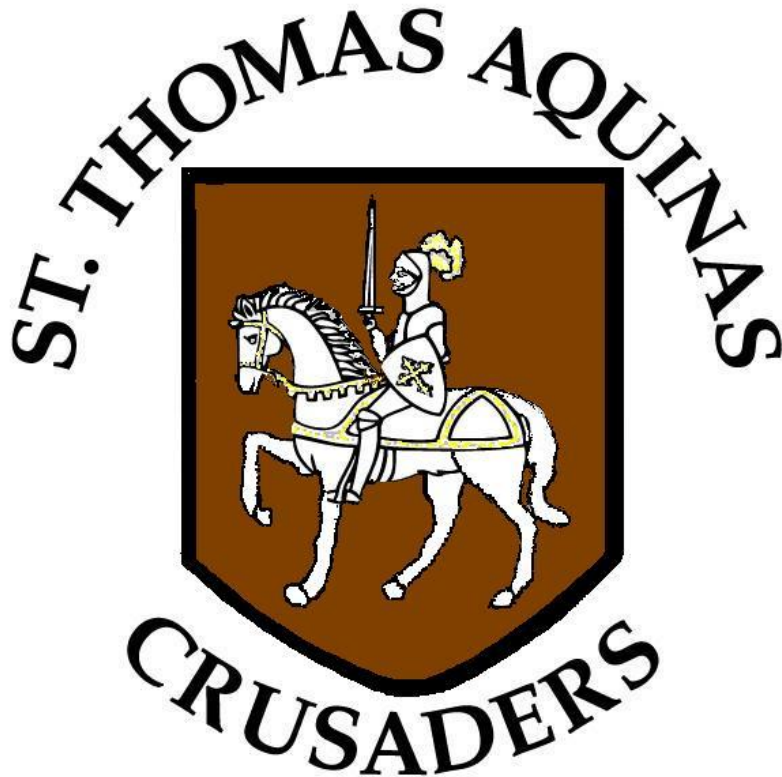


**St. Thomas Aquinas
Catholic School**



**PARENT-STUDENT
HANDBOOK
2009-2010**

Mission of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School seeks to promote a reverent, respectful, responsible community of believers who are empowered to know, learn, and understand God's love through academic excellence, spiritual development, and service to others.

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Dear Parents and Guardians of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School:

Welcome to the twentieth year of our outstanding school. Our school has enabled hundreds of children to receive a high quality, Catholic education and to give them the base necessary to be strong in their convictions as they enter the “real world”. St. Thomas Aquinas School has always been able to give our students a strong faith-based education. We will continue that vision through high standards of excellence and accountability to students, parents, parish, and each other.

The handbook is intended to be a guide for students and parents in meeting the expectations and standards set by the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School community in order to accomplish its mission. Rules, policies, regulations and stipulations are created with an understanding that not every situation, incident or circumstance can be anticipated. The guidelines in the following pages hopefully will assist in accomplishing the smooth running of the school program and ensure the fact that every child will receive the best that St. Thomas Aquinas School has to offer in all facets of life.

We ask parents to join us in the responsibility of educating their children and embracing the Catholic way of life. We encourage you to be involved with your child’s spiritual and educational needs. By supporting the policies and regulations outlined in the following pages you will be one step closer to accomplishing your role. Our partnership does not end at 3:10; we are here for you and your child and to assist you with any concerns or issues that may arise during the day. Our Christian way of thinking enables us to have different perspectives on situations and responses to dilemmas that otherwise could not be utilized. We promise to always work and do our best for all students here at STA and to keep you informed of all issues necessary for a successful school experience.

By diocesan directive you are asked to read this Parent-Student Handbook in it’s entirety and understand that you and your child are bound by the handbooks’ rules and regulations as part of the student’s requirement for attending St. Thomas Aquinas School. The signed form, indicating your agreement, must be returned to the school office within the first week of school as evidence of this responsibility. This handbook is part of the contractual agreement between you and the school.

Yours in Christ,

**Maura Cox
Principal
St. Thomas Aquinas School**

As a Catholic school, St. Thomas Aquinas School views the spirituality of its children as one of its highest priorities. The school day must center about the faith, both in teaching and in living. Parents choose a Catholic school over a private, independent school for the very fact that it has a strong commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. This Catholic identity should and will be very visible when one walks through the halls of St. Thomas Aquinas School.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

School Accreditation and Teacher Certification

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School pre-kindergarten through eighth grade is fully accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference, which is recognized by the Department of Education of the State of Florida. The school is also approved by the Department of Education of the State of Florida. St. Thomas Aquinas successfully completed its re-accreditation process in spring of 2004 and we will undergo the reaccreditation during this 2009-2010 school year. All classroom teachers are degreed and certified by the Florida State Department of Education. Both certification for all teachers and accreditation for the school are required by policy of the Office of Schools of the Diocese of Orlando and the Florida Catholic Conference. Periodic accreditation reviews for the school are done one year and three years after it is accredited by the FCC. Teacher certification must be maintained through regular, on-going in-service education and professional workshops and conferences. STA received it's reaccreditation in 2004 and continued approval in 2007 through 2009. The school will complete our new self-study this school year (2009-2010) for the re-accreditation process, called the School Improvement Plan, in 2009.

Class Size

By the Diocese of Orlando and FCC policy class size of a maximum of 35 students are allowed in grades 1-8. In kindergarten, class size is limited to 30 students with a teacher and a full time instructional assistant. In Pre-K3 class size is limited to 20 students with a full time teacher and a full time assistant. PreK4 class size is limited to 25 students with a full time teacher and full time assistant. Generally, classes at St. Thomas Aquinas are much smaller than the numbers cited above, offering our students the best learning opportunity.

Curriculum

The curriculum committee reviews the school curriculum periodically.

These reviews are conducted in the following order over a five year cycle:

1. Science
2. Math and Algebra
3. Language Arts and Reading or Literature
4. Religion and Family Life, as well as Spanish
5. Social Studies and Health

New textbooks are examined and purchased according to the five-year rotation so that students have the most current editions of the subject area texts.

Homework

Homework is an extension of the learning process begun at school. Its purpose is to:

- Promote independent study
- Encourage individual initiative
- Reinforce skills and information introduced during the school day
- Provide extra practice needed to perfect fundamental skills
- Make use of resources outside the school
- Recognize individual differences
- Enrich learning

The amount of time needed to complete assignments will vary according to the child's study habits and abilities, as well as the type of assignment being done. Long-range assignments are given to the upper grades to develop skills in research and organization. Regular homework is generally assigned every day and may be assigned on weekends at the discretion of the individual teacher. Homework involves all assigned work, not just written work. A general guideline for the amount of time to be spent on homework assignments each evening is:

Primary Grades	20-25 minutes
Intermediate Grades	40-60 minutes
Middle School	60-100 minutes

Study or reading assignments (not written) are often given to the students and are considered "homework." Check your child's comprehension by listening to him/her read and asking him/her questions pertaining to the material read. Whenever a child's written assignment is completed, check to see if it is legible, neat, complete and worthy of being handed in. **Please do not correct a child's homework, as it is intended to show the teacher the areas in which a child may need additional assistance or where a student or class needs to review a concept.** Homework credit is given for the completion of the assignment, not its accuracy in terms of correct/incorrect items. A definite time and a quiet place (never the kitchen - busiest room in the house) should be set aside for home study.

Upper School Homework Policy

Homework in grades 6-8 is a critical part of a student's academic experience. It is the responsibility of the student and it is expected that homework will be completed neatly, properly and on time.

The following policy is established in this regard by the upper school faculty:

- 1) Homework should be turned in on the due date and during the class for which the homework was assigned.
- 2) If homework is not turned in within three days of the due date, the student will be assigned lunch detention and will continue to be so assigned until the assignment is completed and turned in to the teacher.
- 3) There may be exceptions to this policy, which will be at the discretion of the Teacher, and announced by him or her to the students in advance.
- 4) At the conclusion of the marking period, all incomplete homework (work not turned in) may receive the value of "0".

Academic Reports to Parents

The assessment or evaluation procedure is a most important aspect of the teaching and learning process. The interim reports and quarterly report cards allow the student and parent to assess the progress, strengths and weaknesses of the student. It is important that parents take the time to read and assess their children's interim and quarterly reports and contact teachers with appropriate concerns.

Grading System

The following are letter and numerical equivalents used in student assessment reports:

A+ = 98-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69	F = below 60
A = 94-97	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 64-66	
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	D- = 60-63	

Lower grades use a different system or assessment which is explained on the report cards.

Honor Roll - Grades 2-8

Highest Honors - all A's in each core subject area*

Regular Honors – no grades below a B in each core subject area*

* all special subject areas (courses meeting one time per week) are only counted toward honors based on effort and/or behavior. Students receiving low grades (C or below) in special subject areas due to either lack of effort or behavior will be ineligible for honors.

A published report card will be given four times during the academic year. This card is to be signed and returned within one week. In addition, midway through each grading period a progress or interim report is issued with a checklist, indicating areas in need of

improvement. This is also displayed on the Parent Portal. A C- or below issued to a student will be accompanied by a comment sheet from the teacher, which indicates some specific reasons why the student has earned that grade, as well as suggestions or solutions for remediation.

Midterm and Final Exams

All students in grades 5-8 are to take mid-term and final exams in all academic subject areas to include: Literature/Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Religion and Spanish. Exams material encompasses the entire work of the semester. Exams generally last from one hour and a half.

Final Exam Exemptions

Eighth grade students may be exempt from final exams in May in a subject in which they achieve a final grade of A (94+) for the entire year. Determination of this exemption rests with the classroom teacher of the subject area.

Parent Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences will be scheduled twice each year, after the first and third quarter report cards. These meetings provide an opportunity for the teachers and parents to discuss the student's progress and those areas needing improvement. It is recommended that students in grades 3-8 should attend the conference with their parents. The Spring Conference which is optional, will include a discussion of the students' advancement or retention at the end of the school year.

