



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK 2019-20

"[Students] need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be [people] of integrity and ... to be balanced in judgment and behavior."

"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

A recognized leader among independent Catholic preparatory schools, St. Thomas More Academy (STMA) offers a top-quality liberal arts education in a faithful, aspiring, peaceful, and loving learning community that is committed to truth and constant improvement. Young men and women go out from the school into the world with sound ethical standards and superior academic and personal skills to love and serve as Christian disciples.

Steady alignment with this apostolic mission and positive engagement with all aspects of the STMA education are essential for realizing the highest outcomes. By freely enrolling, parents and students express aspiration toward and support for the ends of the STMA education and signal intended cooperation with and trust in the school. This community handbook summarizes important practices and expectations to help guide the journey.

1. STMA's founder and school leaders endorse values and practices that are proper to a traditionally Catholic preparatory school engaged in common labor for the good of young people and dedicated to real excellence. STMA cannot waive or modify established curriculum, instructional pace, evaluation modes and standards, math placements, house rules, or other school expectations.
2. The Registrar assigns students to required core courses. Core drop/add is not allowed. Most core courses offer honors credit. Honors credit requires a grade of 77 or better on the course's honors examination and for the course itself. Honors examinations are offered only once. STMA also provides an outstanding range of electives. Students in grades 10-12 must complete three (3) each year. A fourth is allowed. Elective drop/add is allowed with the Registrar's approval. Electives do not offer honors credit. Most have enrollment caps and are filled "first-come, first-served."
3. STMA's curriculum is an integral whole. Students cannot take courses for credit if equivalent courses have been completed elsewhere. To accelerate math a student may take summer Geometry elsewhere between grades 9 and 10 with the Registrar's approval. Students who have attended all four years at STMA must present a minimum of 34 credits to graduate. The Registrar evaluates transfer credits case-by-case.
4. Other than reading and writing, traditional homework is a modest part of the student's experience in most courses. Silent study periods encourage and support efforts to keep tasks inside school. Students are steadily urged to take full advantage of in-school study time.
5. Graded work at STMA includes tests, quizzes, in-class writings, lab reports, and formal papers and

projects. STMA uses a traditional 4.0 scale and records grades in FACTS/SIS (formerly Renweb). The Registrar reviews student results each quarter and encourages any needed improvements.

6. Course failures are rare at STMA and require successful remediation per faculty direction within specified timelines to warrant promotion. The remediation limit for grade 9 is three (3) courses. For grade 10 it is two (2). Only one (1) remediation is allowed for rising seniors.
7. As a graduation requirement each senior works with the support of a faculty adviser to complete a 3000-word research paper (4000 and a brief oral defense for honors) on a topic that the Dean of Studies assigns each fall. Writing and research are facilitated via the College Writing course. For approval a thesis must earn a grade of 77 or better. The thesis submission deadline is 1 April 2020.
8. Writing quality is a key discriminator in college admissions and in the professional world. STMA requirements are streamlined to encourage deep work and unhurried crafting. Each year the Dean of Studies blind-reviews teacher-nominated writing for the Preparatory Writing Prize (best course paper) and for STMA's premier academic honor, the Excellence in the Trivium Prize (best senior honors thesis).
9. STMA's proven approach to math practice develops student responsibility and supports high outcomes. Instructors regularly assign ungraded homework problems that are linked to pending graded quizzes. To take a math quiz for credit a student must complete the homework(s) assigned to support the quiz. Otherwise the quiz is treated as ungraded practice and dropped in the gradebook. Core courses in mathematics allow two (2) quiz drops per semester.
10. From its founding STMA has held up non-negotiable standards that bear witness to Catholic college preparatory success. Promotion to grade 10 requires a cumulative 1.33 GPA or better over all STMA courses. Promotion to grade 11 requires a cumulative 1.66 GPA or better, and promotion to grade 12 requires a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better. Timely graduation requires an approved senior thesis, a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better over all STMA courses, and passing grades for all core and elective courses completed in grade 12.
11. A student receiving STMA-based financial aid must earn a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better at the end of his or her first year and a cumulative 2.33 GPA or better at the end of each subsequent year to keep the aid. At administrative discretion aid may be rescinded at any time for disciplinary or academic cause.
12. Each semester students compete for spots on the Dean's and Headmaster's Lists. Mention on the Dean's List requires a 3.89 semester GPA or higher; mention on the Headmaster's List requires a 4.10 semester GPA or higher. Seniors who have studied at STMA at least four (4) consecutive semesters may qualify for Latin graduation honors. A cumulative weighted 3.89 GPA is required for *summa cum laude*. 3.78 is required for *magna cum laude* and 3.67 for *cum laude*. Seniors who have studied at STMA at least seven (7) semesters are also eligible for valedictory and salutatory honors. These are decided on cumulative GPA at spring mid-term of grade 12.
13. STMA expects all members of the school community to follow the Gospel rule of love toward God and neighbor that fulfills the Ten Commandments. STMA offers a safe and secure learning environment. Prompt and preventive formation and swift issue resolution are pillars of the school model. Student and family support and cooperation are expected.
14. Subsidiarity honors Catholic teaching and ensures quick response to concerns. Questions about a student's experience should be directed first to the nearest competent authority (usually the classroom teacher or activity leader). Classroom concerns that are brought to the administration first will be redirected to the nearest competent authority. STMA teachers and administrators cannot monitor all interactions between students and families in and outside school. Parents can

and should contact other parents directly to talk over ordinary peer-to-peer issues. Staff may be invited to assist if resolution is not achieved.

