demerit - Parent/Teacher Conference (Level Teachers)
- 4th Demerit - Detention
- 5th Demerit - Suspension

The Principal retains the right to make exceptions to the above stated procedures. The Principal will be the final resource in all disciplinary situations and may waive or accelerate any disciplinary rule for just cause at his/her discretion.

Some offenses may result in immediate issuance of a demerit at the teachers' discretion.

Detentions will be documented and placed in the student's cumulative folder as part of his/her official transcript.

Detention is held every Wednesday from 3:15 -4:15p.m. Suspension may result in the ineligibility for academic awards (Principal's List, Academic Honors, Citizenship, and Attendance) at the end of the 4th quarter. Detentions and/or suspensions will not be rescheduled due to sports games, practices, doctor's appointments, vacations, etc. Detentions and/or suspensions will only be rescheduled due to illness verified by a doctor's note, or if a student is dismissed early by the recommendation of the school nurse.

Students in PK2 – Kindergarten do not follow a formal detention system. However, the same kind of behavior and teaching of self control is expected. The classroom rules and consequences are determined by the teacher and administration and applied as is age appropriate. Consistent communication between home and school is encouraged to enable this growth to occur.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

The use or possession of illegal drugs or illegal mood altering substances, alcoholic beverages, drug-related paraphernalia, or the abuse of prescription or over the counter drugs by any student on school property or while attending or participating in any school sponsored activity or at anytime the student is wearing a school uniform is forbidden. Transgression of this rule will result in disciplinary action, which may include expulsion from the school, even for a first offense.

Any student selling drugs on school property or at school functions may be immediately expelled.

The school is committed to a drug-free environment. This commitment may, under some circumstances, prompt a need for testing of students for evidence of substance abuse. [It may also involve the use of drug dogs and other methods in the discretion of the school administration which seek to deter the use and/or distribution of illegal drugs or alcohol.](#)

If a student exhibits the symptoms, or is suspected of substance abuse, the school may require that the student undergo substance abuse testing at the parents' expense. If the results of the test suggest abuse (and the substance was not used on or brought to campus or a school related activity), the school will normally use this information to help the student seek assistance. Refusal to participate in such a test may result in expulsion from the school.

At times, the school may choose to conduct random drug testing of the student body at the parents' expense. St. Thomas the Apostle may conduct random searches of students' backpacks and cubbies.

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

The following disciplinary infractions may result in suspension or expulsion:

- actions gravely detrimental to the moral and spiritual welfare of other pupils or faculty – harassment
- habitual profanity or vulgarity
- assault, battery or any verbal or written threat of force or violence, directed toward any school personnel or student
- open, persistent defiance of the authority of the teacher
- continued willful disobedience
- use, sale or possession of narcotics – substance abuse
- use, sale, distribution or possession of any alcoholic beverage on or near school premises
- smoking or having tobacco
- stealing
- willful cutting, defacing or otherwise injuring in any way property, real or personal, belonging to the school or to another person
- habitual truancy

This list is not exhaustive and the school shall administer its disciplinary policies in its sole discretion.

After a suspension, the student may NOT return to the classroom until the student and his/her parent have met with the administration and the counselor.

The disciplinary infractions listed above may also be addressed by any or all of the following:

1. referral to a psychologist at the parents' expense and to the school counselor both of whom will be asked to submit a written evaluation.
2. the placement of the student on probation with an indication that, should another disciplinary infraction occur, the student will be expelled from school.
3. the Department of Schools and/or the legal authorities may be contacted to report the disciplinary infraction.

In certain cases, the needs of the student and the needs of the school are not in harmony. Therefore, the principal must make the determination of continued enrollment after the process of discipline has been taken. The best practice to confer with the parents and come to the mutual understanding of having the child withdraw.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

The satisfaction of all financial obligations to the school, including tuition and fees, constitutes a material condition for continued enrollment in the school. In cases where a family is delinquent in paying tuition, the administration of the school may refuse to allow the child to sit for exams. The student will have an Incomplete on his/her report card. It is Archdiocesan policy that a child will not be accepted into another Archdiocesan school until the outstanding debt in the former school is paid.

In addition, the school may withhold the issuance of transcripts, Plus Portal, or any other student records and/or disallow participation in or access to school activities, and/or unenroll the student if any financial obligations are not met.

All families are required to participate in the FACTS Tuition System.

If financial obligations are not met, report cards will be withheld and Plus Portal will be blocked. At the end of the school year, report cards will not be mailed to 8th grade parents; thus, affecting high school requirements. Please note that any family who has not met all financial obligations for the current school year by the due date of the Letter of Intent in January, may not be allowed to register for the incoming school year. A student may not be permitted to begin the new academic year unless July and August financial obligations are met.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE THROUGH SCHOOL SERVICE

Each family is asked to contribute twenty hours of service to our parish family. This volunteer help provides service to the students and the parish which otherwise would have to be paid for. Opportunities for this service are made available through the Communication Folder and at General Parent Meetings. Additional opportunities are available as projects arise and parents are welcome to get involved anytime by contacting one of the Committee Coordinators.

FUNDRAISING

No student may solicit funds in the school's name unless such solicitation has been authorized in writing by the principal.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Periodically, the school may require that parents or guardians make electronic acknowledgments confirming the receipt and/or acceptance of various policies, procedures, notices, releases or updates. Any time a parent/guardian makes an electronic acknowledgment by clicking "submit" or "accept" on an electronic document, that individual is agreeing that he/she has read, understood, and agrees to be bound by the contents of the electronic document. Electronic acknowledgments and signatures are valid and binding and may serve as consent to the contents of any electronic communication. Parents and guardians are responsible for reviewing the contents of any electronic document prior to making any electronic acknowledgments. In addition, **Parents/Guardians, by executing the acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, HEREBY AGREE** to receive and be bound by electronic acknowledgments.

TRANSCRIPTS

A transcript fee of \$50.00 will be charged for all requests submitted. Requests should be made in writing to the attention of the Principal. Allow 48 hours for processing. **The first set of 8th grade transcripts is free of charge.**

All recommendation forms to other schools must be given to the Principal directly, not the homeroom teacher.

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

After School Care

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School offers an after school care program that runs from 3:15pm to 6:00pm. Information on this program can be obtained by calling the school office and leaving a message for the after school care director.

Age Requirements

According to the standards of the Florida Catholic Conference and the policy of the Archdiocese of Miami, a pupil entering Pre-Kindergarten -2 must be two years old by September 1st of the year. Pre-Kindergarten-3 must be three years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering Pre-Kindergarten-4 must be four years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering Kindergarten must be five years old by September 1st of that year. A child entering 1st Grade must be six years old by September 1st of that year.

Attendance Information

Students need to learn the importance of regular school attendance. Mandates from the state and from the Archdiocese of Miami require 180 school days for students during which the children are placed in the care of school personnel. Therefore, the marking of attendance, late arrivals and early dismissals is a legal requirement and mandatory for the school, noting that the student is under the care of the school or with the parent / guardian. Students are expected to attend school the entire day.

Supervised student drop-off begins at 7:15 am until 7:45 am. All PK2-2nd grade students must be in their homeroom class by the time the bell rings at 7:45 am in order to not be considered tardy. All 3rd – 8th grade students must be in their homeroom class by the time the bell rings at 7:30 am in order to not be considered tardy. **When a student is absent, the absence is also true of any school related activity before or after school; therefore, a student will not be able to participate in any activity on that day.**

It is policy that when a student has been absent, a written excuse signed by the parent or guardian is required, and these will be kept on file. **Note from parent or child's pediatrician must be presented in person to the office the morning of the student's return.** Any student who is absent 20 or more days will be required to attend summer school in order to be promoted. Absences that total 20 days will attend summer school based on the amount of days absent: 1-5 days – 1 week of summer school; 6-10 days – 2 weeks; 11 days and over – all 3 weeks. In order for an absence to be excused, **a doctor's note (child's pediatrician) must be brought to school on the day the student returns to school.** This note should be written and signed by the child's pediatrician and include the dates the student was under his / her care. A child who has had a communicable disease must have a release from the doctor before returning to school. **Doctor's notes will ONLY be accepted on the day the student returns to school, not at a later date.** Any notes received in the classroom must be forwarded to the school office. If a student is signed out for a doctor's appointment and returns within 2 hours **with a doctor's note that day**, it will excused.

Absences are marked in the following manner:

- a. students who are not seated in their homeroom by the 7:30am/7:45am bell will be marked tardy, even if they are in the school building
- b. students who arrive after 10:00am are marked ½ day absent

- c. students dismissed before 11:30am are marked absent that day
- d. students dismissed after 11:30am and before 1:30pm are marked ½ day absent

Students in 1st-8th - tests and quizzes missed due to illness are to be made up within the designated period of one day times the number of days absent. It is the responsibility of the student to attend the make-up session on the designated date given by the subject area teacher. Failure to comply with the make-up policy will result in a 59% for the missed assessment.