Honors Courses

The eighth graders at STA may receive credit for some of the courses, designated "9th honors courses", which they take at STA. These courses must encompass the academic materials of the ninth grade curriculum and syllabus used in the Osceola County Public High Schools, as these schools will formally grant the credit to the students. As an elementary school, STA has no authority to grant high school credit. The following courses are designated honors courses and potentially grant high school credit, if successfully completed at STA: Algebra I, English I, and Physical Science. Spanish will allow students to test out of Spanish I and into Spanish II at the end of this year, who have been in the program since sixth grade. Our Spanish program may cover the high school Spanish I curriculum over the course of three years – grades 6-8.

Library/Media Center

In addition to assigned library periods in the student schedule for all grade levels, other opportunities are provided for students to make use of the school library. We ask students and parents alike to make sure that all books and materials are returned to the library on or before the due date. **Any loss of or damage to books or materials must be reimbursed prior to the end of the school year.**

The Library/Media Center is the central and most important academic resource area of any school, and must be treated with respect. Our school Library/Media Center is expected to meet the standards for accreditation of the Florida Catholic Conference, and it does meet this standard by housing over 13,000 books and other learning and visual materials. Reference works and children's periodicals will be found in the school library, as well as computers for research purposes. Computers will be online to insure the availability of first-rate research opportunities for the students. New additions, both print and electronic, will be added and processed on an annual basis as a matter of course. Examples of this are the new Britannica-on-Line and the Accelerated Reader Program.

Parents are reminded that good, age appropriate books or software donations are always welcome. The Library has a Birthday Book Program in which books are donated to the Library in honor of individual students on their birthdays and formally inscribed in this regard. Donations to the Library/Media Center are always most welcome.

Text Books

All textbooks must be covered and well cared for by the student. The full cost of hardcover books is not met by our General Fees. Elementary school textbooks cost as much as \$60-80 each today. The books are merely rented by the students each year and must be treated with care in order for others to use them in subsequent years. Subject area textbook rotation involves the replacement of texts with updated editions every five years. Students may not write in books (other than consumable books) or mark in them in any way. STA school may charge the full replacement fee for damaged hardcover books, which the teacher judges to be severe, making the book unusable by the next student.

Physical Education

All students are required by law to participate in the physical education program, unless a written physician's statement limiting the student's physical activity is provided. "A sound mind in a sound body" continues to be a motto for the ages. The PE program, prescribed for elementary and middle school grades by the Diocese of Orlando, is followed at St. Thomas Aquinas School, with age-appropriate skills and games being introduced throughout the school year. As described in the Uniform Code section, a St. Thomas Aquinas PE uniform must be worn to Physical Education class by all students, grades K thru 8. Failure to come in uniform for PE will result in a zero grade for the day. It will also exclude the student from participation in the PE class for that day. It may further affect the student's quarterly grade in PE. Students must be prepared for class.

Field Trips

According to Diocesan policy all field trips which take away from school instructional time, must have "a clearly defined educational component." At times trips which involve other purposes beneficial to the students may be approved by the Principal. School field trips are a privilege, not a right, and students may be denied participation, if they fail to

meet behavioral or academic requirements. Diocesan permission forms are provided to each child in advance of the planned trip. Students are required to turn in the completed field trip permission slip, which is required by Diocesan policy. The permission slip cannot be altered or added to in any way. If this permission slip is not signed by the parent/guardian, then the school will not permit the child to participate in the activity. The school will not accept letters stating that the child may go on the trip. According to Diocesan attorneys, **only the proper Diocesan field trip form is acceptable**. Based on Diocesan policy, permission over the phone is not acceptable in lieu of the Diocesan permission slip.

The use of commercial transportation, rather than parent cars, is encouraged. In the event of parent transportation, all volunteer drivers are required to submit, at least one week in advance of the trip, a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of their insurance policy stating coverage amounts. The Diocese requires coverage amount of 100/300/50. Diocesan regulations require that all chaperones and drivers must have submitted their fingerprints and background check form and have been cleared by the Diocese, (see Fingerprinting) before being permitted to drive students (other than their own) on any trip. No siblings of students are allowed to attend the field trips.

Overnight field trips and other activities involving water related activities for elementary school students are not allowed by the Diocese. Liability for such trips quadruples insurance liabilities according to Diocesan authorities.

Records – Permanent Files

Every student has academic and health record folders on file. Those who have been tested for special services may have an additional, separate file folder. These records are available for review by the parent upon appointment with the School Principal. When requested, official records are forwarded by the school directly to the next school. No official records are ever handed to the parents, although unofficial copies may be shared. Information about students who have attended STA, are kept on file for fifty (50) years by State law. Information must be available to verify the student's attendance at the school and all associated information. Records of serious injury to any student are kept in the school's accident report file until the student reaches the age of 21 years. All such records are kept under lock and in a secure area resistant to water, theft or fire. Records are available only to authorized personnel.

If parents have not cleared accounts with the school, student records will be held until such financial obligations are satisfied. Retention of records is the only possible way the school has to insure the satisfaction of all debts owed to it. This is an action the school, of course, prefers not to take. Parents are asked to take care of financial and other such obligations and not put the school or the children in this difficult situation.

ADMISSION/REGISTRATION

St. Thomas Aquinas School welcomes and does not discriminate against qualified students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin in respect to admissions, and all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded are made available to every student at the school. A variety of criteria will be considered in decisions to admit a student to St. Thomas Aquinas School; the main consideration will always be the proper fit of the child and school for one another, as well as the family's willingness to accept all policies and goals of the school.

Registration

The normal registration time for the next school year will begin in January-February. Priority of acceptance into the school will be determined by the following criteria:

1	Currently enrolled families who are registered, supporting parishioners.
2	Currently enrolled non-parishioners.
3	New families who are registered, supporting parishioners.
4	New families who are non-parishioners.

If classroom space remains available after the initial in-house registration period, priority of acceptance will be determined on a first come, first served basis. If the maximum classroom or school enrollment is attained, a formal waiting list will be established at the school office, and classroom vacancies will be filled according to the above criteria.

Returning Students, who are reregistering students, are required to submit a completed registration form annually. Family accounts must be current, or the application will not be processed or accepted until such accounts are current. New Students entering kindergarten must be five (5) years old on or **before September 1st of the new school year**. This is the law in the State of Florida and must be followed by the school. Children entering first grade must be six years old on or before September 1st and have successfully completed kindergarten.

Prospective new students for grades 6-8 and their parents must be interviewed by the Principal. Placement testing may be required for any student. New students, once accepted, are required to submit:

1	Copy of latest interim or report card from the current school.
2	HRS Form 680 Immunization Record.
3	HRS Form 3040 Physical Examination.
4	Certified copy of a birth certificate.
5	Registration form and nonrefundable fee.
6	Copy of the child's baptismal certificate is also required for Catholic students.

NOTE: Students coming from other Catholic or private schools must have cleared their accounts at the former school before beginning school at St. Thomas Aquinas.

Tuition Assistance: At St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School we strive to assist all families in providing a quality Catholic education for their child. Please note that any tuition assistance granted must be done so in writing.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

The speed limit in the parking lot is 5 mph. Please follow this speed for the safety of all of our children.

Parents are asked to please refrain from walking their children to class after the first two days of school. It is understandable that you want to be sure that your child arrives safely, but the school does assign faculty members and safety patrol students to assist the children in entering and leaving the school safely. Following the arrival/dismissal procedures will help move traffic in and out of the school parking lot quickly and insure a more safe environment for all personnel.

Arrival

Preschool:

The pre-school gate opens at 7:45 a.m., and parents of PreK students only may park in the back lot and walk the PreK students to their classroom. No child is to simply be allowed to leave the car on his or her own and must be accompanied by a parent or older student. Older siblings or “carpoolers,” who arrive with preschoolers may also use that gate to enter school. All non PreK students are to proceed to the classroom.

Grades K-8:

Students in these grades are to be brought through the front drive-up line each morning. The gates are not unlocked before 6:45 a.m. Students may be dropped off at the gate on the church side (near the teacher’s lounge) starting at 7:45 a.m. Students dropped off prior to 7:45 a.m. must go to Before Care. Students are **not** to enter school through the main office. All students are to proceed to their classrooms beginning at 7:45 a.m.

All gates are locked at 7:55 a.m. Any student arriving after that time must enter through the main school entrance (office area) to sign in and receive a tardy slip. Students arriving after 7:55 a.m. are tardy and should be signed in by parents.

Dismissal

Preschool Eleven O’clock or Noon Dismissal

For eleven O’clock or noon time dismissal, parents are to park in the **back parking lot** and walk to the classroom to pick up your child. You are asked to please avoid coming through the office unless the gate is already closed. The gate closes at 11:10 and 12:10 p.m. for safety reasons.

Regular Dismissal

Carpool riders: The older children/siblings should assemble at the dismissal area of the youngest in the car pool.

Identification

To help identify your car, please place your family name in your front window or on your turned down visor, so the faculty can identify your car during the first few weeks of school. In time, the faculty will recognize all cars.

Preschool Classes

Preschool students are dismissed at the circle behind the church social hall. Cars may line up in that area and the children will be brought out to the cars by faculty members.

Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade

Please enter the drive-up line through the old Winn Dixie parking lot, or Chevron Station lane, making a circle around the front entrance of the church. Please do not enter the drive-up line through the church parking lot. An aide or teacher will escort your child to your vehicle. **No one is to walk up to the building through the drive-up line to pick up his or her child.** Your cooperation with this procedure is appreciated as it may put students, as well as drivers, at risk. A single lane only will be available for the dismissal procedure. Please observe the yellow drive through markings.

Third, Fourth and Fifth Grade Students

All students in grades 3-5 are released through the two front gates at the front drive-up. Parents are to enter through the church lot entrance (the first driveway on Brown Chapel Rd. closest to Rt. 192 - near the flagpole) and make a complete circle around the pick up area. **Do not enter through the Church Office Driveway.** Students will be called as you approach the building.