15. STMA cannot always notify families about student issues in advance, but FACTS/SIS formation notes are available to document and communicate interactions. *Local Formation* notes follow low-intensity counsel over presentation in the school. Emailed to students, copying parents, these might come from any STMA staff and seldom raise concerns unless they add up in a student's record. *Formation Meeting* notes come only from the Student Life Coordinators and report sustained intervention over persistent or pressing negative conduct. These notes often convey requests for family meetings to discern the best paths forward to positive outcomes.
16. In most cases problems are resolved and solidarity reestablished in conversations with the Student Life Coordinators, but some grave issues might merit referral to the Dean of Studies for resolution. The Dean has broad authority over school discipline. Possible referral outcomes range from counsel to indefinite suspension.
17. STMA extends and desires good will and prizes unfailing integrity. Truthfulness is expected in all interactions. Academic integrity merits special mention. An *ad hoc* honor committee blind-reviews any alleged academic impropriety, including alleged plagiarism, and refers findings to the Student Life Coordinators. Repeated founded disintegrity is grave and is always referred to the Dean of Studies.
18. STMA cannot accommodate activities and public presentations that risk scandal to the school's traditionally Catholic identity. Antagonism from students or families toward the school's identity, expectations, and practices or toward school employees conflicts with the Gospel. Meanness, gossip, and calumny have no place. STMA cannot be all things to all people. Myopia around school purposes poses risks to mission alignment and solidarity. Failures to profit from the STMA education merit serious concern. If challenged over these or similar matters community members must achieve prompt resolution per administrative direction. As a private school STMA may dismiss a student at any time without right or process of appeal.
19. STMA provides students 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 annual March for Life, and in multiple Service and Outreach projects built around the corporal works of mercy.
20. STMA offers many extracurricular activities. All support the top student outcomes (below) and sharpen portfolios for college and future careers. These activities include Athletics, Choir, Debate, Future Farmers of America, Junior Classical League, the Pro-Life Club, Science Olympiad, Student Council, and more.
21. Students and families must not communicate directly with the NCISAA or other Conference schools. STMA's Athletic Director is exclusively authorized to address Conference issues. Teachers cannot supervise students at sports events and other off-campus gatherings. Families are the proper resource for this supervision.
22. The Dean of Studies has discretion over extracurricular eligibility. A student who earns a failing grade or posts a cumulative GPA below 2.0 on a quarterly report must set aside the privilege of extracurricular participation to focus on improving grades for the next report. The Student Life Coordinators might also recommend suspension of eligibility as a formation consequence. With the Dean's approval, extracurricular organizations may establish their own higher standards around GPA, conduct, and student contribution.
23. During school days students are to dress according to the in-school uniform code (below).

Appropriate non-uniform dress is allowed only when leaving school directly to participate in an athletic event and when participating in a practice, class, or club that requires it.

24. All students represent STMA publicly both on and off campus. Students must avoid personal presentations that risk scandal or divisiveness or in any other way chaff against the values and sensibilities of a well-ordered Catholic community. The Headmaster's judgments around the suitability of student dress and demeanor are determinative and final.
25. STMA expects students and families to follow established attendance policies. Irregularities disrupt the learning experience and risk declines in key outcomes. A student may miss up to ten (10) full school days in an academic year. This is the *annual allowance*. Time out is calculated in quarter-day increments and is not routinely adjudicated as "excused" or "unexcused." Annual allowances may be used as students and families wish. The Registrar assists family tracking by sending alerts when a student has used more than five (5) days from his or her annual allowance. STMA also provides each student an *emergency reserve* for use over the full time of enrollment in the school. The emergency reserve is five (5) days for grade 9 and is prorated for continuing (and transferring) students at four (4) days for grade 10, three (3) for grade 11, and two (2) for grade 12. The reserve cannot be replenished.
26. STMA does not offer at-home study options for students who are not meeting attendance expectations. The Registrar can waive up to two (2) days per year for professional appointments (medical, dental), but only with written notice from the attending professional(s). If a student exhausts his or her annual allowance and emergency reserve any additional time out requires compensatory work on selected Saturdays and Teacher Work Days. Any other accommodations around excessive time out are fully at the Headmaster's discretion and considered only in demonstrably serious circumstances.
27. Too much delay in making up missed work impacts optimal academic progress. If a student is absent for graded in-class work he or she must make-up the missing work before the next class meeting. Afterwards a missing quiz is dropped. Other work loses ten (10) points per day pending submission. If a student will be absent when graded out-of-class work is due he or she must submit the work to the teacher electronically or by proxy no later than 8:00 AM on the due date. Afterwards the work loses ten (10) points per day pending submission. Other accommodations around missing work require the Dean of Faculty's approval.
28. 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 student's parent has approved in FACTS/SIS. A self-driving student may leave and return during school hours only for a professional appointment.
29. STMA does not charge a materials fee. There are occasional fees for field trips, athletics, and some classes and clubs. Some courses require modest book purchases. Online readings are common. Core STEM courses often provide textbooks. Excessive damage on return requires reimbursement. Each student must also have computer and printer access outside school and a personal TI-83+ or TI-84 graphing calculator for use in and outside school.
30. All document requests (including for transcripts and teacher references) require three (3) weeks' notice to the relevant party. STMA cannot ensure on-time delivery without this notice. Moreover, to protect students and maximize outcomes all teachers require confidentiality guarantees for references and only provide references directly to reviewers. STMA can release records (including transcripts and diplomas) only after all of a student's financial accounts are settled.
31. Having prepared students for outstanding college success, STMA expects all seniors to cooperate with placement activities and to secure at least one four-year admission. STMA supports all graduates during transitions into college, other schooling, or professional work and vocation.