Tardiness Policy

Every student at St. Thomas the Apostle has the God-given right and duty to learn and every staff member the obligation to assist each student in the process. Parents have the duty to help ensure, by the prompt arrival of children at school, that the educational process shall be unhindered by the distraction and interruption caused by tardiness. It is of utmost importance that each parent supports the school staff in this effort to provide quality education to our children.

Archdiocesan policy states that a student is tardy if he / she arrives after the time fixed by the school for the beginning of the school day.

Students will report to the front office, once the student has been marked tardy in the front office, **and a Tardy/Admit Pass has been issued, only then may he/she proceed to class. If a student does not report to the front office when they are late, they will be marked absent for that school day.**

With rare emergencies, a tardy may be excused. However, whether a tardy is excused or not excused, the student's late arrival must be documented, as the child was not in the custody of the school. This does affect the attendance record

Take Your Child to Work Day is not sponsored by the school; therefore, if you choose to have your child participate, your child will be marked "unexcused absent" and is responsible for making up all missed work, unless a note on company letterhead, from someone other than the parent, is provided on the day the child returns to school. Once a note is provided, the absence will count as a Field Trip which is excused.

Communication between Home and School

Communication between home and school will be via the internet. A yearly special events calendar, a monthly calendar that will be updated regularly, the parent-student handbook and the monthly newsletter will be posted on the school's Plus Portal page. For the parents' convenience, there will also be a listing of the students' weekly homework assignments. Communication of academic progress will be facilitated through Plus Portal.

Doctors' Appointments

When students must be late or dismissed early for appointments at the doctor or dentist, they can be excused as a medical absence and are not marked tardy or absent for that part of the day. However, in order to do this, a slip must be obtained from the doctor's office, stating the time of the appointment and the child must return to school unless the appointment is at the end of the school day. Only medical slips signed by the doctor and accounting for the time spent away from school can be used for this type of absence. The medical slip must be submitted to the school office at the time the child returns to school.

Early Dismissals

Dismissal for medical and dental appointments or for other serious reasons is discouraged because of lost instructional time. However, when they become necessary they may be granted when the request is made. These requests are to be submitted in advance to the teacher or school secretary. Parents present themselves at the school office to pick up the student and school personnel will call the child over the P.A. or go to the

classroom. Parents are not allowed to go to the classroom for pick up. It is preferable, however, that medical appointments be made outside of school hours. Children who need to leave early must be picked up no later than 2:15 pm.

Once a student is dismissed early and does not return to school, he/she may not participate in any extracurricular or school related activity after school such as, a school game, practice, nor detention, etc.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of hurricane warnings or other emergencies, parents should follow radio or television public announcements for Dade County Public Schools. The school will notify the homeroom mothers and they will notify all the parents of the homeroom. If emergencies or tropical storms arise during school hours, parent / guardians are urged to pick their children immediately at school. **All parents will be held in a designated place and the students will be brought to you. No parent is to go directly to the classrooms to pick their child.** No students should remain on school grounds when these emergencies arise. Please make sure all the information (address, phone numbers, etc.) is kept current in the school office.

Field Trips

Participation in a field trip is a privilege. Students serve as representatives of the school, therefore, they may be excluded from participation in any trip for reasons relating to behavior / conduct.

Outside field trips of educational and / or cultural value that are directly related to the curriculum may be taken by each grade during the academic year. Field trip permission forms will be sent home prior to the field trip giving the date and times, the place to be visited, and the mode of transportation. Parents are to sign and return the form, if they give permission. No student may go on a field trip without the signed consent of a parent or guardian. Verbal consent over the phone will not be accepted. If parents take their child / children home early after a field trip, they must sign them out in their classroom. **Parents participating in school activities; such as, fieldtrips, classroom parties, must have fingerprints on file at the school and must have attended VIRTUS training in order to be cleared by the Archdiocese of Miami. You must have a school issued ID card.**

During a field trip, students must remain under the supervision and policies of the teacher. Parent chaperones will be chosen according to the teacher's needs and style of the field trip. Parents who accompany field trips are expected to support the school philosophy and rules or directions of the teacher; parents must follow the same directions given to the students. Parents may not purchase nor consume alcoholic beverages while supervising students on a field trip. Parents' example during these occasions is extremely important as they speak a message of respect and obedience. Parents may not bring other siblings to a school field trip.

While on a field trip, chaperones are asked not to use cellular phones to inform other parents of incidents during the field trip. Failure to comply will deny the privilege of future attendance at these activities.

We expect our parents / volunteers to dress appropriately in a manner befitting a professional atmosphere. This should be followed when coming to school, chaperoning a class on special days, attending church functions and in guiding sons and daughters in what is appropriate.

Lost and Found

St. Thomas the Apostle School has a lost and found cabinet in the school cafeteria. Students and parents are encouraged to look there for misplaced or lost sweaters, uniforms, shoes, etc. Numerous items are often left unclaimed. Articles not claimed at the end of each quarter will be given away or sold.

Lunch

Lunch is pre-purchased; all students are to eat from the daily lunch provided. Peanut and tree nuts are not allowed at STA, therefore food items may not be brought to school. **Commercial foods may not be brought to school.**

Conduct in the cafeteria reflects a student's home training. Students should eat in an atmosphere that is pleasant and conducive to good habits.

All students eat in assigned areas. It is expected each child will practice proper eating manners and eat balanced lunches. The students are required to clean their own eating area, as they would be expected to do at home.

Office Hours

The school office is open from 7:30am to 2:30pm each school day. We encourage parent / teacher communication. However, since teachers' schedules and care of the students are involved, please call in advance to schedule a desired appointment or phone call. For the safety of students and faculty, as well as for the good management of our large student body, we ask that all parents and guests come directly to the school office before proceeding into the school for business.

The school phone number is 305-661-8591 and the school fax is 305-661-2181.

Parties

Classroom parties before the Christmas holiday and at the end of the school year are arranged by the administration with teachers and homeroom parents. These occasions are kept simple. Any additional celebration **must** be approved by the administration. Always check with the administration before planning or making any purchases. Only students currently enrolled in the school may attend the class party.

Parents of PK and Kindergarten students who wish to bring a treat for their child's birthday may bring only cupcakes, donuts or cookies. We discourage parents from bringing gifts for the class, as every family cannot do this. If a parent wishes to celebrate their child's birthday in 1st-5th grade, they may bring cupcakes or cookies to the office in the morning after coordinating with the homeroom teacher. If you wish to bring cupcakes for your child in 6-8th grade, it may only be on Fridays, please coordinate with homeroom teacher. These celebrations must take place only during recess time. Birthday balloons and birthday gifts are not allowed in school.

Invitations to personal parties cannot be distributed anytime at school. Invitations must be mailed from home because they can become an exclusion issue with students and cause hurt feelings and distraction in class. (There are also legal implications to the distribution of invitations to private events on school grounds).

Peanut Allergy Policy

In order to ensure the safety of students with peanut allergies, please notify homeroom teacher 72 hours in advance when cupcakes, donuts, or cookies to celebrate your child's birthday will be brought to school. This will give the teacher sufficient time to notify parents of students with peanut allergy or any other allergy to provide a snack for their child on that day. Under no circumstance can parents nor teachers distribute party

bags and/or candy. All allergies must be listed in Emergency Cards that are part of the registration forms. If an EpiPen is necessary, it must be provided to the School Office. A meeting with all teachers that have students with allergies will be conducted at the beginning of the school year.

Student Records

Each student has a cumulative record folder in the office files. These are available to teachers, health personnel and the school secretary. The folders may be viewed by the student's parents upon request. It is extremely important for parents to notify the school of any changes in student information, such as change of address or phone and / or medical or guardianship need (such as custodial parent).

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School, in accordance with Florida Statute 61.13(3), will make school records and in person conferences available to both parents unless a court order specifically revokes this right, in which case, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the court order to the school.

Student Supervision

There is no supervision on the school grounds before 7:15am or after dismissal at 3:15pm (after 1:15pm on early dismissal days). Students not picked up promptly after school will be placed in the After School Care Program where a fee is charged.

