



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK 2018-19

"Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Pope St. John Paul II

St. Thomas More Academy (STMA) offers a Catholic classical college preparatory education grounded in history's great conversations and ordered to truth. Students work in a joyful and faithful community that nurtures human excellence. Graduates are formed as whole persons with high ethical standards and superior skills and sent out to love and serve as Christian disciples.

Welcome to STMA!

As a recognized leader among independent Catholic preparatory schools St. Thomas More Academy provides students a proven top-quality learning experience in an environment that inspires constant improvement and excellent outcomes. This handbook offers a summary of important practices and expectations to help guide the student's journey.

Academics

1. STMA's model of school is intentional and tightly designed. Standards, curriculum, instructional pace, math placements, house rules, and other school expectations cannot be waived or modified.
2. Students have many commitments around home, church, and community. STMA manages workloads to respect these commitments.
3. Each semester the Registrar definitively assigns students to core courses. Students in grades 10-12 also request a spread of preferred electives each semester.
4. Students cannot take courses for credit at STMA if equivalent courses have been completed elsewhere. With the Registrar's permission a student may take summer Geometry elsewhere between grades 9 and 10.
5. Transfer among core courses is not possible, but students may transfer among electives. The deadline for fall requests is August 17, 2018; spring is January 11, 2019. Transfers are at the Registrar's discretion.
6. Students may request honors in a core course by notifying the teacher in writing by August 17, 2018 (for spring-only courses, January 11, 2019). For honors instead of standard credit the student must earn a grade of at least 77 on the course's honors examination and for the course. Examinations are offered just once.
7. Annual honors seminars with the Dean of Studies are among STMA's most intensive learning opportunities. Enrollment is limited and based on prior performance in the school.
8. STMA's modes of assessment include tests, quizzes, in-class essays/lab reports, and formal papers or projects. Math and language core courses allow two (2) quiz drops per semester; others allow one (1).
9. Traditional "homework" is a modest part of the student's experience. Silent study periods allow diligent students to finish many tasks inside the school.

10. Writing quality is a critical discriminator in college admissions and in the professional world. Student writing loads are streamlined to encourage deep work and crafting at an unhurried pace.

11. Each year STMA awards the Preparatory Writing Prize for the best humanities paper in grades 10-12. The Excellence in the Trivium Award recognizes the best senior honors thesis.

12. STMA's thesis program has inspired similar programs in several peer schools. With individualized faculty support each senior writes a non-honors thesis (3000 words) or an honors thesis (4000 words and a presentation). The thesis submission deadline is 1 April 2019.

13. STMA's approach to math practice has demonstrated success in supporting student responsibility and strong results. Regular ungraded problem sets are linked to graded quizzes. To take a math quiz for credit a student must complete the set assigned to support the quiz. Otherwise the quiz is dropped.

14. If a student is absent for graded *in-class* work the work is to be completed within two (2) school days of return. Afterwards a missing quiz is dropped; other work loses ten (10) points per day until it is turned in.

15. If a student is absent from school when graded *out-of-class* work is due the work is to be submitted to the teacher by 8AM on the due date. Afterwards the work loses ten (10) points per day until it is turned in.

16. Too much delay in making up work impacts optimal progress. Other accommodations around missing work require the permission of the Dean of Faculty and are only granted for serious cause.

17. STMA grades on a traditional 4.0 scale. Students and families can view assignment grades and quarterly grade reports in Renweb. The Registrar reviews student results each quarter to evaluate standing and progress and to encourage any needed improvements.

18. From its founding STMA has held up non-negotiable standards that bear proper witness to Catholic college preparatory success.

- Promotion to grade 10 or 11 requires a cumulative GPA of at least 1.33 over all STMA courses.
- Promotion to grade 12 requires a cumulative GPA of at least 2.00 over all STMA courses.
- Graduation eligibility requires a grade of at least 77 on the senior thesis, a cumulative GPA of at least 2.00 over all STMA courses, and passing grades for all courses in grade 12.
- Renewal of STMA merit aid requires a cumulative GPA of at least 2.00 at the end of the first year and 2.33 at the end of each year after. Support may be rescinded for disciplinary cause (see 27).

Course failures are rare and require remedy to maintain enrollment. Students in grades 9 and 10 may remedy up to two (2) failures each academic year according to teacher direction and within specified timelines. Students in grade 11 may remedy one (1).