Middle School Dismissal

Middle School students are dismissed at the circle in front of the library and the church social hall. Cars may line up in that area and the children will be dismissed from the side walk.

Safety Reminders

- Remain inside your vehicle at all times. Do not leave your vehicle.
- Do not allow your child to exit from the left or driver's side.
- Please do not walk your child into the classroom.
- If you must come into the building for business, please park your car and enter before the dismissal procedure in the afternoon or in the morning before the start of the drop off starts. **Do not park in front of the door this is a fire lane.**
- You are asked to always maintain a positive, Christian attitude as you model this behavior for your children, regardless of any unforeseen delays or complications.
- Road Rage has no place in our Catholic School parking lot. Be courteous and kind at all times.

Rainy Day Dismissal Procedure

Rainy Day Dismissal decisions will be made at 2:45 p.m. In some cases it is difficult to make such decisions. If there is merely a light drizzle, regular day dismissal will be followed. In a relatively heavy rain we will conduct the normal rainy day dismissal procedure. Students in fourth and fifth grade will remain at a dismissal area by the faculty room. Middle school students will move to the gate by the faculty room and join the fourth and fifth grade. Third grade will move to the front gate near the gym side, where they will be joined by Pre-K and kindergarten through second grade (from back drive-up). Parents are to be sure their **family/carpool names are visible in the front windshield** of the vehicles. Teachers will be strategically assigned to read off the names, so children may be ready to board your vehicle. Safety patrol with umbrellas will escort the students to the vehicle.

Vans from Day Care Centers

Outside Day Care Center vans which pick up students at our school at the end of the day must proceed through the regular dismissal line procedures. These vans normally pick up at the PreK dismissal area. They are not to get out of line to pick up children nor to try and go around the traffic. Such drivers will be informed of this policy.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is a basic requirement for academic success, and the State of Florida Department of Education has established attendance policies, which must be followed by all schools. Naturally, any student absence detracts from this requirement and prevents the student from fulfilling an essential condition for earning scholastic credit. The school strongly discourages parents from removing students from class for vacations outside the assigned vacation periods. Perfect attendance is recognized for students who have never missed school during the school year and who have been tardy on a few occasions (less than five per semester).

School Hours

School starts at 7:55 a.m. and ends at 3:10 p.m. except on Wednesday, which ends at 2:00 p.m. The daily schedule for the start and end of the school days is as follows:

6:45 a.m.	Before School Care begins
7:45 a.m.	First bell – Students report to classrooms
7:55 a.m.	Start of classes
8:00 a.m.	Morning Announcements
3:10 p.m.	Dismissal
2:00 p.m.	Dismissal on Wednesday – 2:20 p.m. students taken to After School Care
3:25 p.m.	Supervised dismissal ends; students not picked up go to After School Care
6:00 p.m.	After School Care ends – Extra charge for pick-up after 6:00.

Before and After School Care

Students arriving before 7:45 a.m. must go to Before School Care. Before Care is located in the school cafeteria. The fee for before school care is \$1 per family per day. Students are to bring payment as they come to morning care. Regular classes end each day at 3:10 p.m.(2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays) The dismissal period lasts fifteen minutes. Students not picked up by the end of the dismissal period will be placed in the After School Care Program. The After School Care room is located in the classroom in the Gym. Parents will be charged one dollar per fifteen minutes per child for the after care fees. **Parents are expected to pay their after care bill each day as they pick up their child. Any IOU fees will result in double charges. After Care fees are as follows:**

M, T, Th, F

3:30-3:45	\$1 per child
3:46-4:00	\$2 per child
4:01-4:15	\$3 per child
4:16-4:30	\$4 per child
4:31-4:45	\$5 per child
4:46- 5:00	\$6 per child
5:01-5:15	\$7 per child
5:16-5:30	\$8 per child

Wednesday

2:30-2:45	\$1 per child
2:46-3:00	\$2 per child
3:01-3:15	\$3 per child
3:16-3:30	\$4 per child
3:31-3:45	\$5 per child
3:46- 4:00	\$6 per child
4:01-4:15	\$7 per child
4:16-4:30	\$8 per child

5:31-5:45 \$9 per child
5:46-6:00 \$10 per child

4:31-4:45 \$9 per child
4:46-5:00 \$10 per child
5:01-5:15 \$11 per child
5:16-5:30 \$12 per child
5:31-5:45 \$13 per child
5:46-6:00 \$14 per child

Leaving School Before Regular Dismissal Times

No student will be permitted to leave school grounds during the school day without permission of his/her parents and in the company of an appropriate, supervising adult. The approval of the Principal or school office member is required in each instance. Leaving the campus without permission is a serious offense and may result in serious disciplinary action.

Medical appointments are discouraged during school hours, as valuable learning time is lost. Of course, there are times when this cannot be helped. When medical appointments are necessary during the school day, the student is to present a note from the parent to the teacher the day before the actual appointment whenever possible. Students must be picked up in the school office by the parent or an authorized person.

Absences

Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of their child(ren) at school. If a student is absent, a parent must personally call the School Office before 10 a.m. or the student's absence will be considered as unexcused. In accordance with **Florida State Statutes, a student in K-5 with more than 15 absences (whether excused or unexcused) in a semester may be retained** for lack of attendance unless medical evidence of illness or injury is presented in writing from a competent medical authority. **For grades 6-8 a student with more than 10 absences per semester may be retained under the same circumstances/ conditions.** All educational requirements must be met before a passing grade will be assigned. The principal will have the final judgment on this issue.

Absences shall be excused for the following reason only:

1	Illness or injury of the student.
2	Illness, injury or death in the immediate family.
3	Extensive medical procedures.
4	Other major family emergencies or events.

Absences are unexcused when taken for vacations, personal activities, and any other event not covered by the excused absence definition.

As noted above, parents are expected to contact the school prior to 10 a.m. each day a student is absent to avoid unexcused absences. Students arriving at school after 11:00 a.m. or leaving prior to 11:00 a.m. may be marked absent ½ day. Upon returning to school after an extended absence period (three days or more), the student, who has been

absent, is also required to present a written excuse stating the date, the reason for absence, and the signature of the parent. **Only** the principal may authorize an absence for any special circumstances. Prior permission is normally required for such absences, except in case of an emergency. Family vacations during school time are strongly discouraged and will not be considered excused absences. Students will follow the make up guidelines for an unexcused absence. Advance notice must be given prior to such an absence.

A record of attendance and tardiness is maintained for every student. State law requires that the student's attendance records be retained as part of his/her permanent record at the school. This is a legal document for all educational institutions.

Make Up Work for Absences

In the event of pre-arranged absences it is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with teachers to receive the necessary assignments and materials. The student is also responsible for the completion of all homework assignments and tests which are expected to be turned in upon returning to school. Students failing to complete such assignments will be graded accordingly.

Teachers will NOT be responsible for re-teaching material covered, if the student is absent due to a family vacation or other absence considered to be unexcused. Tests missed during an unexcused absence will be taken immediately the day of the student's return at lunch/recess time.

Any work "requested in advance" of a child being absent must be turned in to the teacher (completed) immediately upon their return to school to receive proper credit for the work. If the missed work is not turned in when it is due, the student will receive no credit and will be graded accordingly. After a **prolonged, excused absence**, special arrangements may be made with the teachers to make up the work.

Tardiness and Daily Arrival and Dismissal

As elementary school children cannot drive themselves to school, it is the parent's responsibility to get their children to school on time. Please make every effort to have your child at school by 7:55 a.m. daily. A student who comes late to school, not only misses important announcements and instructions, but also may feel isolated because of creating undue attention on their arrival.

If a student is not in their classroom by the 7:55 a.m. bell, he/she is officially tardy. STA school does a time check against a "Time Of Day" service once per week to verify the correct time on our school bell system. Any student late for school must obtain a tardy pass and have a responsible adult sign them in at the office. After the third such occurrence in any quarter, the parents will be notified that the child will receive a demerit. For each additional "three tardies" another demerit will be assigned. If your child is tardy due to a medical appointment, he or she should have a note from the

physician on an Rx pad stating the child's name, date and time of the appointment. This is considered an excused tardy and will not count toward the "three times tardy" rule.

DISCIPLINE AND CONDUCT

St. Thomas Aquinas School exists to provide an academic community that will help each student grow in his or her awareness of God, self, and others, and encourage each student to achieve his/her maximum potential intellectually, personally, socially, physically, and spiritually. To that end, STA has established standards of behavior and character development expectations for its students.

The following disciplinary objectives provide the standard of judgment and the guide for action in the area of discipline. When strict enforcement of this discipline policy and the student behavior code achieve results contrary to the school's philosophy and objectives, the school's philosophy and objectives take precedence. St. Thomas Aquinas School recognizes and accepts the responsibility it shares with the parents in the supervision of the student, while he/she is in school or at any off-campus event acting as a student of the school. This document is interpreted and applied by St. Thomas Aquinas School as a form of instruction for all students in the school. The final interpretation of any given school behavior policy or situation remains with the administration.

Parents are liable for their children's conduct on field trips. Teachers and staff members do share this responsibility with parents, while children are at school, and thus they act "in loco parentis" (in the place of parents) in terms of any and all decision making regarding safety and proper behavior of students under their care.

Diocesan Policy Statement

In Catholic Schools the school and the Administrator can impose consequences for conduct occurring outside the school. What students do off-campus can detrimentally impact a school or program's reputation. **By Diocesan policy the school administration reserves this right.** Parents also **share** responsibility for their children's conduct while they are in school or on an authorized school field trip. Teachers and staff members do share this responsibility with parents, while children are at school, and thus act "in loco parentis" (in the place of parents) in terms of any and all decision making regarding safety and proper behavior of students.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT RULES

Individual teachers will establish rules of conduct for their individual classrooms. These will be promulgated to the students and parents and will be visibly posted in the classrooms. Our disciplinary policy uses a graduated set of rewards, consequences, and corrective steps. Teachers and/or the principal select the proper response to both reward good behavior and to discourage the breaking of school and classroom rules.