Telephone Use

Emergencies are reported to the classroom teacher or Administration. **Students are not permitted to telephone home for homework, forgotten articles or personal schedule arrangements.** Likewise, emergency messages for students are left with the school secretary who will see that they are delivered. **Under no circumstances are cellular phones permitted for student use during the hours of 7:15am-3:15pm. If a child is found with a cellphone on school property from 7:15am – 3:15pm the cell phone will be confiscated. The cell phone will not be returned until two weeks from the date that the phone was confiscated. The School Office is open until 3:15pm and students may use the School Office Phone in case of an emergency. Aftercare also has a telephone for student use.**

Parents / Guests are not to go directly to the classrooms without having an appointment with the classroom teacher and obtaining a visitor's pass from the main office

Truancy

Truancy is being absent without prior knowledge or approval of parents or the leaving of the school grounds without school approval. This behavior constitutes a serious disciplinary matter. By law, three days of truancy is reportable to state authorities.

Use of School Facilities

The use of the Church, Guadalupe Center and school buildings are for the exclusive use of school and church functions. Included functions are: Religious Education classes, RCIA, Ascending Life meetings and luncheons, Marriage Encounters, school plays and the Food Festival, Prayer and Life Workshops, Bible Study, Novenas and Emmaus retreats. Any new groups and any groups that are not Parish based must contact the Pastor for approval. A contact person from the group is responsible for acquiring the keys to open the building and having it locked up before leaving. It is also the user's responsibility to turn off all the lights and to keep the facility clean.

Vacations

There are regularly scheduled vacations and holidays in the school calendar, which are based on mandated days by the State of Florida and the Archdiocese of Miami. Please check these ahead of time and plan accordingly. Permission may not be given by any teacher or the Administration for students to be absent for other vacations or holidays not in the school calendar. These decisions are the responsibility of the parents. Prolonged unauthorized absence can and does affect students' academic standing. The school cannot be responsible for the results of these absences. The student will **not** be allowed to make up any missed class work assignments or homework. Students who were ill are given another due date for class work and homework assignments. It is the child's responsibility to ask for their missing assignments as soon as he / she returns to school. The time given to complete missing assessments due to an absence is one day times the number of days absent.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Each student will have on file a Health Card. This card must list any particular health concerns or medication of which the school personnel should be aware. Without notification, each student is expected to participate in all activities and curricula.

Abuse

As caretakers of minor children and in compliance with government regulations, the school will communicate to the proper authorities any suspected cases of child abuse, molestation or neglect – whether physical or emotional. By law, the responsibility of investigating such suspected neglect or abuse does not belong to the school but to the investigating authorities.

Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Abuse

Any time a staff member has a reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of abuse; a report will be filed with the Department of Children and Families as mandated by Florida Law. Neither the school nor any staff member is under the obligation to prove or investigate the suspected abuse. The parents or guardians will be contacted directly by the Department of Children and Families, not by the school. In certain cases, law enforcement officials may also be contacted.

Communicable Diseases

A student who has been absent from school because of a reportable communicable disease must have a permit issued by the Public Health Department or a physician before he / she is re-admitted to school. The principal may re-admit a pupil absent because of non-reportable communicable diseases – chicken pox, German measles and influenza.

After serious injury, the school is to receive written clearance from both the parents and doctor before the student can engage in physical activity.

Counseling Services

All young people need to be guided and supported as they mature and develop into adults. For this reason, the counseling department at St. Thomas the Apostle School provides a number of services to the students. These include, but are not limited to:

- individual counseling

- group counseling
- classroom counseling
- grief counseling
- observations of student behavior in the classroom and recommendations based on these observations
- facilitation of parent-teacher conferences
- support group for children of divorced parents

Counseling in the school setting is an interactive process in which the counselor facilitates the development of the students and helps them to understand and adapt to change. The goal of counseling is not to change the ways things are but to help the students to accept themselves, deal effectively with their life situations and to grow by learning to take responsibility and making healthy decisions. This process is carried out in a non-judgmental fashion in which the uniqueness and strength of each individual student are recognized.

Students may refer themselves for counseling, or may be referred by the administration, teachers, staff and parents. The counselor will meet with students during school hours. If the need for ongoing counseling is determined, parental consent will be required. Because trust and confidentiality are crucial elements of the counseling relationship, the students' confidentiality will be respected at all times unless and individual is in danger of getting hurt or in danger of hurting him/herself. PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE ADMINISTRATION SPECIFYING THAT THEY DO NOT WANT THEIR CHILD TO MEET WITH THE COUNSELOR AT ANY TIME. Parents may contact the counselor by calling the school.

Head Lice (Pediculosis)

Student will be checked periodically for lice. If a student becomes infested with lice, report it to the school office so that it can be prevented from spreading. The student should be examined and treated. The school may at this time inspect the student's hair, as well as, that of other students who may have had contact with the student in order to prevent any further spread of lice. All nits must be removed from the hair before returning to school.

Illnesses

The importance of regular attendance cannot be over-emphasized, but students should not be sent to school when they are ill. Students will be sent home if they have a temperature of 99 or above. In order for a child to return to school, he / she must be free from fever reduction medication for 48 hours and vomit free for 24 hours. If a student becomes ill during the school day and it appears that they would be best cared for at home, the parent will be contacted. School personnel must be notified of any student's chronic illness- asthma, diabetes, heart conditions, seizures, allergies, etc. This will heighten awareness in case of an emergency. It is important that the school office be notified in instances of communicable diseases and/or lice infestations for the health and safety of all students.

Documentation after Hospitalization

When a student is hospitalized for any reason, the school will require a letter from the physician upon the student's return, stating that the student is able to return to school and participate in all school activities. The letter must specify any restrictions, limitations, and/or continuing treatment during school hours.

Injuries

Injuries sustained during the school day or while participating in an after school activity sponsored by the school is to be reported the same day to the teacher, health personnel or after school supervisor. Then, proper assistance will be given and the parent notified. Student insurance covers

these injuries if reported immediately. The accident insurance forms for injuries sustained at school are given upon request. Parents are responsible to follow up on any claims made. If under any circumstance the paramedics need to be called, the child must be taken **immediately** for a follow-up consultation with a physician. A consent or release form must be turned into the Main Office upon returning to school.

Immunizations

The Archdiocese requires, that prior to enrollment or attendance in grades Kindergarten and above, each student presents or has on file with the school a certificate of immunization for the prevention of those communicable diseases for which immunization is required by the Department of Health. A completed Florida Certificate of Immunization (Form DH 680) is required to document the administration of prescribed immunization doses. An exemption from immunization requirements is permissible only with a physician's certification as to the need for either a temporary or permanent medical exemption. An exemption from immunization requirements is not permissible for religious, philosophical, personal, or other reasons.

All children must have the following: five doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis; four doses of polio; two doses of measles vaccine; one dose of mumps vaccine; one dose of rubella vaccine. In addition, students entering kindergarten must have completed the hepatitis B series. Students entering 7th grade must have completed the hepatitis B series, have a second measles vaccination and a tetanus-diphtheria booster.

Each family is to have an emergency card filled out (and updated yearly) in the school office. In the event of sickness or injury, the parents or another person indicated on the emergency card will be called. It is extremely important to name someone who can pick up and care for a sick or injured child. Failure to notify the school of readily available adults who have authority to care for the children can be considered neglect.

MEDICATION GUIDELINES

Except as authorized by the school, students are not permitted to carry or distribute any prescription or non-prescription drugs or treatments, including aspirin, on the school grounds or at any school function. The administering of medicine to a student outside the doctor's office or a health institution is a parental responsibility and should only be delegated to school personnel when necessary and authorized by the school. Parents should ask their physicians if it is possible to prescribe medication so it can be administered at home. Only when necessary will the school allow the administration of medication on campus, and only under the following guidelines:

1. An authorization form must be completed and submitted by a parent or legal guardian of the student. The name of the medication and dosage should be indicated on the form.
2. Medications to be dispensed at school should be labeled with the child's name and the exact dosage. The name and telephone number of the physician should also be on the label. If a student must take any medication during the school day, the medication must be kept with the Nurse or School Office and the student must go there to take it.
3. While the school may monitor a student taking the medication, the school will not remind students to come and take their medication.

Exceptions to this policy may be made for the use, supply and administration of an epinephrine auto-injection (Epipen), or as otherwise authorized in writing by the school. In particular circumstances, the school may agree to administer medication or otherwise provide health care interventions that go beyond a minor adjustment for a particular student. In those cases, parents hereby release the school, the Diocese, and their corporate members, officers, employees, affiliates, and agents from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to the provision of those health care interventions that are beyond minor adjustments.

Physical Exams

All new students, all students entering Kindergarten and 7th grade, and students with a temporary exemption must provide immunization forms before being admitted to class on the first day of school. This is a State Law – it is mandatory. In order to participate in physical education and to tryout for after school sports, the physical evaluation and athletic consent form must be completed with doctor signature and checked off by our Student Services Department.

HARRASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

The school is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the school will not tolerate harassment or discrimination on the basis of a person's protected status, such as gender, color, race, ancestry, national origin, age, physical disability, mental condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status. All employees, faculty members and students are protected under this policy. In addition, this policy applies to all conduct occurring on school grounds, at assignments outside the school, or at school-sponsored events. All students/parents are responsible for helping to assure that any harassment or discrimination is reported. If a student witnesses or learns of any conduct that violates this policy, the student and/or parent must immediately report the incident to his/her principal. If, however, the principal is the individual who is believed to have engaged in the inappropriate conduct, the student/parent should notify the Pastor and the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese of Miami. If an investigation reveals that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the school will take corrective action based on the circumstances.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Corrected Papers Folder

Each child receives a Corrected Papers Folder at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of this folder is to promote responsibility among the students, to encourage communication between students, teachers and parents, to keep parents informed on a regular basis of student progress through the review of graded papers and to increase student academic achievement.

Corrected Paper Folders go home every Thursday. If there is no school on any given Thursday, the folders will go home the following day. Parents should review these with their child, giving praise as well as suggestions for improvement. Folders are to be signed by the parents/guardians and returned to school the following day. This communication is important in encouraging positive growth and learning for the child. Parents should expect this folder from each child.

Conferences

Parents who would like a conference with the teacher, Administrators, or Principal should call the school office or write an email to the teacher. Teachers' phone numbers will not be given out for this purpose. All requested conferences should be scheduled within one week of the date requested.

All of the teachers are university trained professionals certified to teach by the state of Florida, and are best qualified to judge the academic progress of the student. Trust in their judgments and support their decisions. If there are any concerns or questions, please make an appointment with the teacher at a time of mutual convenience to discuss the problem. The teacher is best able to give the proper answers. Students may not understand the reason for certain academic decisions, so please hold off judgment until the teacher has explained.

Teachers may sometimes need to contact parents in the evening due to parent unavailability in the daytime. However, teachers are not to be contacted at home. New technology makes phone numbers easy to obtain, but these should be respected. In addition, teachers may not see parents "unannounced" as they are preparing for or supervising students in the morning, during lunch and after school. With a previously arranged appointment, parents can be assured of successful communication.

Parents are also asked to refrain from using social occasions to discuss parental concerns. This discourages teachers from taking part in these school / parish / home activities.

Educational Evaluations

St. Thomas the Apostle reserves the right to require a complete psycho-educational evaluation of a student in order to determine if that student's specific learning needs can be met by the school. When requested, the evaluation must be completed in a timely manner, within two month's time.

The school reserves the right to administer in-house educational evaluations to students to better determine academic performance and potential. The school utilizes the results of the evaluations to better serve the needs of the individual students.

Curriculum

Beginning in Kindergarten and continuing on through 8th grade, the curriculum in the Archdiocese of Miami includes instruction in the following areas:

Religion	Family Life / AIDS Awareness
Mathematics	Social Studies
Science	Spanish
Art	Music
Computers	Physical Education
Language Arts	
*Reading	
*English Grammar	
*Handwriting	

*Spelling

*These components of Language Arts are considered major subject areas.

Daily Schedule

Regular School Days PK2 – 8th grade

7:30 am 3rd – 8th Bell Rings / School Day Begins
7:45 am PK2-2nd Bell Rings / Morning Announcements
School Day Begins

Lunch

GRADE	LUNCH TIME
PK 2	10:45 – 11:30 AM
PK 3	10:30 – 11:15 AM
PK 4	11:00 – 12:00 PM
KINDER	10:00 – 10:30 AM
1 st	10: 25 – 10:55 AM
2 nd	10:30 – 11:00 AM
3 rd	10:50 – 11:20 AM
4 th	10:50 – 11:20 AM
5 th	11:20 – 11:50 AM
6 th	11:20 – 11:50 AM
7 th	12:00 – 12:30 PM
8 th	12:00 - 12:30 PM

2:30pm 1st Dismissal PK2- 3rd (1st floor)
2:50pm 2nd Dismissal 4th – 8th Grade (2nd floor)
Early Dismissal Days PK2 – 8th Grade

7:30am/7:45am School Day Begins
12:30pm 1st floor Dismissal
12:50pm 2nd floor Dismissal

Mid Term and Final Exams for 6th -8th Grades

A Mid Terms exam will be given after the second quarter, and a Final exam will be given after the fourth quarter. The exams will consist of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Religion project. Mid Term and Final exams help students to synthesize the material covered throughout the quarters and give teachers another opportunity to assess student's progress. Examination grades count twice (2) and are factored into the assessment process at the end of each grading period.

Exams in Mathematics will consist of no more than fifty (50) questions. The exam is to consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, true or false and short answer questions. A detailed study guide will be provided a week before the exam.

In Language the exams will consist of an Essay (Writing Sample), as well as informational text that the students must read and answer questions. Mid Term and Final exams will not be sent home; teachers will review the exam in class with the students after they have been graded. If parents wish to review an exam, a parent/teacher conference will be set up.

Mid Term and Final exams cannot be re-scheduled. They must be taken on the assigned day, unless other arrangements have been prearranged and approved by the administration. [In cases where 8th grade students have maintained an A average, the teacher may exempt the student from taking a Mid Term for the A's in quarters one and two or Final exam for quarters three and four.](#)

Any student that does not take the tests may be given a zero. Medical excuses will be accepted with proper documentation from the student's physician.

All tests and quizzes will be time allotted. Students must complete the tests within the specific time block.

Elementary Grading Scale

Pre-Kindergarten through Second Grade

Students will not receive a percentage grade. The student will be evaluated on a Performance Scale with 4 as the exceeding expectations level and 1 as emerging skills level. The scale is:

- 4 Exceeding grade level standards
- 3 Proficient in meeting grade level standards
- 2 Development in meeting grade level standards
- 1 Emerging in the development of grade level standards

The goal is for every student to reach a level 3 to be a proficient learner in grade level standards by the end of the school year.

The standards (under each subject) and Active Learner will be measured by:

- + Area of strength
- S Satisfactory performance
- Area of weakness
- NA Not assessed this quarter

Grades Three through Eight

Grades Three through Eight will receive a percentage grade. The grading scale is:

- A 100-90
- B 89-80
- C 79-70
- D 69-60
- F 59

Students will receive a percentage grade in all subjects, both core subjects (Religion, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) and enrichment subjects (Art, Music, Physical Education, and World Language).

The standards (under each subject) and Active Learner will be measured by:

- + Area of strength
- S Satisfactory performance
- Area of weakness
- NA Not assessed this quarter

Category weighting for third through eighth grade are as follows:

- 20% Class work & Homework
- 40% Tests and Quizzes
- 40% Project based

Extra credit and bonus questions are not permitted. A quarter grade cannot be higher than 100%.

Graduation

Graduation from St. Thomas the Apostle School indicates that a student has successfully completed the course of studies offered here. It is not an “automatic” ceremony. Therefore, we encourage our students to be their best right up to the final days. Graduation activities are privileges and are determined by the administration. Participation in these various activities are earned by the students depending on behavior, cooperation and

attitude. Any or all of them can be revoked for disciplinary or academic reasons. These activities consist of a class luncheon, field day, the Graduation Mass and reception and the distribution of diplomas and awards. The following policies apply to our 8th grade students:

1. A student receiving one or two F's as a final average in any major subject area will be ineligible to participate in graduation. The subject(s) must be remediated in summer school before the diploma is given.
2. A student receiving more than two F's as a final average in any major subject area may be retained. If retained, the student will have to repeat the grade in another school setting.
3. According to Archdiocesan Policy, St. Thomas the Apostle School must contact the high schools and notify them of any student receiving an F as a final average in any class. The high school will make the final decision whether to accept or not accept the students.

Homework

Homework is to be used so that the teacher can create instruction that will meet every child's level. The purpose of homework will be used as one form of formative assessment:

- To determine the student's prior knowledge
- To reinforce skills taught

Students in 1st through 3rd grade receive a weekly homework sheet, which reflects the work the students are expected to accomplish at home each day. Students in 4th through 8th grade use an agenda book, provided by the school, in which all assignments, projects and upcoming tests are written. It is the child's responsibility to write this information.

Amount of Homework

Pre-Kindergarten/ Kindergarten	5 – 20 Minutes
1st	10-30 minutes
2nd	20-40 minutes
3rd	30-50 minutes
4th	40-60 minutes
5th	50-70 minutes
6th	60-80 minutes
7th	70-90 minutes
8th	80-100 minutes

Homework is due on the day set by the teacher. Ordinarily this is the next day as it is practice work to prepare for class. No makeup work is permitted.