19. STMA awards honors to qualifying seniors with at least four (4) semesters in the school. *Summa cum laude* requires a GPA of at least 3.89, *magna cum laude* 3.78, and *cum laude* 3.67.

20. Graduating students with at least seven (7) semesters in the school are eligible for valedictory and salutatory honors. These are decided on cumulative GPA at spring mid-term of grade 12.

Formation

21. STMA's founder and school leaders endorse values that are proper to a classical Catholic preparatory school engaged in common labor for the good of young people. By freely enrolling, parents and students express aspiration toward and support for the ends of the STMA education and signal both trust in the school and intended cooperation with established expectations.

22. The fundamental expectation pertaining to conduct in the STMA community is the Gospel rule of love toward God and neighbor that fulfills the Ten Commandments. It encompasses all personal interactions that might occur. STMA also expects students to cooperate with all house rules (below).
23. STMA maintains a safe, peaceful, and secure learning environment. Prompt and preventive formation that leads to swift resolution is a pillar of the school model.
24. Staff cannot always notify families about student conversations in advance, but Renweb notes document and communicate all significant formation interactions.
25. A *Local Formation* note indicates ordinary counsel about improving attitude or conduct and is emailed to the student, copying parents. These notes seldom raise concerns unless they add up in a student's record.
26. A *Formation Meeting* note indicates more sustained counsel and intervention from the Student Life Coordinators over persistent or pressing issue(s).
27. The Student Life Coordinators may refer any matter to the Dean of Studies for resolution. The Dean has broad authority over school discipline. Possible outcomes range from counsel to suspension.
28. Unfailing integrity is a prized student outcome. The faculty honor committee blind-reviews alleged academic impropriety and refers findings of impropriety to the Dean of Studies.
29. Questions about a student's experience should be directed first to the nearest competent authority. Subsidiarity honors Catholic teaching and ensures quickest response.
30. STMA has no place for meanness or hostility. Antagonism from students or families toward the school, its expectations and practices, or persons working in it conflicts with the Gospel. Failures to profit from the STMA education merit grave concern. Continued enrollment depends on resolution in accord with school direction. As a private school STMA may dismiss a student at any time without right or process of appeal.

Resources

31. STMA provides many opportunities to enter Christian life more deeply. Besides rich Catholic learning, students also participate in required Masses, small-group "households" with faculty mentors, the March for Life, and in Service and Outreach projects built around the corporal works of mercy.
32. Many extracurricular activities are available to students, including Athletics, Choir, Debate, Future Farmers of America, Junior Classical League, the Pro-Life Club, Science Olympiad, Student Council, and more. All support the top STMA student outcomes and sharpen portfolios for college and future careers.
33. Student-athletes have steady opportunities to model STMA standards inside and outside school. For details about STMA's sports program see the *Athletics Handbook*.
34. A student who earns a failing grade or drops below a cumulative 2.0 GPA on a quarterly report must set aside the privilege of extracurricular participation to focus on improving grades. Restored eligibility requires all passing grades and a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 on the next report.
35. Extracurricular organizations may establish their own higher standards around GPA, conduct, and student contribution. These standards are at the discretion of extracurricular advisers.
36. With the exception of documented professional appointments (below), a student must attend school for a full day on the day of an extracurricular event to participate in the event.
37. Teachers cannot supervise students at sports events and other off-campus gatherings. Families are the proper resource for this supervision.

38. STMA does not charge a materials fee, though there are occasional fees for field trips, athletics, and some classes and clubs.

39. Textbooks are often provided for core courses in STEM. Significant damage on return requires reimbursement. Some courses require modest book purchases. Online readings are common.

40. Each student must have a personal TI-83+ or TI-84 graphing calculator and computer and printer access outside of school.

Dress

41. Student dress and demeanor is to be crisp, dignified, professional, and modest at school and at all school events. Students are expected to comply with the established dress code (below). The Headmaster's judgments around the suitability of dress and demeanor are determinative and final.

42. When on campus students must wear the day's uniform with properly tucked and buttoned shirts. Accessories should be simple and subdued. Students may change out of uniform on campus when leaving to participate in an athletic event or when participating in a class or club that requires other dress.

43. With the exception of the STMA sweatshirt (which is ordered through the school) the required vendor for STMA apparel is Flynn & O'Hara, at (800) 441-4122 and www.flynnohara.com.

Attendance

44. STMA expects regular school attendance within established boundaries. Excessive absence undermines key outcomes and disrupts the student's learning experience.