Classroom Rewards

The purpose of reward is to reinforce positive behavior. Possible rewards may include:

- Verbal or written praise to the student.
- Verbal or written communication with parents.

- Other tangible rewards determined by the teacher(s).
- An intrinsic reward from the student knowing they did the right thing.

Classroom Disciplinary Consequences

The purpose of disciplinary consequences is to help prevent reoccurrences of negative behavior patterns. Consequences in order of incidences:

- Verbal warning
- Verbal communication with parents.
- Issuing of a demerit/demerits.
- Written communication with parents.
- Teacher-parent conference
- Saturday Detention – Paid for by parent
- In-school or Out-of-school Suspension
- Expulsion

GENERAL CLASSROOM RULES

Rules are expectations of appropriate student behavior. Rules immediately create a work-oriented atmosphere. Rules create a strong expectation about the things that are important.:

- Listen and follow directions the first time.
- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
- Show respect for other people and for their property.
- Avoid inappropriate behaviors, such as swearing, teasing, improper language or rude gestures.
- Gum chewing is never permitted at any time on school grounds.
- Fighting “in any form” is never permitted (even “fooling around”).
- Live as Jesus lived.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Teachers are the ultimate authority in their individual classrooms. **Issues and situations of a very serious nature may be brought to the Principal**, who has the final authority in all disciplinary matters. Depending on the situation, in some instances warnings should and will be given, but repeated offences will result in a demerit or a detention. Daily detentions, which are recorded on student record cards in grades 6-8, may be given for any of the following infractions:

- Chewing gum.
- Misbehaving in class or in any other area of the school.
- Misbehaving in church.
- Using bad language.
- Being dishonest.
- Wearing makeup or nail polish.
- Running in any area of the school other than recreational areas.
- Eating food or candy in class or hallway.

- Not dressed in proper school uniform.
- Leaving the classroom without permission.
- Touching things that do not belong to you.
- Throwing any objects.
- Failure to return signed detention slips.
- Failure to return signed written communication.
- Tardy to class three times.
- Public display of affection.
- Horseplay (pushing, shoving, tripping, pulling chairs, etc.).
- Insubordination to authorized school personnel, including, but not limited to, repeatedly failing to comply with the directions of teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, teachers aides, support staff members or any school employee.

Academic Infractions

Daily detentions may be issued for academic reasons. Consequences of such actions as being unprepared for class, not having a test signed, having no homework, being late with a class project, etc. will be assessed in the student's grade and possibly on a disciplinary form. It is generally more appropriate that detentions be issued only for behavioral matters, but the teacher may require the student to complete the work missing that day during the lunch time detention. Any student in grades 3-8 that earns a D or F on their interim or report card must attend Academic Saturday School. Students must come to Academic Saturday School dressed in their school uniform. **Parents are responsible for paying \$10.00 for staff compensation.** This will be an opportunity for the students to correct their grade.

Assignment to Saturday School

Copies of demerits or infractions will be reported on the Parent Portal for parental review, as well as reported on the report card and on the interim report to keep parents abreast of their child(ren)'s status in this regard. **Receiving five detentions will result in a Saturday Morning Detention ("Saturday School") in which the parents are responsible for paying \$10.00 for staff compensation. Two such detentions will result in a student being placed on disciplinary probation. Further improper behavior will result in an automatic suspension and mandatory parental conference with the Principal, as well as establishing a behavioral contract (see below).**

Detention, supervised by faculty members, will be held Tuesday and Thursday afterschool and on assigned Saturday mornings from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. Students will be given adequate notice to allow parents/guardians to make transportation arrangements for Saturday detentions. Students will attend detention in full school uniforms. An extra charge of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for late pick-ups.

Rules for Suspension and Expulsion

"Suspension from school is imposed only for a very serious reason or for repeated infractions for which the student has received several warnings and detentions. The

decision to suspend a student rests with the Principal. Prior to suspension, parents must be notified and a formal letter stating the issuance of this disciplinary action and the reasons for such action should follow."

"Expulsion is resorted to only when all other means of discipline have proved ineffectual, and the student's conduct is a definite hindrance to the welfare and progress of the school community. The measures taken to implement the decision and notification of the parents are the same as those for suspension, which is at the discretion of the Principal. Diocesan Policy #652.2

Students will be responsible for all work missed while they are serving a suspension.

Suspension or dismissal may result from any of the following serious infractions:

- Actions that endanger the physical well-being of self or others, such as fighting or the intent to injure another.
- Possession, use, or serious threat of use, or exhibition of dangerous weapons (including pen knives), fireworks, or instruments of similar nature.
- Possession of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, unauthorized prescriptive drugs or any other harmful substance while in school or at school sponsored activities held off school premises.
- Coercion - forcing another by action or threat to do something against his/her will.
- Engaging in any form of sexual activity while in school or at school sponsored activities on or off school premises.
- Leaving the school premises at any time during school hours or activities unless signed out by parent.
- Sexual harassment in physical or verbal form.
- Serious acts of physical or verbal violence, including bullying.
- Cheating or helping others to cheat (including plagiarism).
- Damaging school, church or other's personal property.
- Persistent harassment of students or staff members.
- Defiance or disrespect to adults and/or school rules and regulations
- Any behavior or action of a serious nature which reflects negatively on the school.
- Serious and persistent use of vulgar language or gestures and racial slurs.

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

As defined in the Diocesan Policy and Procedure Manual, Policy #ER008. "The Diocese of Orlando strictly prohibits harassment of any individual in any form because of his or her age, race, religion, color, national origin, age or disability in any of its schools. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and will not be tolerated at any Diocesan entity. **Once a child is warned of an incident of harassment, they are in a "0" tolerance situation** and will be suspended for the next incident of harassment, and possibly expelled, depending on the

severity of the infraction.” The school is required to follow these procedures by the Diocese of Orlando.

Bullying

Harassment is a form of bullying, although bullying is traditionally defined as “a stronger, more powerful person hurting, intimidating or frightening a smaller, weaker person deliberately and repeatedly.” It is also seen as any negative actions by one or more persons being imposed on another person being bullied or victimized. Students being subjected to such behavior are to report such behavior to their teachers or the school office for resolution. People guilty of such bullying, whether it be physical, emotional or social, will be punished appropriately, as such behavior is NEVER acceptable. In a Catholic school we must follow Jesus’ words and actions and live a Christian life.

Email Threats or Hurtful Statements

A new problem has arisen from the age of technology. Often students make negative, untruthful statements about staff and other students. The website “ratemyteacher.com” in addition to “blogs”, offer students opportunities to post potentially defamatory statements about others. **Despite their quasi-public figures, the courts now have taken a stand on this issue and state that teachers have the same right to their reputation that other people have.** Therefore, if defamed, teachers have a right to use. In the same vein, administrators can punish students who defame others in the school community. Deliberate defamation of others is not consistent with Christian values, and students should be held accountable for intentional hurt they cause others.

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTS FOR CHRONIC OR EXTREME BEHAVIOR

It is always the goal of STA to help guide students toward appropriate Christian behavior. However, it is conceivable that certain students may have great difficulty in complying with rules on a regular basis. Because this infringes on the rights of the other students to an orderly learning environment, STA school will issue behavioral contracts for students who either frequently misbehave or who have committed serious infractions. Under certain, serious and extreme circumstances, a behavioral contract may be instituted by the Principal despite prior good behavior. Such contracts are a form of last resort.

DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCE GUIDELINES

1. Students committing a serious infraction, which could lead to suspension, will become ineligible to participate in any extra-curricular activities during that week.
2. Students, who receive several disciplinary infractions, will be assigned to serve Saturday Morning Detention on a day designated by the Principal, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The student will report to the school no later than 7:55 a.m. in school uniform. Failure to attend may result in an in-school suspension or another form of punishment at the Principal’s discretion.
3. Detentions will be monitored by the Principal or faculty on a rotational basis.
4. **Students, who serve Saturday detention on a consistent basis (three times) will be placed on behavioral contract and may be placed on probation.**

5. Should a student receive an out-of-school suspension, he or she will be put on a behavioral contract.

Search and Seizure

Although rarely used, St. Thomas Aquinas School reserves the right to search the lockers, desks, person and personal belongings of a student when there is “**sufficient cause**”, and it is believed to be necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of other students. If possible, parental notification and consent will be sought prior to searches of the person. Students are advised that their lockers, desks, persons and personal belongings are subject to search for forbidden, dangerous or illegal substances or items. Students are instructed at the start of the school year that certain items are not to be brought to school, i.e. anything that could be construed as a weapon, any electronic devices, any form of drug etc.

Sports and Behavior

Students who consistently receive Saturday detentions, who are suspended, or are on behavioral contracts will be suspended from participation in the sports program for a period of time determined by the Principal and Athletic Director and coach. Students with low academic performance will be held ineligible from participation until approved by his/her teachers.

Enrichment Programs

Curriculum enrichment and extracurricular activities are offered in accordance with student interest and the availability of sponsors, volunteer instructors and coaches.

Team Sports

Volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, soccer, track, baseball and softball are offered through Orlando Athletic Conferences, such as CYL and CMAC. The school also participates in the newly formed Osceola Christian Athletic League, which is offered as an alternative to the CMAC league when we are unable to field a team for CMAC. OCAL policies are more lenient and the league less competitive than CMAC. Eligibility for all sports is determined as follows: Participants who receive a cumulative average below a 2.0 will be ineligible, but may attend practice sessions only until grades improve. Students who have a C average and a failing grade are ineligible until they get clearance from their teacher to participate in games. **If a student is absent from school on a given day, he/she cannot participate in any extracurricular activities on the day of that absence.** Participation in team sports requires a fee, which is paid to the conference, to underwrite costs of officials, administration of leagues, etc.