Students who were ill or had a real and unforeseen emergency are given another due date for class work and homework assignments. It is the child's responsibility to ask for their missing assignments as soon as he / she returns to school. The time given to complete missing assignments due to an absence is one day times the number of days absent.

Students are not to come back to school after dismissal for forgotten items. Late homework of forgotten materials WILL NOT be accepted by the school office.

Handwriting/Headings

Papers must have proper heading and must be legible and properly written. Messy, illegible papers will not be accepted. All writing after the first semester of third grade must be cursive in all subject areas. Print will not be accepted after third grade.

Academic Assembly

Any student in 6th -8th grade is eligible to receive recognition. Students will be awarded at the end of the year. The following criteria must be met in order to qualify:

Principal's List:

- Students receiving 95-100% in all subject areas (92-100% in Seton, Spanish I and II, Geometry, HS World History, and ADOM HS Algebra Honors)

Academic Honors:

- Students receiving 90-94% in all subject areas (87-94% in Seton, Spanish I and II, Geometry, HS World History, and ADOM HS Algebra Honors)

Promotion / Retention

Students are usually promoted at the end of each school year when sufficient success in mastery of skills is achieved. When a child is in danger of not being promoted due to lack of mastery, a letter is sent to the parents after the second and third quarters to notify them of this possibility. Parents should confer with the teacher regularly. Any student receiving an F in more than two major subjects is in serious danger of being retained or receiving a recommendation for a different school placement. Students receiving an F in two or less subject areas will be required to attend summer school before he / she can be officially promoted.

Every possible effort will be made to address this problem with parents. Consistent and ongoing communication with parents is our policy here at St. Thomas the Apostle as well as the expectation that parents will follow the recommendations made for the child's assistance and progress.

A student required to attend summer school must provide proper verification of attendance before the school year begins in order to be officially promoted to the next grade level.

Private Tutoring, Coaching, or Lessons

Except as specifically noted in this Handbook, the school does not sponsor, oversee, or otherwise provide private tutoring services. Parents who engage school staff members for the provision of tutoring services do so at their own risk and expense and are hereby advised that such services are outside the scope of the staff member's employment with the school. Parents, by executing the acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook

HEREBY RELEASE the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their corporate members, officers, employees, and agents from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to the provision of private tutoring services, regardless of where they may occur.

Report Cards

Report Cards are posted on Plus Portal accounts at the completion of each quarter; a Final Report Card is sent home on the last day of school.

Standardized Testing

Besides the regular testing in the curriculum, standardized testing is administered to each child in 1st through 8th grade at certain times of the year.

8th Grade High School Placement Test (administered at the high schools)

5th & 8th ACRE (Religion)

1 – 8th Grade Terra Nova

Summer School

St. Thomas the Apostle School offers a summer school program for the school students as well as the students in the community. It is open for all students entering PK3 through 9th grade. The program runs from 8am – 2pm. The dates change each year. **Summer school is mandatory for students that will be attending St. Thomas the Apostle for the first time. Students (including siblings) entering Kindergarten through eighth grade that have been accepted from a different setting are required to attend.**

Textbooks

All textbooks are to be properly cared for. Hard cover textbooks cannot be written on or highlighted. Students are responsible for keeping textbooks covered at all times. Textbooks are updated and replaced as the need arises. Books and workbooks lost or returned in poor condition must be replaced at parents' expense. Please notify the homeroom teacher if this situation occurs.

Textbooks are the property of St. Thomas the Apostle; the students are responsible for covering all books with clear contact paper. Textbooks must be returned to the subject area teacher on the day that the final exam for that subject is given. Failure to return books will result in payment of book or ineligibility to take final exam.

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should complete the Request for Release of Student Records and submit it to the School principal [or appropriate school official] identifying the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend a record should write the School principal [or appropriate school official], clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person or company with whom the School has contracted as its agent to provide a service instead of using its own employees or officials (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5920

PARENTAL COOPERATION

The school views the education of a student as a partnership between the parents and the school. Parents and students are expected to comply with the school rules and policies, and to accept and support the authority of school officials, [whether it be at school events, on or off school](#)

[campus, or on social media or other public forum](#). Just as a parent can withdraw a child from the school if desired, the school has the right to dis-enroll a student if it determines at its discretion that the parent or student partnership with the school is irretrievably broken.

PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The school recognizes the following sports, activities and clubs:

School Clubs:

Acolytes; Mass Greeters; Junior Lectors-fulfills the need to serve the church and faith community in the celebration of the sacraments

Student Council-instills leadership and citizenship qualities in students and also provides service to the school community

National Junior Honor Society (NJHS)-based on scholarship, character, service, leadership and citizenship

Athletic Program-develops social awareness and Christian sportsmanship through competition, tolerance and recognition of the worth of the individual

Choirs-fosters service to the church, school, and community by sharing their musical talents

Art Club-expresses individual creativity and uniqueness

Liturgical Dance-prayer through music and dance

Friends of Jesus and Mary-develops a sense of sharing, giving, and dedication amongst the children.

WSTA-promotes public speaking and enhances student interest in school and current events

Cheerleading-fosters a sense of discipline, commitment, teamwork, and school spirit

Athletic Program

Any boy or girl who has the permission of his / her parents and is progressing successfully in academic studies is eligible to try out for any sport, which is sponsored by the school. Permission slips are sent home before the start of any season. The school pays for all fees for participation in league games and tournaments. Care is taken in selecting a coach or assistant so that the perspective given to the sports program is in keeping the values of a Catholic School.

If for academic and / or behavioral reasons a teacher feels a student should not participate in a team, the teacher will voice these concerns to the administration. The administration will look at each student on an individual basis and schedule a conference with the parents to discuss the teacher's concern.

Parents acknowledge that participation in these sports, activities, or clubs may be inherently dangerous and, the school cannot ensure the safety of all students involved in its activities and programs.

Prior to participation in any sport, each student must complete the Parent Consent and Release of Liability form and a physician's certificate to the effect that the student is physically fit for participation in the sport. Participation includes pre-season conditioning, open gym, tryouts and practice. **Parents, by executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, HEREBY RELEASE the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and**

their corporate members, officers, employees, and agents, from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to participation in any sports, leagues, clubs, activities, or volunteer service-hour programs.

The school is not responsible for student participation in any sports, leagues or clubs not identified above. Parents hereby acknowledge that students who participate in any such program or activity do so at their own risk. Parents further acknowledge that the school does not control or sanction any such program or activity and that it shall not be held liable for any injuries or damages sustained by students or others arising from participation in such program or activities.

PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

The Catholic school promotes friendship, charity, kindness, love and respect for self and others. However, inappropriate displays of affection, such as kissing or embracing which connote more than simple friendship, are not permitted in school, at school dances, or at any school event. Those who violate these rules may be subject to disciplinary measures, including detention, suspension or expulsion. The administration reserves the right to determine what is, or is not, appropriate behavior in a Catholic school.

RELIGIOUS PROGRAM

Confessions

It is the responsibility of the students and parents to receive the Sacrament of Penance regularly. Here at St. Thomas the Apostle Church the opportunity is available every Saturday. In addition, the students are periodically offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the school day.

Mass Attendance Policy

Because parents are the primary educators of their children in all areas, especially that of our Faith, St. Thomas the Apostle School looks at the weekly attendance at Sunday Mass as a requirement for admission. Since this obligation is part of the third commandment and also a precept of the church, participation in Sunday Mass is considered basic for any practicing Catholic. St. Thomas the Apostle Church offers six Mass choices each weekend. All staff members assist in the effort to promote participation in the Faith among our students and their families.

Weekly Masses

The students celebrate Mass every week at 9:00am. Mass day is normally Wednesdays, but because of the school calendar or special feast days, another day may be chosen. Each class takes turns participating in the school liturgies. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend. Other prayer services and devotions are also celebrated, such as Eucharistic Adoration, the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. These liturgies are not in replacement for participation at Sunday Mass with the parish community, but are added opportunities for our children to be trained and grow in their relationship with God and the Church.

Student Activities

National Junior Honor Society

The National Junior Honor Society chapter of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is a duly chartered and affiliated chapter of this prestigious national organization. Membership is open to those students who meet the required standards in four areas of evaluation: scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Criteria for selection is established by the national office of NJHS and have been revised to meet our local chapter needs. Students are selected to be members by a four-member Faculty Council, appointed by the principal, which bestows this honor upon qualified students on behalf of the faculty of our school each year.

Students in the 8th grade are eligible for membership. For the scholarship criterion, a student must have:

* a 95% or above grade point average.

* students are expected to have no more than 2 behavior incidents per year.

Students who meet the criterion are invited to complete a Student Activity Information Form that provides the Faculty Council with information regarding the candidate's leadership and service. A history of leadership experiences and participation in school and community service is required to be considered for eligibility.