45. STMA does not describe absences as excused or unexcused. Students may miss up to ten (10) full school days in an academic year at family discretion. Absences are calculated in quarter-day increments. The Registrar alerts any student who reaches seven (7) absences.

46. STMA provides each student a one-time emergency absence reserve for potential use over the *full time of enrollment*. If a student exceeds the annual allowance he or she may access the reserve. The reserve for first-year students is four (4) days for potential use over four (4) years. The reserve is pro-rated for continuing (and transferring) students at three (3) days for grade 10, two (2) for grade 11, and one (1) for grade 12. The reserve cannot be replenished.

47. STMA is unable to provide at-home options for students who cannot meet attendance expectations. Enrollment must be curtailed if a student exceeds the annual absence limit and exhausts his or her reserve.

48. Ordinary timeliness is important in college and in professional life. A student who is persistently tardy to school or class will be referred to the Student Life Coordinators.

49. The Registrar can waive time out for up to six (6) brief professional appointments each year. Waiver requires written notice from the attending professional(s).

50. The Registrar must have permission to release a student during school hours. Release is only to the student's parent or to a person the parent has approved in Renweb. A self-driving student may leave and return during school hours only for a professional appointment.

51. Notice of non-scheduled school closures is available on WRAL television, at wral.com, at <http://stmacademy.org>, via text from Remind 101, and on the school's Facebook page.

After STMA

52. Any request for documents (including college and scholarship reference requests) requires three (3) weeks’ notice to the person being asked to fulfill the request. STMA cannot ensure on-time document delivery without adequate notice.

53. To protect students and maximize chances of success all teachers require guarantees of confidentiality for references and only provide references directly to reviewers. Student records (including transcripts) are released only if all financial accounts with the school are settled at release.

54. STMA prepares students for outstanding college placement success. All seniors are expected to cooperate with placement activities and to secure at least one four-year admission. STMA keenly supports all graduates during transitions into traditional college, other schooling, or professional work and vocation.

Top Student Outcomes

Love of God	Continuous Learner
Love of Neighbor	Competent Technical Skills
Love of Church	Ability to Find the Best Solutions and Outcomes
Love of History	Cooperative and Contributive Team Member
Love of Beauty	Strong Work Ethic
Unfailing Integrity	Dreams and Aspirations to Change the World
Virtuous Leader with Well-Developed Judgment	Traditional American Values and Entrepreneurialism
Self-Reliant Individual	Well-Developed People and Communication Skills
Truth-Seeker	Gratitude
Critical Thinker and Problem Solver	Healthy Mind, Body, and Spirit

Course of Studies

	<i>Grade 9</i>	<i>Grade 10</i>	<i>Grade 11</i>	<i>Grade 12</i>
<i>Trivium</i>	Grammar	Logic and Rhetoric	Philosophy	Senior Thesis
<i>History</i>	Ancient History	Medieval History	Modern History	Colonial America, American History Since 1789
<i>Literature</i>	Ancient Literature	Medieval Literature	Modern Literature	American Literature
<i>Theology</i>	Scripture	Catholicism	Church History Moral Theology	Bioethics, Catholic Traditions in Politics and Economics
<i>Language</i>	Latin 1	Latin 2	Latin 3 or Spanish 1 or French 1	Latin 4 or Spanish 2 or French 2
<i>Math</i>	Algebra 1 or Geometry or Algebra 2	Geometry or Algebra 2 or Precalculus	Algebra 2 or Precalculus or Calculus	Precalculus or Calculus or Statistics
<i>Science</i>	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	See Trivium
<i>Electives</i>	n/a	Two per semester	Two per semester	Two per semester

<i>Support</i>	Orientation, Prep Writing	n/a	SAT Prep, Non-cognitive Skills 1 College Workshop	Non-cognitive Skills 2, College Writing, College Transitions
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Graduation requires 30 STMA credits from students who have attended all four years. The Registrar evaluates credits for transfer students case-by-case.