Extracurricular Activities

The school will offer as many extracurricular activities and clubs as possible, depending on student interest and willingness to be involved. Activities should include altar servers, broadcast club, safety patrol, student council, National Junior Honor Society, drama club, ministry programs, choir, library aides and so on. In addition, intramural programs for grades 3-5 and 6-8, may take place during lunch and recess periods.

Attendance at After School Sports Events

Students, who wish to attend an after school sports activity as a spectator, must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult. **NO STUDENT will be allowed to attend games without an adult "chaperone."** A written note from a parent stating that the child has his or her permission to attend the game alone or with a friend is not acceptable. Arrangements should be made with another parent to be responsible for the supervision of a child wishing to attend a game. Should a child be found at a game without supervision, the child will be allowed to call the parent to pick them up and will be sent to After Care to wait. This is for the safety of all students.

If a student has an after school practice or activity, he or she **MAY NOT BRING HIS OR HER SIBLING(S) to such practice or rehearsal.** The child(ren) will be sent to After Care immediately, and the parent will be charged for the time the sibling is in After Care. Our coaches are not able to nor obligated to provide after school care for their players' siblings, and it is impossible for your child to practice and babysit his or her siblings simultaneously.

Code of Conduct

At St. Thomas Aquinas School we believe in providing a Christian educational environment that encourages each student to achieve his or her maximum potential intellectually, personally, physically, and spiritually. Extracurricular activities extend the STA educational objectives from the classroom to other activities in the daily lives of students. In an effort to have a Christian value system permeate throughout the student's environment and reinforce the values implanted and fostered at home, each student and all family members are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior at all STA extracurricular activities. All STA students and families represent our school at such activities and should display Christian values, encourage fairness and sportsmanship, be courteous and respectful to others involved, and present a positive image of STA.

Student Use of Technology

Students are encouraged to use the technology in the school but are asked to request permission from a teacher in each case. Students will have to sign a form at the start of the school year as required by the Diocese, which is a "Technology Contract," that specifies rules and regulations for the proper and appropriate use of school technology. Computers will be found in each classroom, as well as in the Library/Media Center and the Computer Lab. Students who log onto inappropriate programs will be disciplined.

Software has been installed allowing students to access research materials which will be valuable to them in research projects. Encyclopedia Britannica is also available. We will be using the Accelerated Reader program through the library period and under the direction of our media specialist.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

"When a pupil becomes ill or is injured in an accident at school, the school office will contact the parent or designated guardian immediately. If no one can be reached, the student will remain in the clinic until an appropriate person can be contacted. In the event of an accident warranting professional attention, the Principal or office personnel will call the police and/or rescue unit and seek their assistance." Diocesan Policy #655.2

All families must provide the school with an **emergency medical form** containing:

- Address and telephone numbers (home, work, cell, pager) of the parent.
- Names and telephone numbers of two others given authority by the parent to assume responsibility for the student, if the parent cannot be reached.
- Name and telephone number of a family physician and a dentist.
- Name of a preferred hospital for treatment.

These emergency medical forms must be updated annually. Students are covered by a student insurance policy for accidents that happen at school. Cost of this coverage is included in school fees. Information is available at the School Administrative Office.

Clinic

Office personnel and volunteers staff our school clinic. **It is NOT a true medical facility.** They may clean and cover minor scrapes and cuts and/or apply ice to injuries. They do not provide "medical care." The school is not permitted to dispense any medication without an "Authorization to Dispense Medication" form. **We are not allowed to provide any over-the-counter medications**, such as Tylenol, aspirin, etc. If your child may need any such medication, it must be brought to the office along with the permission form. Please mark the child's name on the container. We cannot accept permission over the phone to give your child any form of medication. Such permission must be in writing, per Diocesan policy.

A parent will always be called if the student is too sick to stay in school or is running a fever. We anticipate the child being picked up as quickly as possible. This is important!

Illness

Children who are ill should remain at home. Children should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. In case of contagious disease, consult your family physician regarding a time for the student to safely return to school. Should your child be diagnosed with a contagious condition, such as Fifth Disease, Chicken Pox, Mumps, Pediculosis (head lice), H1N1 virus (Swine Flu), virus etc., please inform the school office immediately. While every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, we must be given the opportunity to inform/alert parents of the possibility of contagion.

Medication

By law students may **NEVER** carry any form of medication (with the exception of an inhaler) on their person while at school. This is the law and a very strict policy. Students

requiring prescription or nonprescription medication (even cough drops - held by teacher) during school hours must leave it in the school office. The medication must be kept in the original bottle from the pharmacy and an "Authorization to Dispense Medication" permission form must be on file according to the State law listed below. Arrangements must be made, if the use of an inhaler is required.

According to Florida School Law, (#232.46 1.b.1 and 2) "each prescribed medication the student's parents or guardian shall provide to the school Principal, a written statement which shall grant to the Principal or their designee permission to assist in the administration of such medication and which shall explain the necessity for such medication to be provided during the school day, including any occasion when the student is away from school property on official school business. The school Principal or their trained designee shall assist the student in the administration of such medication."

"Each prescribed medication to be administered by the school personnel shall be received and stored in its original container. When the medication is not in use, it shall be stored in its original container in a secure fashion under lock and key in a location designated by the Principal."

Other Medical Conditions

Special medical procedures, which must be performed during school hours, i.e. breathing treatments or insulin shots, should be done by the parent (or the student under supervision, if old enough). School office personnel will not be allowed to perform such procedures, unless it is matter of life or death, i.e. allergic reaction to a bee sting.

Immunization

All students must have the following immunizations before being permitted to enter school:

Kindergarten requirements (or students new to the school):

Diphtheria/Pertussis/Tetanus (DPT)	5 doses
Polio Vaccine	4 doses
Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)	2 doses
Hepatitis B vaccine series	3 doses
Varicella/Varivax	2 doses

7th Grade requirements:

Hepatitis B vaccine series	3 doses
T/D 4 Booster	1 dose
Varicella Vaccine	1 dose
(Or documentation of Varicella Disease)	

The Hepatitis B vaccine series takes up to 6 months to complete. Following the 1st injection, a child must wait 1 month before getting the 2nd injection and 5 months before receiving the 3rd and final injection. Students who have not completed their shots, but

have started the series can receive a temporary extension in order to continue attending school. In accordance with the regulations of the Florida State Health Department, a child not submitting evidence of required immunizations may not attend classes.

AIDS

The objectives of the Diocesan AIDS Guidelines are to protect the innocence of our children, to safeguard the health of our students, and to show compassion and respect for the victims of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Students should be made aware that the best defense against acquiring the disease is be aware of the danger of the disease, to follow our Catholic teachings on sexual morality, and to abstain from the use of intravenous drugs. Faculty must all go through training in the proper procedures for handling the cleaning of any type of bodily fluid.

Bicycles

Bicycles may be ridden to school provided St. Thomas Aquinas receives a letter of permission from the parent or guardian of the student in question. All bicycles **must be locked** on the bicycle racks provided by the school. We recommend that students riding bikes to school enroll in a bicycle safety course offered by local police departments. Students are always expected to wear a helmet when riding to or from school.

Fire and Emergency Drills

In compliance with Diocesan Policy No. 655.3, fire drills will be conducted once a month. Additionally, emergency crisis drills and severe weather drills will be conducted at least twice a year. These will involve extreme weather situations (hurricanes and tornados) and other situations such as bomb threats and threats from persons with weapons. The Diocese of Orlando has an emergency management manual, which is on file at the school and which all Catholic schools will follow in the event of such crises.

Closings Due to Inclement Weather

In order to simplify the decision making process in terms of severe weather conditions, St. Thomas Aquinas School will follow the decisions of the Osceola County Schools in regard to closing school for severe weather situations. If Osceola County Schools are closed for the day or are dismissing early due to weather conditions, St. Thomas Aquinas School will follow this decision as well. The decision to reopen school will be that of St. Thomas Aquinas School and the Diocese of Orlando. These announcements will be found on the school answering machine or announced over local radio and TV stations. Do not assume that STA continues to be closed because the public schools are closed. Their decisions are often based on school transportation issues.

The Diocesan School Policy manual contains procedures and practices in this regard for all Diocesan schools. A school telephone tree is to be developed to assist in the dissemination of information to families in the event of an early emergency closing along with radio announcements. At times, although weather may not seem severe, if flooding or impassable streets are predicted, the Principal or his designee may have to decide the best course of action under such circumstances. In all cases, the children will be kept safe

and under supervision at school until a parent comes to pick them up, regardless of how long that may take.

Asbestos Review

In accordance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), 40 CFR 763.93 (g), the Management Plan for ASBESTOS-containing materials as developed by Law Engineering is available without restriction for parent's inspection at the school's administrative office. Parents are asked to make an appointment if you wish to review the plan. Periodic surveillance reports are completed in this regard every six months in accordance with the directive of the Diocesan school office.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

Calendar

An official school calendar of no less than 180 student days will be developed each year. Unless noted, all days will be full days. A copy of the school calendar is provided for each family. Additionally, a monthly calendar is published at the start of each month, and it will be the most accurate recounting of school events for the current month.

Lost and Found

Articles of clothing, lunch boxes, and other large items found around the school are kept in our lost and found area. These will be on display in the cafeteria every Friday. Smaller items such as jewelry, glasses, money, etc. will be kept in the school office and may be retrieved by accurately describing the item in question. To help alleviate the problem of lost items, please mark as many of the student's belongings as possible with his/her name. At the end of each grading period, all unclaimed clothing items will be given away or sent to the uniform exchange.

Food Service

Hot lunch is served Monday through Friday. A bi-monthly menu is provided to parents. .

Students are always welcome to bring their own lunch any day of the week. All food brought to school should have nutritional value. Gum, candy and soft drinks (soda) are not permitted other than on special occasions when supplied by the school.