School Community Interaction

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School, as stated in our philosophy, is dedicated to the growth and development of the students to be responsible and participating members of the Catholic Church and of society. Through education, the students learn that love is the powerful animator of every Christian's concern for peace and justice. The organized programs at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School guide the students to use their individualized gifts not only for themselves but also for the good of all, so that all may realize their human potential and more readily enjoy life with God now and for all eternity.

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is an active participant in the Miami community. Participation in the Baptist Health Systems Foundation Fund raisers, Jackson Memorial Hospital Children's Cancer Center Toy Drive and Luncheon, Thanksgiving Food Drive for the needy, "Save a Rainforest" Collection and several other causes, allow for interaction with the community. School news and events are made available to the community through the weekly church bulletin, the Parish and Department of Schools Websites, the Neighbors' section of the Miami Herald, and miscellaneous Catholic publications.

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School also serves the Miami Dade County community through its involvement with St. Francis Xavier School, our sister school, the Respect Life Foundation and Camillus House.

We encourage any member of our community to contact us with any cause in which our school may be able to participate.

Student Service Hours Program

The primary goal of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is to teach the students the foundation of their Catholic faith. The school accomplishes this goal through a religious education program that begins in PreK-2 and extends its way beyond Confirmation in the middle school. Throughout the students' education, they are taught the different components of a Christian lifestyle.

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School is offering a program for all our students. The three S's will be:

1. Spirituality with Religious Education
2. Service to our Church and Community
3. Social Activity to help develop good Catholic Christian Citizens

Different activities will be planned throughout the year in order to assist the students in working to their full potential for their Church, school, and community

SCHOOL SPONSORED EVENTS

The school does not sponsor, oversee, or in any way control parties or social functions at private residences. School-sanctioned events are specifically identified in this Handbook or are identified as such in written notices generated and distributed by the school.

Parents, by executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, HEREBY RELEASE the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their corporate members, officers, employees, and agents, from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to attendance at parties or social functions at private residences or from attendance at functions not sponsored by the school.

Students engaged in conduct that is contrary to the mission and philosophy of the school may be subject to disciplinary action regardless of whether the conduct occurred at a school-sponsored function.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE POLICY

The principal and his/her designee has access to any lockers, handbags, electronic devices, cell phones, book bags, desks, cars or any other object that is brought onto the campus of the school or any school sponsored event, and may remove or confiscate any object which is illegal or contrary to school policy.

SECTION 504- Policy Statement

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School complies with the mandate of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in certain programs and activities. Pursuant to the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School will make those minor adjustments that can accommodate students with disabilities to the school's educational programs and activities.

The school's designated 504 Coordinator and contact information are as follows: Marcey Ayers, (305) 762-1019. Parents with questions regarding the school's disability accommodations or related items should contact the 504 Coordinator.

Parents may file a grievance as to any decisions related to a disability accommodation and request an internal hearing and review by sending a written notice addressed as follows:

Donald Edwards, Ed. D
Archdiocese of Miami
Associate Superintendent of Schools
9401 South Biscayne Boulevard
Miami Shores, FL 33138

The internal hearing and review will seek the prompt and equitable resolution of disability discrimination complaints

SEXTING

The electronic transmission or receipt from one minor to another of any photograph or video that depicts nudity may constitute illegal sexting. Students engaged in sexting will be subject to serious disciplinary consequences, which may include expulsion from school. In addition, the school administration may report instances of sexting to the Florida Department of Children and Families or local law enforcement for appropriate investigations to violations of law.

SMOKING/VAPING

It is a violation of Florida law for any minor to knowingly possess any tobacco product, nicotine product, or nicotine-dispensing device. In addition, the use of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and vaping carry known health risks that can be very serious. The use of any tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and/or vaping in any form is prohibited on school property and at any school events. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary consequences, which may include expulsion from school.

CONDUCT

Students and parents are expected to behave consistent with the mission, philosophy and spirit of the school and the moral teachings of the Catholic faith. Because the school cannot anticipate all conduct that violates this policy, it reserves the right to take any form of student disciplinary action, including expulsion, against and/or restrictions against any behavior that violates this policy, even if not specifically stated in this handbook.

TEXT MESSAGING/TELEPHONE CALLS

The school may use text messages and automated telephone calls to alert parents/guardians of important information related to the school's mission, operations, and activities. Parents/guardians acknowledge and consent to the receipt of these messages when providing their telephone numbers.

THREATS OF VIOLENCE

The disciplinary consequences for a student whose verbal or written comments, including email messages, that threaten serious bodily harm to another student or member of the faculty or staff or destruction of property, may include, but not be limited to:

- a. Immediate suspension from the school;
- b. Treatment or consultation by a psychologist or psychiatrist at the parents' expense and/or by the school counselor, both of whom may be asked to submit a written evaluation. If it is determined that the child was serious about the threat and has the capacity to carry it out, the child may be expelled from the school. If it is determined that the child did not seriously intend to do harm to others, the child may be allowed to return to the school, at the discretion of the school principal.
- c. If allowed to return to school, the child may be placed on probation with an indication that, should a similar threat occur, the child will be expelled from school;
- d. The school should inform the Department of Schools of these cases. The school may submit an informational report to the police.

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Parents hereby acknowledge and agree that the school does not provide or arrange for student transportation to or from school, except as specifically set forth in writing by the school. Student transportation to and from school each day is a parental responsibility. The school does not authorize or endorse any private transportation arrangements. In limited and documented circumstances, a parent may engage a commercial transportation company to transport a student from school; however, any such engagement requires the written authorization of the school and the execution of school documents allowing for such an arrangement.

TRAFFIC PROCEDURES

As the student body of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School continues to grow, we must implement specific procedures to insure the safety of each student and respect for the property and safety of our surrounding community neighbors. In addition, the example of cooperation and obedience to rules must be given to the children.

Morning Procedures

PK2, PK3 and PK4 – Students are to be walked by their parents to the class rooms

K – Students are to be dropped off in the Family Center. All cars are to enter through the 62nd street entrance (lane closest to the family center) and exit on 64th street.

1st – 8th Grade – Students are to be dropped off in Lane 1 or Lane 2.

All cars are to enter through 62nd street and exit on 64th street. We recommend that children in 1st – 3rd grade be dropped off in Lane 1 and children in 4th – 8th be dropped off in Lane 2. If you have children in both age groups, drop off in Lane 1.

Only parents with students in PK2-PK4 may park and walk the students to class.

For safety purposes, we ask that the children leave the car from the passenger side and that parents remain in their cars.

Afternoon Procedures

PK2- 3rd grade will be dismissed at 2:30 from their classrooms, unless they have older siblings.

4th – 8th grade dismissal will not begin until 2:50 pm.

All parents must remain in their cars throughout the dismissal time.

Walkers are to come in thru 62nd Street and approach a teacher with the device to input the family number. The children will be picked up in their respective areas.

Students who will be leaving with another parent must bring in a note to the teacher on the day that they will be leaving with that individual. Emails will be accepted only up to 12pm.

- Follow the directions of the adult monitors
- Enter the school campus only by 62nd Street
- Vehicles may not park, there will be no walk ups/
- Out of respects for those that are in line waiting, please do not cut in line
- Courtesy and patience sets a good example for the children
- Due to the fact that we are located in a residential neighborhood, we must ask that drivers not honk horns at any time during the pickup procedure
- Local speed limits will be strictly enforced for the safety of all
- For first floor dismissal, PK2-PK4 will use the circular foyer driveway, last names **A-F** 1st Lane covered area, and **G-Z** South exit 2nd Lane.
- For second floor dismissal, last names **A-F** 1st Lane covered area, **G-Z** South exit 2nd Lane.
- To ensure a safe and efficient dismissal, please turn off cell phones

Parents are responsible for explaining drop off and pick up procedures to any other adult designated to drive the children to or from school. The school cannot assume the responsibility for confusion in this matter, and disregard for established procedures will jeopardize the safety of your children.

If you have a change in your normal pick up or drop off procedure, you are responsible for letting your child know before he / she leaves for school in the morning and notify the school in writing.

If a student is going home with a friend or with someone not on the emergency contact card, a note must be presented to the homeroom teacher that morning. The note should include the name of the student, the grade and class, the name of the student / parent picking up and the date along with the parent signature. All students who walk home must be accompanied by an adult and picked up in the family center.

Any student that needs to be picked up early due to doctors' appointments **must be picked up by 2:15pm.** The school office will close from 2:15 – 3:15pm during dismissal time.

Each family will be issued two color coded pick up cards with their family number. Any additional cards can be purchased in the school office for \$5.00. Please note that your children may not be released to anyone who does not have an STA issued laminated card on their dashboard.