Grading Scale

Letter	Numerical	Narrative	Standard	Honors
A	95-100	Truly exceptional; meets or exceeds highest expectations	4.0	4.33
A-	93-94	Outstanding work; superior across all course areas	3.667	4.0
B+	91-92	Very good; superior across most course areas	3.333	3.667
B	87-90	Good; solid across most course areas	3.0	3.333
B-	85-86	Good, but falls short of solid in in most course areas	2.667	3.0
C+	83-84	Meets all basic expectations	2.333	2.667
C	79-82	Acceptable; meets most basic expectations	2.0	2.333
C-	77-78	Meets a minority of basic expectations	1.667	2.0
D	70-76	Minimally acceptable	1.0	N/A
F	<70	Unacceptable	0	N/A

Dress Code

	Young women	Young men
MWF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional: Blazer optional • Optional: Wine sweater, sweater vest, or fleece • Optional: Black embroidered soft-shell jacket • Optional: STMA sweatshirt (with STMA shirt underneath) • Charcoal or black trousers, knee-length plaid or charcoal skirt, or black knee-length kilt/skirt • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves), white, wine, or gray STMA polo • Black socks • Closed-toe flats or low-heeled all-black shoes in good condition, with heels not to exceed two inches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional: Blazer • Optional: Wine sweater, sweater vest, or fleece • Optional: STMA sweatshirt (with STMA shirt underneath) • Charcoal or black trousers • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves), white, wine, or gray STMA polo • Black socks • Black belt • Closed-toe all-black shoes in good condition
TT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black blazer with sewn crest on pocket (maroon blazer in grades 11/12 after convocation Mass) • Charcoal trousers or knee-length plaid or charcoal skirt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black blazer with sewn crest on pocket (maroon blazer in grades 11/12 after convocation Mass) • Charcoal trousers • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves) • Black or charcoal socks • Closed-toe flats or low-heeled all-black shoes in good condition, with heels not to exceed two inches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black socks • Black belt • Closed-toe all-black shoes in good condition • Wine-striped necktie
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House Rules

Students are expected to maintain proper decorum inside and outside school. STMA cannot allow:

- Class disruption. Negative attitudes toward learning will incur strong challenge.
- Sleeping in school. A student who cannot stay awake will be sent home for the day.
- Exclusivity and coupling on campus and at school events.
- Use of personal electronic devices on campus between arrival and the last class bell. If a student brings a device to school it must be kept off in the student’s locker until the last class bell.
- Internet postings that do not respect STMA’s core Catholic values and honor STMA’s good reputation.
- Cyber- and other forms of bullying.
- Use of STMA’s logo or name without permission.
- School-related filming, photography, or audio recording without permission.
- Recording in a class or school assembly.
- Frivolous activity on school computers or use of school printers.
- Unsecured medications, including over-the-counter pain relievers. Students must secure all medications with the Registrar, along with written parent/guardian instructions.
- Smoking/vaping and related products, alcohol, illegal drugs, or weapons on campus or at school events.
- Eating/snacking in class without verified medical reasons or specific instructor permission.
- Storage of large backpacks and bulky personal belongings outside assigned lockers.
- Untidiness in school spaces. Students must keep all school spaces clean, neat, undamaged, and free of trash. Items cannot be taped to the outside of lockers. Students must participate in school cleanups.
- Visitors to campus who have not signed in and received a visitor’s tag at the front desk.

The 2018-19 Community Handbook abrogates and supersedes any prior statements of STMA policy.

Staff 2018-19

Deacon Brad Watkins, Headmaster (M.F.A., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill)
Wesley Kirkpatrick, Dean of Studies, College Placement Director (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame)
Jake Noland, Dean of Faculty (Ph.D., Texas A&M University)
Ann Cureton, Registrar (B.A., University of North Carolina Wilmington)
Randall Blessing, Math and Sciences (M.S., Creighton University)
Luisana Briceno, Humanities (B.S., University of Zulia)
Myles Casanova, Humanities (M.T.S., University of Notre Dame)
Kristy Chandler, Humanities and Fine Arts (M.S., North Carolina State University)
Michael D'Andrea, Math and Sciences (B.S., United States Naval Academy)
Joel Decker, Humanities (M.Div., Duke University)
Julie Eaton, Math and Sciences (M.S., North Carolina State University)
Christina Geradts, Student Life Coordinator, Humanities (B.A., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill)
Patricia Hartley, Service and Outreach
Kelly Jackson, Math (M.S., Georgia Institute of Technology)
Kate Kirkpatrick, Humanities and Sciences (B.A., Franciscan University)
Charles McCants, Student Life Coordinator, Humanities (M.T.S., Duke University)
Shari Milton, Non-Cognitive Skills
Emily Nye, Humanities (M.T.S., University of Notre Dame)
Jeff Rice, Humanities and Fine Arts (B.A., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill)
Dan Rolando, Math and Sciences (M.S., North Carolina State University)
Anna Scinska, Math and Sciences (BSc., King's College, University of London)