Lunch is ordered and purchased two weeks in advance. Students, who are absent on a given school day, will be given credit for any lunch purchased in advance only if the absence was called in prior to 9 a.m. that day.

Students that do not bring their own lunch will be given a small sandwich as an IOU. Students will be charged \$2.00 for IOUs.

Recess is normally held every day for 15-20 minutes at times determined by the teachers, generally after the lunch period.

Students must display proper behavior, manners and etiquette when eating lunch. A set of rules is established for the lunch period to maintain a calm, peaceful time for students to eat, socialize quietly and relax. There will be structure in the process of picking up lunch and in the disposal of paper products and other items after lunch. Students who misbehave during the lunch period will not be allowed to attend lunch recess.

Specific tables are set aside for individual grades. **“Set seating” will be used this year at all grade levels**, and all students will have assigned seats with their classmates. Seats will change every month, so that over the course of the year students may get to know all their classmates well. No student will be allowed to sit in any other than his or her assigned seat.

School Board

The board is established in accordance with Diocesan policy to assist in the governing of the school. The School Board is “consultative” in nature, meaning the members cannot act apart from the Pastor and/or Principal, and cannot make decisions binding on the school without the approval of both Pastor and Principal. The membership of the St. Thomas Aquinas School Board shall consist of eighteen (18) persons (7 school members and 6 parish members plus the Pastor, Principal, CCW Representative, STAPA President, and School Finance Officer), who will be broadly representative of the community it serves. Four members rotate off, and four new members rotate on the board each year for a three year term. Board officers are chosen by the members of the Board each spring for the following school year. These are one year terms. The Board acts by a set of by-laws which have been written by it and are reviewed annually for modification.

Change of Address

If your address or telephone number changes, please notify the school office immediately. This is especially important in light of the school’s need to reach parents in cases of illness, emergencies or a variety of other school-related issues and situations. This request also relates to emergency numbers for other authorized adults to be called in the event parents cannot be reached. Changes in family status, such as separation, divorce, etc. should also be brought to the school’s attention to be sure that the school is aware of such traumatic events in the child’s life. This information is always held confidential.

Fingerprinting/Background Check

Nothing is more important in our schools than the protection and safety of our youngest and most vulnerable members, our students. In light of this and at the urging of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, the Diocese of Orlando in 1998 initiated a program requiring all parents and other volunteers to be fingerprinted and have background checks run to allow them to participate in our schools as volunteers and coaches. Teachers and other employees are required to go through this process at the time of hiring and must be rechecked every five (5) years. All other persons volunteering to work with or around students must have a cleared fingerprint card and background check on file in the school office. These are renewed every five (5) years. These must be processed through the diocese and the FBI or FDLE – no other background check or fingerprint verification is acceptable. Please follow the diocesan steps for setting up an appointment to be fingerprinted. A list of fingerprinted/approved parents must be kept in the school files. Only these parents, whose fingerprints have cleared the background check, will be eligible to assist at school activities and in the presence of our school children.

Forgotten Items

Learning to be responsible is an integral aspect of growing up and an important skill learned in school. Students must learn to come to school prepared to work and be

responsible for their obligations and possessions. **Students will not be allowed to call home to ask for forgotten homework, projects, books, money, clothes, sports equipment, permission slips, etc. without express permission of a teacher.** If the parent happens to bring an item that the student has forgotten, it should be left in the office with the student's name and grade on it, and **it will be delivered** to the student's classroom at an appropriate time. Parents are not allowed to deliver the item to the child in person, as this practice is very disruptive to the classroom.

Birthdays

How to Celebrate in School

A child's birthday is a very special event. Students may "Dress Up" for their birthday. Students may wear clothing suitable for church (no jeans, shorts, or t-shirts). All other dress down rules apply. If a parent would like to bring a treat for his/her child's class, he/she is asked to get the permission of the teacher and co-ordinate the time and type of items to be brought to school. We encourage only individual treats, such as cookies, cupcakes, brownies, that can simply be passed out one to each child. Treats for the upper grades, 5th through 8th, will not be distributed during class time. Should a parent wish to bring treats for the older students, it must be done during their regularly scheduled lunchtime only. We ask that you not bring any type of "goody bags" to pass out for any grade level. There are good reasons for this policy prohibiting goody bags, i.e. they are a distraction in the classroom during the remainder of the school day. Students that have birthdays during the summer months may celebrate their birthday on their half birthday. For example if a child's birthday is on July 15, then they may celebrate their birthday on January 15.

Issuing Invitations to Parties Held Outside of School

In fairness to and in consideration of all children, we do not allow invitations for parties to be passed out at school, **unless the entire class is being invited (or "all the boys" or "all the girls")**. We must consider the feelings of those children who may not be invited. Nothing is more hurtful than to be "left out." If you wish to have a party for your child and are able to invite only certain children, we suggest that you mail the invitations directly to their homes. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Required Written Notes

A written note is required in the following circumstances:

- Excused tardiness.
- Excused absence.
- Permission to leave early or to stay after school.
- Permission to take medication.
- Permission to walk or ride a bike home.
- Permission to go home with a student/family not on your pick up list.

These permissions cannot be granted over the telephone. **The school needs proper documentation for its records by policy of the Diocesan Office of Schools.**

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

Parental participation is a very important aspect of our school's mission and life. We encourage our parents and parishioners to participate in the great work of Catholic education. Parents also make a very important contribution by participating in fundraising and other school activities. Tuition is generally maintained at as reasonable a rate as possible through the dedication of parent volunteers. Parents are encouraged to support the activities of the school, as a way of modeling for the children the fact that they value the education at St. Thomas Aquinas School. All of our school publications form a key link between the school and the home. **We urge parents to read:**

- The Principal's informational letters
- PTO (parent teacher organization) newsletters
- The school news section of the Parish bulletin
- Any other communications that are sent home
- Tuesday Envelopes

Our website is also a means of communication to and with parents. The Handbook, the informational letters and STAPA news may be found on the website.

Family Volunteer Service Hours

Along with your "treasure" there are a great variety of opportunities to share your "time, talent, and heart" with the school. All parents (families) **are expected** to contribute at least twenty (20) hours of volunteer work each year or contribute \$10.00 for each hour not volunteered. This is another way of helping reduce the cost of running the school, as well as assisting parents to become involved in the life of the STA school family. A log is available at the school office and maintained by STAPA for parents to "log-in" their hours as they are completed.

Parent Teacher Organization

All parents belong to PTO, which works directly for the benefit of St. Thomas Aquinas School children. Each family is assessed an annual \$10 fee for membership by PTO and is expected to become active in this organization by attending its meetings, supporting its projects, and becoming volunteers or officers of the Association. PTO is responsible for raising \$25,000 during the year to meet some of the general expenses in the annual school budget, as well as \$2500 for tuition assistance. This is accomplished through several major fund raisers, such as the Sally Foster Program, the Annual Auction/Dinner-Dance, the Annual STA Golf Tournament, and a few other less ambitious fund raisers. Your participation in these events not only helps the school's financial situation, but also adds to our "STA family spirit."

PTO will have a welcoming committee in which parents volunteer as "buddies" for new, incoming families at the start of the school year. These parents act as a liaison to assist new students and families through the normal adjustments at the start of school.

School Communications Policy

It is the policy of St. Thomas Aquinas School that **no communication of any kind will be sent to school families through the school unless it has first been reviewed and approved by the school administration.** The Principal or her representative must review all items relating to athletics, class fund raising or activities, STAPA programs and functions, student organization activities, or teacher requests prior to their dissemination to the school families or other outside organizations. This policy is intended to protect the school and its associated organizations by assuring that any and all printed communiqués leaving the school are in compliance with the philosophy, policies and practices of St. Thomas Aquinas School.

Mutual Respect

Although it seems inconceivable, no teacher or staff member at St. Thomas Aquinas School should ever be subjected to disrespectful words, actions or gossip, or to either verbal or physical assault by the parents or relatives of any student. Of course, it goes without saying that faculty and staff, as professional educators, should treat parents, students and others with similar respect and courtesy. Any such incidents cited above should be reported to the Principal verbally or in writing as soon as possible. The Principal will then contact those involved and any witnesses to the reported incident and will take such action as he/she deems appropriate to resolve the situation.

Communication

If you wish to contact a teacher, please leave a message with the school office. Telephone calls to the teacher or student during school hours interrupts the educational process. No teacher or student will be called from class for a telephone call, except for **extreme** emergencies. Please allow 24 hours for the teacher to respond. **It is generally inappropriate to call a teacher, the Principal or any staff member at home, unless there is an extreme or emergency situation.** (Please see Problem Solving Procedure below). If a parent does not receive a response to a phone request or voice mail message, please recall the school. At times, the voice mail may not activate properly and the school personnel may not have gotten the message which was left. The Parent Portal also gives the parents a way of communicating with teachers through school e-mail. Students may only use the school telephone in case of an emergency, illness or cancellation of an after-school event. They are to seek permission through the school office.

Visiting the School

St. Thomas Aquinas School is a closed campus. All visitors, including parents, must sign the visitor log in the school office, state the purpose of their visit and obtain a Visitor Pass. Parents are most welcome at our school, but **no one may enter the interior school area without permission. This policy is intended to protect your children.** Classes may never be interrupted by parents or other visitors without the principal's or teacher's **specific and express permission.** PARENTS ARE ASKED TO COOPERATE WITH THIS REQUEST. This is a very serious issue in schools today. Every interruption affects the instructional/ learning situation in the classroom, which is very unfair to the teachers and students. Parents are NOT to look in classroom windows/doors to distract the children. Parents who are at school for a meeting or to volunteer are asked to refrain from

wandering through the halls. We ask that you go directly to your meeting location. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by the faculty.

Parents are welcome to visit and enjoy lunch with their children occasionally. It is not, however, appropriate for parents to be at lunch every day unless their child has a special need for assistance. Children need to develop independence, and we appreciate parents cooperation with this restriction, as the children learn to socialize and handle situations on their own.