UNIFORMS

The wearing of a uniform is an integral part of Catholic school discipline. Students in uniform are less pressured at school by clothing trends and peer comparisons and it greatly aids in good order and concentration on schoolwork. All students are expected to be in complete uniform from the first day of school. The uniform provider is AA Uniform.

Hair Styles

Boys (PK2-8th grade) are to keep their hair cut neatly and evenly in a simple style. No fad-type styles such as mushrooms, tails, multi-layered styles, carving marks, shaved or close crew cut (no shorter than #2; scalp is not to be visible). Hair must not touch the shirt collar or the ears. Boys must be clean-shaven at all times.

Girls' (PK2-8th grade) hairstyles are likewise to be simple and neat. Unusual cuts, extreme or fad-type styles are not permitted. Coloring the hair is also not appropriate for this age and is not permitted. [Simple headbands without appendages are permitted.](#)

Jewelry

Girls (PK3-8th grade) may wear a single pair of "stud" earrings – gold, silver or pearl. Dangling or hoop earrings are not permitted for the sake of safety and simplicity. No rings or bracelets may be worn. Boys may not wear earrings. A small crucifix or holy medal may be worn on a silver or gold chain under the shirt. **No heavy chains, ropes, nor beads please.** One watch is permitted. No other jewelry is permitted with the school uniform.

Make-up

Students may not wear make-up. Clear lip balm for chapped lips is allowed. No lip-gloss. Nail polish is not permitted. Nails are to be kept short and clean.

Non-Uniform Dress Days

For some occasions, we allow the students to wear sports or casual types of clothing. On these days, PE shorts, t-shirts and sneakers are permitted. We expect that this clothing will follow the rules of modesty – not tight, not short. All clothing will be specified for the occasion. Cut-off style t-shirts are not acceptable. Pants/ Shorts must be the correct size and be worn at the waist.

Guidance in appropriate dress is the responsibility of the parents. It should not be up to school personnel to make corrections or need to discipline students because of infractions.

GIRLS (PreK2-KINDERGARTEN)

POLO DRESS:

PreK2: Hunter with plaid bottom with embroidery

PreK3: Gold with plaid bottom with embroidery

PreK4: Red with plaid bottom with embroidery

Kinder: Hunter with plaid bottom with embroidery

FLEECE: Navy with embroidery

TIGHTS: Navy tights worn under polo dress (*Winter*)

BOYS (PreK2-KINDERGARTEN)

KNIT:

PreK2: Hunter with embroidery

PreK3: Gold with embroidery

PreK4: Red with embroidery

Kinder: Hunter with embroidery

SHORT: Navy pull-on (52130) with AA logo

PANT: Navy pull-on (51060) with AA logo

FLEECE: Navy with embroidery

GIRLS (Grades 1-8)

BLOUSE:

Grades 1-3rd: White Round Collar with Navy piping with embroidery

Grades 4-5th: Lt. Blue short sleeve Fitted Blouse (5586) with embroidery

Grades 6-8th: White short or long sleeve Fitted Blouse (5586/5486) with embroidery

JUMPER: **Grades 1-3rd:** Split Front (1996) in plaid #55 with embroidery – *Must Be Knee Length*

SKORT: **Grades 4-8th:** Plaid Tab Skooter (3574) in plaid #55 – *Must Be Knee Length*

SLACKS: Navy adjustable waist slack (*Winter*)

VEST: **Grades 6th-8th:** Navy sweater vest with embroidery (*optional*)

BELT: Plaid belt

TIE: **Grades 4-8th:** Plaid Cross tie (*for Mass only*)

BOYS (Grades 1-8)

KNIT: **Grades 1-3rd:** White with Navy tipping on collar with embroidery

OXFORD: **Grades 4-5th:** Lt. Blue short sleeve with embroidery

Grades 6-8th: White short sleeve with embroidery

SHORT: **Grades 1-2nd:** Navy Bermuda (7099) with AA logo

PANT: Navy (7750/7021) with AA Logo

BELT: Black Leather belt

TIE: Striped (*for Mass only*)

ALL STUDENTS

KNIT: White long sleeve with embroidery (*Winter*)-*Must be worn with Navy pants*

JACKET: Girls: Navy Full Zip Dri-fit (*YST241*) with embroidery

Boys: Navy ¼ Zip Dri-fit with embroidery

SWEATPANTS: Navy Open Bottom

GIRLS SHOES: Grades PreK2-3rd: Black Mary Jane **Scuff free*

Grades 4th – 8th: Black Penny loafer **Scuff free*

BOYS SHOES: Grades PreK2-K: Black Velcro sneakers

Grades 1-8th: Black tie **Must wear black shoe laces* or Slip-on dress shoes **No Penny Loafers*

SOCKS: Navy STA logo sock

PE UNIFORM (Grades PreK3-8) WORN TO SCHOOL ON PE DAY

GYMSHIRT: Long Sleeve Lt. Blue Dri-fit with screen print

GYMSHORT: Grades PK3-K: Navy Jersey Short (*B035*) with screen print

Grades 1-8th: Navy Dri-Fit (*Badger*) with screen print

PE SHOES: Athletic Cross- Trainer or Running Sneaker **No neon colors, High tops, Lights or Converse styles*

TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET

Students should observe the following guidelines with regard to the internet:

1. Students will not use the computer resources for non-academic purposes. The use of the Internet must be in support of the Internet must be in support of education and research consistent with the educational objectives of the school. Students using network or computing resources must comply with the appropriate rules for that network or resource.
2. Students will access only appropriate sites. Parents must realize that their students may encounter material on a network/bulletin board, that they do not consider appropriate (vulgar jokes, statements of belief that some might consider immoral, etc.) The student should report any accidental "hits" of inappropriate sites.
3. Students will not send, display, or download offensive messages or pictures. The student is responsible for not pursuing material that could be considered inappropriate.
4. Students will not reveal their personal information, home address, or personal phone number or those of students, teachers, or other staff members.
5. Students will not use the computer systems to disturb, harass, insult, or threaten others.
6. Students will not violate copyright laws. Students must not make unauthorized copies of software or give, lend, or sell copies of software to others.

7. Students will not submit documents from the internet as their own personal work. The use of school computers and networking resources for commercial activities is not permitted.
8. Students will not use the sign-on and/or password of another person, or copy, change, read, or use files from another user without prior permission from that user.
9. Students will not intentionally waste limited resources such as paper, printer cartridges, and diskettes that are provided by the school.
10. Student use of the computer is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in the cancellation of these privileges. Vandalism or intentional modification of system settings will result in cancellation of privileges and/or school disciplinary action. The school reserves the right to seek financial restitution for any damage caused by a student or other user.

St. Thomas the Apostle has the right to amend this document at anytime as deemed needed; notification of any amendment will be included on Plus Portal.

Plus Portal

Plus Portal is an Internet-based program that allows teachers to post their students' homework assignments, test results, grades, grading scale, upcoming tests, event information, and special announcements. To access an account with the system, parents are given a login name and password that's only known to them. After learning the basics, they can access their child's account from any computer with Internet capability.

USE OF PHOTOS

The school reserves the right to use student or parent photos in any school or Archdiocesan publication including but not limited to print publications, videos, or websites including Facebook, Twitter and other social media websites. Any parent who does not want his or her child's picture or video to be used accordingly must notify the school's principal in writing prior to the beginning of the school year. **By executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, Parents HEREBY CONSENT, authorize and grant permission to the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their agents, employees or duly authorized representatives to photograph or videotape students and parents and CONSENT to their publication for any purpose deemed proper by the school, including but not limited to, use on the internet. Additionally, Parents, by executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, HEREBY RELEASE the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their corporate members, officers, employees, and agents, from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to the use of student or parent photos.**

WEAPONS POLICY

Weapons are not permitted anywhere on school grounds [or at any school activity](#). Any student who brings a weapon to any school activity, who is in possession of a weapon, or who threatens others with a weapon may be expelled from the school. Any item used to threaten or cause bodily harm may be considered a weapon.

COMPUTER NETWORK AND INTERNET ACCESS POLICY

Disclaimer

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Electronic Media (including, but not limited to, telephones, facsimiles, computers, networks, computer files stored in computers owned by Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School or on the network system, Internet use, and electronic mail communication) is restricted for school related use. It is not to be used for personal communications. Inappropriate, morally offensive and/or personal use of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Electronic Media is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. Furthermore, Electronic Media should not be considered a private method of communication as messages will be monitored without prior notice. Therefore, students should not have any expectation of privacy with regard to their use of any Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Electronic Media, and should refrain from using the Electronic Media for any messages they consider private or confidential.