Problem Solving Suggestions and Procedures

Communicating Effectively:

- Try not to speak negatively about anyone especially in the presence of a student. It is detrimental to your child's proper development and learning. This is especially true in relation to teachers.
- Remember a key relationship that facilitates learning is the one between the student and the teacher.
- If you are angry, wait until you can review and deal with the situation objectively before initiating communication. Effective communication takes place when both parties can calmly talk and listen.
- Remember to “live as Jesus lived”.

If a problem arises:

- The student should discuss the problem with the teacher, preferably one on one. If the child is shy, have the child write a note to the teacher explaining his or her concerns. This is a wonderful learning and maturing opportunity. If the problem goes unresolved, the parent should write the teacher a note explaining the problem more thoroughly. The teacher should respond in writing or by telephone within 24 hours.
- If the problem persists or goes unresolved, schedule an appointment with the teacher and be sure to include the student.
- If the issue is still not resolved, schedule an appointment with the teacher and the principal.

Child Custody

Divorced or separated parents and guardians are all “parents” in the true sense of the word. The word “parent” as used throughout this manual signifies biological parent or legal guardian. In the event there is a court order regarding the custody of the child, the school should have a printed copy of it held in a confidential file, otherwise the school is powerless to enforce such an order.

Child Abuse Reporting

Diocesan Policy #PS006, Florida Statutes Chapters 415, 232.50: Any clergy, religious or lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Orlando, who knows, or has serious cause to suspect, that a child has been subjected to any form of abuse or neglect by any person, is expected to observe the following procedures immediately:

- Contact the Florida Department of Children and Families toll free, abuse registry-hotline the same calendar day the abuse is discovered.
- Respond to the local DCF call back with additional information.
- Cooperate with any and all authorities in the investigation of any child abuse report.
- The teacher or principal must ALWAYS be with the child when he or she is being interviewed by the DCF worker.

Tuesday Envelope Policies

Items to be included in the Tuesday Envelopes must be submitted no later than 3:00 p.m. on Monday afternoon to the school office. No fliers or letters for outside organizations (businesses, civic, community, private) will be sent in the Tuesday envelopes. Mention of the information may be included in the Tuesday Times and fliers made available in the school office. Only STA church and school related information will be allowed in the Tuesday envelopes. Such fliers may be left for distribution through the school office.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Promotion is the assignment/advancement of a student to the next grade level after the successful completion of all current grade level requirements. "Administrative Placement" or "Probationary Promotion" is the assignment to the next grade level of a student who has failed to fully and properly complete grade level requirements. This is done only in most unusual circumstances. Retention is the assignment of a student to repeat the same grade level for the next school year. The student's teacher will make the determination to recommend promotion or retention based on the students' performance. If a parent requests a probationary promotion, this **may be done one time**. If a similar situation presents itself the following year, the child then must be retained or seek admission to another school. Although the final decision is always that of the principal, the general policy will be to support the teacher's recommendation. Parents will be notified after the end of the third grading period, at the spring parent conferences, if retention or administrative placement is being considered for the following school year. Final decisions are made at the end of the school year, however.

Graduation

Students, who have successfully completed the course of studies prescribed for them by Office of Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Orlando, are eligible to receive a diploma certifying the successful completion of the program of studies. The diploma further signifies that the student is eligible to move on to studies on the secondary school level. The official documents needed for such advancement, however, is the student's transcript, which the school retains, and not a copy of the diploma. Transcripts will be sent to the secondary school upon its request to STA.

Modified Curriculum – Special Learning Needs

If the academic curriculum is modified or accommodated to meet the specific needs of a child with some learning differences, a brief explanation will appear on that student's report card, denoting the modification(s) or accommodation(s) of the curriculum in those subject areas. It is not fair to the student to set him/her up for failure in the next academic setting because a modified/accommodated curriculum is not noted.

Although, by Diocesan policy, a student does not need an IEP (this term is not used in Catholic Schools), these are often very helpful for classroom teachers to demonstrate ways in which the child can receive the most optimum assistance. Although our teachers are not specifically trained in special education, they are able to help students with mild learning differences in most cases. The school makes no promises but will do the best it can within its limited resources and personnel.

Testing

St. Thomas Aquinas School participates in the Iowa Basic Skills testing program (ITBS). Grades 4, 6 and 8 will take the basic skills achievement test in the fall (October). Grades 3, 5 and 7 take both the performance assessments and aptitude tests in the fall (October). Grade 2 takes the core battery of standardized tests (ITBS) in the spring (March). The

results of these standardized tests are published and shared with the parents when received back from the Riverside Publishing Co. Students in grades 5 and 7 will also take a standardized test of writing skills in the spring of the year offered through the ITBS program.

Students in 5th and 8th grades are also required to take the Assessment of Catholic Religious Education (ACRE) test in February of each year. These results are used to assess the quality of the religious education program in the school to assist in improving it and insuring that no gaps exist in the spiritual formation of the students.

SCHOOL UNIFORM CODE

It is the parent's responsibility to see that children are sent to school wearing the proper uniform. All students are required to wear the approved uniform daily, unless a special exemption has been given. Students who are not wearing the appropriate uniform, as outlined below, will call home to have a parent bring in the proper uniform item before returning to class.

UNIFORMS FOR GIRLS

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

Green polo shirt with STA logo, with plaid skirts, skorts (only girls in grades 1 and up may wear skorts) and culottes, or Peter Pan collared shirt with plaid jumper.

Maroon PE school shirt with maroon PE mesh shorts must be worn on PE days. All shirts must be tucked in.

Navy blue slacks with a belt may also be worn on cold weather days.

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Red polo shirt with plaid skirts, skorts or culottes.

Maroon PE school shirt with maroon PE mesh shorts must be worn on PE days. All shirts must be tucked in.

Navy blue slacks with a belt may be worn on cold weather days.

UNIFORMS FOR BOYS

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

Green polo shirts with STA logo.

Navy blue shorts or navy blue slacks with a belt.

Maroon PE school shirt with maroon PE mesh shorts must be worn on PE days. All shirts must be tucked in.

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Red polo shirt with STA logo.

Navy blue shorts or navy blue slacks with a belt.

Maroon PE school shirt with maroon PE mesh shorts must be worn on PE days. All shirts must be tucked in.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN UNIFORMS

Boys and girls in both PreK3 and PreK4 classes will wear uniforms this year. Green t-shirts and navy blue gym shorts with STA logo, will be the uniform for both boys and girls.

Shoes may be of the parents choosing at PreK grade levels only. These shoes must be regular shoes (closed toes/heels). No flip-flops or sandals, please!

OTHER UNIFORM POLICIES

Shoes

Black uniform flat heeled dress shoes may be worn.

Approved low-cut (no high or mid-cut style) athletic shoe (leather) only may be worn.

Shoes or athletic type shoes must be completely black. No logos or insignias.

No roller skate type shoes are to be worn at the school on any occasion.

Socks

Socks should be in solid white color. No trim or logos.

Socks must be worn above the ankles.

Athletic socks, which do not stay or show above the ankle, are not permitted.

Students with incorrect socks will be supplied a correct pair for which parents will be charged. Proceeds from this program will go to the missions. This will be strictly enforced!!!

Belts

Solid black, brown or navy blue belts **must be worn** at all times when wearing shorts or slacks.

Skorts/Skirt/Culotte Length

K-8th girls may wear uniform skorts, skirts or culottes.

They must not be shorter than 2" above the knee when worn at the natural waist.

The waistband of the skirt may not be rolled up at any time.

No exceptions will be made to this 2" rule, regardless of grade level.

This will be strictly enforced!!

Sweatshirt/Sweaters

Only the green sweatshirt with STA logo may be worn while in school.

No other sweatshirts or logos are permitted. Navy blue sweatshirts may be worn for PE only.

Shirts

In grades K-5 shirts must be tucked in so the belt or waistband is visible.

In grades 6th-8th, students will have the privilege to blouse the shirt only to the bottom of the waistband.

A belt is still required when worn this way with slacks or shorts.

Jackets

Only the STA school jackets may be worn inside the school (but not in the classroom) during school hours, but we recommend that the student wear the green sweatshirt during school hours if they are cold, and wear jackets for recess and dismissal. Classrooms will have adequate heat and/or cooling while children are in them.

Zero Tolerance Makeup Policy

Students are not permitted to wear any form of makeup to school at any time, **including dress down days**. Makeup includes, but is not limited to, lipstick, colored or clear lip gloss, mascara, eyeliner, eye shadow, glitter, foundation, blush, bronzing powder or any other form of facial decoration. The **only exception** will be the use of clear nail polish and foundation used to cover a skin condition. Students wearing any other form of makeup will be sent to the office to remove the makeup. Parents will be called if the offense is repeated. The child will have to wash the makeup off before being admitted back to class. We will make no exceptions to this policy.

Jewelry

Boys and girls may wear a watch and a small cross or religious medal on a light chain. Girls may wear **one pair of small post earrings**. No part of the earring may extend below the lobe of the ear. This is a safety issue. One small bracelet may be worn on the wrist. No ankle bracelets are allowed. No type of body rings or studs are permitted. One ring is permitted.

Hair

Hair color may not be dyed or altered in any extreme fashion (**no unnatural colors**). No hair decoration, such as glitter, etc. may be worn. Hair extensions and weaves are not allowed. Tails, scalp sculpting, lines or symbols are not allowed. Boys and girls hairstyles should be neat and worn off the face.

Girls may wear narrow ribbons, hair bands, or small clips/barrettes in solid, uniform colors or school plaid to hold their hair in place. Hair must be out of the eyes.

Boys are to avoid haircuts or hairstyles that interfere with the student's vision or are extreme in appearance. Hair should not be long enough to touch the collar. **Boys must be clean-shaven**. Facial hair, such as beards, moustaches or sideburns are not permitted. Bowl haircuts, such as "surfer" cuts, styles with any portion of the head shaven, and extreme layering are not permitted.

Hats or Scarves

No hats or scarves are allowed at any time during school days, **including dress down days**.

Dress Down Days Guidelines

No makeup of any form is ever allowed during Dress Down Days (see "Makeup"). Students may wear jeans or shorts, providing the jeans are not ripped or torn and must be worn at the natural waist. No excessively baggy, tight or low-cut pants, nor extremely low rise or hip-huggers are allowed. Shorts must be mid-thigh in length, and the waistband of the shorts is to be worn at the natural waistline. Short shorts are not allowed. **Undergarments should never be visible.**

Open toed shoes, flip-flops or sandals without back straps may NOT be worn on school grounds at any time. This is for safety reasons. **No rollerblade type shoes or sneakers may be worn at school on school days or for any school sponsored event.** They tend to damage the floors and also run the risk of an accident on school property. This policy will be strictly enforced.

No suggestive or offensive logos on shirts are allowed. Tank tops, ripped or sheer blouses, low cut, strapless or spaghetti strapped tops are NOT permitted. No exposed midriffs are allowed. **Blouses or tops should be long enough to still be tucked into the pants or skirts when the students' arms are raised above their head.** This guideline will be used when the length of a top is in question.

Questionable attire will always be reviewed and remain the sole decision of the Principal or Assistant Principal. Students improperly dressed will be asked to call home for a change of clothing.

“Dress Warm Days” Guidelines

When the weather forecast indicates **unusually cold weather** a “dress warm day” may be called. Guidelines for dress on such days are: STA green sweatshirt or STA shirt and sweater and slacks. Girls may also wear navy blue, black, red, or white tights or leggings once they enter school. Students may wear maroon or blue sweat pants on dress warm days. These are the **ONLY OPTIONS** for “Dress Warm Day”. Parents are always urged to use common sense.

“Birthday Dress Up Days”

Birthdays are a special occasion for children. Every student will be able to dress up for his or her birthday. Students must wear “church appropriate” clothing. No shorts, t-shirts, or jeans may be worn. All other dress down guidelines apply.

Dress Requirements for Mass Days

Boys are to wear **long navy blue slacks** and girls are to wear skirts or skorts as the official dress uniform on Mass days. No PE uniforms are ever worn to Mass. School jackets are **not** worn during Mass.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

School Mass

School Masses are celebrated once a week and on Holy Days. Individual classes plan and participate in these liturgies on a rotational basis. Students must dress in school uniform for all school Masses. All students in grades K-8 will attend school Masses. PreK4 classes are welcome and will begin to attend at some point in the school year, depending on the judgment of their teachers.

Religious Education

All STA school students are required to attend formal classes in religion. It is expected that all students, regardless of religious affiliation or belief, will participate fully in the religious/spiritual activities at the school, including Mass, liturgies and prayer services. Diocesan guidelines develop the curriculum plan for each grade centered on four major themes: Doctrine and Scripture, Prayer and Liturgy, Faith Response/Morality, and a Family Life Program.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacraments are important spiritual events in the lives of individual Catholics and our parish collectively. The Director of Religious Education for the parish is the point of contact on sacramental preparation. The school will facilitate communication between the Director of Religious Education's office and our school families, however, the church handles and schedules the dates of these events. Students are prepared for sacraments as follows:

First Communion:	Grade 2
First Reconciliation:	Grade 2
Confirmation:	Grade 9

These sacramental preparations demand certain key prerequisites for their reception:

- Parents must be involved in the student's preparation and attend the required meetings.
- In preparing for each sacrament, it is important to understand that Sacraments celebrate key spiritual events in our lives and help affirm the faith that is already being practiced. For this reason it is important that parents and their children practice the faith, especially through regular attendance at Sunday Mass.

Community Service

The true mark of every Catholic/Christian is found in his/her love for others. The children of St. Thomas Aquinas School demonstrate their faith in action through our community service program and our special ministry programs during the school year. Students at St. Thomas Aquinas School will provide a variety of service activities through their individual classes and collectively as a school through the parish and civic community.

Community service is a vital and integral part of the life of St. Thomas Aquinas School and its students. Every student has an **obligation and a responsibility** to complete a certain number of community hours each year as part of his or her program. Community service means actual work done to benefit others without pay or other compensation. The school will provide some opportunities for service hours, as will parish, student activities, and neighborhood opportunities. This work is not to be done at home nor as part of a student's normal chores. Student graduation and/or promotion depend on fulfilling this critical obligation. New policy this year states that Service Hours must be accomplished at determined points throughout the year and failure to do so will affect the student's grade in religion. Students that do not complete the proper amount of hours per quarter will be required to attend the crusader clean up days. To fulfill their quarterly service hours. The following are the required hours of service for each grade level:

Grade K-2	1 ½ hours per quarter
Grades 3-4	3 Hours Per Quarter
Grade 5-6	4 Hours Per Quarter
Grade 7	5 Hours Per Quarter
Grade 8	6 Hours Per Quarter

Specific forms to properly document service hours are available from homeroom/classroom teachers, and must be completed by the student and signed by the person supervising his or her service work. These forms are turned into the classroom/homeroom teacher and class records are maintained by him or her. Service Hours will be listed on report cards each quarter, so parents may see where their child(ren) stands in terms of the obligation to complete community service. A special bulletin board designated for Community Service will post completed hours for each student and be updated regularly.

Family Life Program

Students at St. Thomas Aquinas School have the opportunity to participate in the Diocesan Family Life Program. The goals of this program, dealing with issues of family life and human sexuality, are to:

- Assist parents in opening lines of communication with their children in this very important area of life.
- Provide the necessary, age-appropriate information to the students.
- Help in the formation of a Christian conscience in areas of a sexual nature.

To achieve these goals, parents are encouraged to discuss the material with their children. Parents may review all instructional material prior to the start of the program. If, after such a review, parents do not wish their child(ren) to participate in the program, they may submit a written request to the Principal to exempt their children from the program. In such a case, the child will leave the classroom during the instructional period.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition rates are determined annually by the pastor and principal and approved by the school board. Supply fees and registration fees are not included in the tuition. Tuition and special fees are determined through information gathered in developing the annual budget for the school year. Tuition, fees and fundraising are the major sources of revenue for meeting the expenses of running the school. Generally, tuition and fees account for approximately three-quarters of the actual cost of educating a child at STA school; the balance must be met through fund raising and other special sources.

St. Thomas Aquinas Schools employs the **SMART Tuition Management Service** to handle its tuition collection. In order to facilitate the collection of tuition and to assist parents in their monthly, personal budgeting, several payment options are available. The payment plans include:

- A single annual payment before the start of school with a 3% discount
- 2 semi-annual payments
- 10 or 11 monthly installments through Smart Management, Inc. These are **automatic payments drafted from your checking account**. There is a “set-up fee” for this service.

The annual or 1st installment of the semi-annual payment is due to the school by July 15.

All families pay a registration fee for each child annually. If the student is voluntarily withdrawn by the family for any reason, this registration payment is not refundable.

Tuition terms are specified in the registration packet and available through the school office. Any questions should be directed to the Principal.

Application for Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance may be available to parishioners who demonstrate true, financial need. The amount of funds available varies and is dependent upon the amount donated to the scholarship fund. This fund is designated for use by those who have applied for and been granted assistance. It will not be used to bring past due accounts current. Tuition assistance applications may be obtained through the school office. STA uses the agency recommended by the Diocese, FACTS, to determine family eligibility for tuition assistance, and all information submitted for review is strictly confidential. **Neither the school nor the parish alone shall determine which families receive aid.** Unless tuition assistance is applied for and approved, the school assumes that full tuition will be paid. Tuition assistance granted for one year does not guarantee that it will be granted every year, and by Diocesan policy families must re-apply each year for such assistance. Families receiving tuition assistance may not apply for the 3% discount.

Tuition Adjustments

All tuition adjustments, due to late entry to or withdrawal from school, will be determined on a daily-prorated basis, based upon 180 school days. No tuition refunds will be made for students withdrawn after February 15th.

Parishioner Tuition Rate

Parishioners registered, attending and supporting St. Thomas Aquinas Church through the Sunday envelope (\$10.00 weekly donation) are entitled to the parish tuition discount. The church office will check families participation in this program, and families not making this contribution will be charged the non-parishioner rate for tuition.

Default payments

If checks from parents are found to have insufficient funds, the school will levy a charge of \$25.00 for the default check. If this situation is a recurring one, the Business Office may require the parent to pay by cash, credit card, or money order.

Withdrawal

If it is necessary to withdraw a student during the school year, parents should advise the school as early as possible of the anticipated date of withdrawal. Parents must complete a Diocesan Withdrawal Form and settle all accounts before student records may be transferred. No official records are ever handed to parents. The school must have at least five (5) days advance notice to insure the timely processing of records and accounts. All original records will be transferred directly to the child's new school upon the request of that school.

Parents Agreement with School Parent-Student Handbook Rules and Regulations

As directed by the Office of Schools of the Diocese of Orlando, each parent must sign a form indicating that he or she has read, understands and accepts the directive, rules and regulations, as outlined in the school Parent-Student Handbook. In this regard, you are asked to attach your signature on the line below to indicate your agreement with this directive. This is a requirement for your child to attend our school and must be completed within the first week of school.

The Parent-Student Handbook is part of the contractual agreement between the school and the parent and is essential to the smooth and informed running of the school program day to day. Parents having any concerns or questions about the contents may call the school, and the Principal or Assistant Principal will gladly discuss and help clarify any such issues.

I, _____, understand and accept the rules, regulations and directive contained in the St. Thomas Aquinas Parent-Student Handbook for the 2009-2010 school year. I have read the book and agree to follow the spirit and intent of the handbook.

Parent's Signature

Date _____

**THIS SIGNED FORM MUST BE RETURNED TO THE
SCHOOL OFFICE WITHIN ONE WEEK OF THE
BEGINNING OF SCHOOL.**