Permitted Use of Internet and School Computer Network

The computer network is the property of **Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School** and is to be used for legitimate school purposes. Users are provided access to the computer network to assist them in the performance of their work. Additionally, certain students ("Users") may also be provided with access to the Internet through the computer network. All Users have a responsibility to use School's computer resources and the Internet in a lawful and ethical manner. Abuse of the computer network or the Internet, may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and possible expulsion.

COMPUTER NETWORK USE LIMITATIONS

Prohibited Activities. Without prior written permission, the School's computer network may not be used to distribute, view or store commercial or personal advertisements, solicitations, promotions, destructive code (e.g., viruses, trojan horse programs, etc.) or any other unauthorized materials. Occasional limited appropriate personal use of the computer is permitted if such use does not a) interfere with the User's or any other student's performance; b) have an undue effect on the computer or the School network's performance; c) or violate any other policies, provisions, guidelines or standards of this agreement or any other of the School. Further, at all times Users are responsible for the ethical and lawful use of the computer system. Personal use of the computer is a privilege that may be revoked at any time.

Illegal Copying. Users may not illegally copy material protected under copyright law or make that material available to others for copying. You are responsible for complying with copyright law and applicable licenses that may apply to software, files, graphics, documents, messages, and other material you wish to download or copy.

Duty Not to Waste or Damage Computer Resources

Accessing the Internet. To ensure security and avoid the spread of viruses, Users accessing the Internet through a computer attached to the School's network must do so through an approved Internet firewall or other security device. Bypassing School's computer network security by accessing the Internet directly by modem or other means is strictly prohibited unless the computer you are using is not connected to the School's network.

Frivolous Use. Computer resources are not unlimited. Network bandwidth and storage capacity have finite limits, and all Users connected to the network have a responsibility to conserve these resources. As such, the User must not deliberately perform acts that waste computer resources or unfairly monopolize resources to the exclusion of others. These acts include, but are not limited to, sending mass mailings or chain letters, spending excessive amounts of time on the Internet, playing games, engaging in online chat groups, uploading or downloading large files, accessing streaming audio and/or video files, or otherwise creating unnecessary loads on network traffic associated with non-school-related uses of the Internet.

Virus detection. Files obtained from sources outside the School, including disks brought from home, files downloaded from the Internet, newsgroups, bulletin boards, or other online services; and files attached to e-mail, may contain dangerous computer viruses that may damage the School's computer network. Users should never download files from the Internet, accept e-mail attachments from outsiders, or use disks from sources outside of the School, without first scanning the material with School-approved virus checking software. If you suspect that a virus has been introduced into the School's network, notify the School immediately.

No Expectation of Privacy

Students' use of computers and Internet access is to assist them in the performance of their work. Students should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the School's Electronic Media. The computer network is the property of the School and may be used only for School purposes.

Waiver of privacy rights. User expressly waives any right of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the School's computer equipment or Internet access. User consents to allow School personnel access to and review of all materials created, stored, sent or received by User through any School network or Internet connection.

Monitoring of computer and Internet usage. The School has the right to monitor and log any and all aspects of its Computer system including, but not limited to, monitoring Internet sites visited by Users, monitoring chat and newsgroups, monitoring file downloads, and all communications sent and received by Users.

Blocking sites with inappropriate content.

The School has the right to utilize software that makes it possible to identify and block access to Internet sites containing material deemed inappropriate in the School.

Social Networks such as MySpace, Facebook, CatholicMatch.com, etc...

If a student is found on any of these, it may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and possible expulsion. The principal will schedule a meeting to discuss disciplinary action.

Media Center

➤ Philosophy

The goal of the library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users, consumers, and producers of information and ideas and to provide intellectual and physical access to a wide variety of materials in all formats to all members of the school community. Resource-based teaching is the immediate goal. The library media specialist collaboratively plans with teachers in an effort to integrate information literacy skills into the curriculum and design instruction so as to meet the individual needs of all learners. The library media program provides an environment conducive to the development of higher order thinking skills (i.e. problem-solving, decision-making, critical and creative thinking), and

a framework from which enlightened and informed citizens are able to design their own learning. The long range goal is to prepare students to meet the information challenges of the 21st century.

➤ **Access**

Information is now our most important and pervasive resource. Intellectual access to the resource is dependent on information literacy skills. Information literate individuals know how to utilize resources in a variety of formats in order to locate, acquire, organize, and evaluate information effectively. Open, flexible use of the library media center is crucial to the goals of the program.

The St. Thomas the Apostle Library Media Center will provide a modified open access for the student, rather than a schedule which preempts facilities and staff for fixed periods of time. Open scheduling permits access by individuals and small groups at the time of need and interest and provides opportunities for teachers to send students to the library media center at any time during the school day.

Individual students, small groups, and total classes can be accommodated in the media center throughout the day. Total class groups must be scheduled in advance so that materials can be provided and instructional planning can be facilitated.

➤ **Instructional Services**

Information Skills: Information skills instruction is an important aspect of the library media program. These skills enable students to become independent and knowledgeable users of information and ideas. Competencies and objectives are included in lessons across the curriculum through collaborative planning between classroom teachers and the library media specialist.

Reserve Collection: Print and non-print materials may be placed on reserve in the library media center for specific student projects. Please plan with the library media specialist in advance so that these resources can be properly developed and made ready for the class in a timely fashion.

➤ **Collection Development** The library media center will contain a comprehensive collection of teaching /learning resources that will enable student and staff to use information and ideas effectively in order to achieve the school's goal. The library media collection, with over **12,000 books and non-print materials**, serves the following functions:

1. Support the religious mission of the Archdiocese of Miami and St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church.
2. Supports the instructional program and school objective for all areas of knowledge.
3. Meets the personal and recreational needs of students.
4. Supports the professional needs of teachers and administrators.
5. Introduces new instructional technologies into the learning environment.

➤ **Scope of the Collection:** The collection will contain a balanced, wide variety of print and non-print materials which reflect all points of view on current and historical issues and appropriate for different ability levels.

➤ **Selection Criteria:** The library media specialist will be responsible for coordinating the collection development program. In order for the library to reflect the needs of the school and community, administrators, classroom teachers, students, and parents need to be actively involved.

➤ All materials purchased for the collection will be evaluated by the following criteria:

Appropriateness	Arrangement/Pacing	Literary Merit	Value to the Collection	Technical quality	
Accuracy	Scope	Authority/Reputation	Aesthetic quality	Durability	Treatment

Circulation Procedures

Circulation policies have been established to provide maximum access and minimum restrictions:

1. Books from the main collection are circulated for two weeks. Items such as reference materials and periodicals are circulated on an overnight or two-day basis.
2. First and second grade students may check out one or two books per week. Third grade through eighth grade students may check out two or three books on a bi-weekly basis.
3. Primary students visit the library on a weekly basis to learn library procedures in which they will follow a sequence of literary activities (story time, reading, and games) to foster a love reading.
4. Teachers are encouraged to check out as many media materials as needed. Print and non-print materials circulate to faculty on a long-term basis. Due to thematic and seasonal units utilized and to maximize circulation, it is requested that these instructional tools be returned as soon as possible after use.
5. Teacher transaction lists will be placed in your mailbox on a regular basis and include all items checked out to you. Please review it for accuracy and contact the media center for any discrepancies.
6. Student overdue notices will also be sent to homerooms on a regular basis. Please encourage the students to return their overdue items. Many teachers assign a library monitor to collect library materials from their class to return to the media center. Also, students can drop off their library books before school and after school. Students will be restricted from checking out further materials if they are not returned on their due date.
7. Students are not charged fines for overdue materials. However, if a book is lost or damaged, a student will be responsible for the cost. The mission of the library is to encourage and build responsibility in students to want to check out materials and use their library. A partnership between the media specialist, teacher, and student can make a difference in developing a love for reading.

Parent-Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form 2019-2020

I, as Parent or Legal Guardian, acknowledge that I have read the entire contents of the Parent-Student Handbook and understand the consequences of any violations of the rules and policies of the school.

I agree to cooperate with the school in the interpretation and enforcement of the policies outlined in the Parent-Student Handbook. I also understand that the school has the ultimate authority over the administration of the school and the interpretation of the school's rules and policies. Moreover, I further understand that all of the school's policies whether written or verbal are only guidelines and are subject to change at the sole discretion of the school with or without notice.

I also hereby acknowledge that I have read and agree to the terms of the **RELEASES** outlined in the School Sponsored Events Policy, the Participation in School Athletics or Organizations Policy, and the Use of Photos Policy.

(Print Parent/Legal Guardian Name)

(Date)

(Signature Parent/Legal Guardian)

(Date)

(Print Student Name)

(Grade)