Top Student Outcomes

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

| | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 |
|------------|---|--|---|---|
| Trivium | Grammar Preparatory Writing | Logic and Rhetoric | Introduction to Philosophy | College Writing: Thesis Research and Composition Advanced Topics in Philosophy (2020-21) |
| History | Dean's Ancient History 1: Prehistory and Early Civilizations Ancient History 2: The Classical World | Medieval History The Early Middle Ages Medieval History 2: The High Middle Ages | Modern European History 1: Early Modern to 1873 Modern European History 2: 1873 to the Present | American History 1: Colonial America to the Civil War American History 2: 1865 to the Present |
| Literature | Ancient Literature 1: Great Stories from Myth and Scripture Ancient Literature 2: Great Stories from Greece and Rome | Medieval Literature 1: Early Medieval Writing Medieval Literature 2: Dante to Chaucer | Modern European Literature 1: Renaissance to Romanticism Modern European Literature 2: 1850 to the Present | American Literature 1: Origins to the Civil War American Literature 2: 1865 to the Present |

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|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Theology | New Testament and Patristics (2019-20) | Catholicism | Moral Theology | Bioethics Catholic Traditions in Politics and Economics |
| Language | Latin 1 | Latin 2 | Latin 3 or French 1 or Spanish 1 | Latin 4 or French 2 or Spanish 2 |
| Mathematics | Algebra 1 or Geometry or Algebra 2 | Geometry or Algebra 2 or Precalculus | Algebra 2 or Precalculus or Calculus | Precalculus or Advanced Functions and Modeling or Statistics or Calculus |
| Science | Biology | Chemistry | Physics | Advanced Topics in Science (2020-21) |
| Electives | n/a | Three or four, varied topics | Three or four, varied topics | Three or four, varied topics |
| Other | First Year Seminar | Catholic Arts and Culture (2020-21) | Non-cognitive Skills 1 SAT Preparation College Workshop | Non-cognitive Skills 2 College Transitions Personal Finance (2020-21) |

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 |

House Rules

Students are to maintain proper decorum inside and outside school. Compliance with “house rules” is expected.

Without exception, campus visitors (including former students) must register for and receive a visitor’s tag at the front desk before entering campus.

STMA cannot and does not allow the following:

- 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.
- Sloppy dress. Clothing must be properly cleaned, tucked, and buttoned.
- Class postures that suggest disaffection/disengagement. Students must maintain proper posture in professional settings, including in classrooms.
- 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 turned off and stowed in the student’s locker until the last class bell.
- Public presentations (including internet postings) that do not respect STMA’s traditional 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 explicit permission.
- Video or audio recording in a class or school assembly.
- Frivolous activity on school computers.
- Student printing on school printers.
- Unsecured medications, including over-the-counter pain relievers. Students must present all medications with written parent/guardian instructions to the Registrar for secure storage.
- 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 explicit 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, and must ensure that nothing is taped to the outside of lockers. All students must participate in routine and announced school cleanups.

Uniform

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.

| | 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) • Black or charcoal 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, charcoal, or gray 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: Black embroidered soft-shell jacket • Optional: STMA sweatshirt (with STMA shirt underneath) • Black or charcoal trousers • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves), white, wine, or gray STMA polo • Black, charcoal, or gray socks • Black belt • Closed-toe all-black shoes in good condition |
| TR | <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 • White Oxford shirt (long or short sleeves) • Black, charcoal, or gray socks • Closed-toe all-black shoes, flats or low-heeled, in good condition, with heels not to exceed two inches. | <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) • Black, charcoal, or gray socks • Black belt • Closed-toe all-black shoes in good condition • Wine-striped necktie |

Non-scheduled Closures

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

Staff 2019-20

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, Athletic Director (Ph.D., Texas A&M University)
Ann Cureton, Registrar (B.A., University of North Carolina Wilmington)
Amanda Bambury, Humanities (M.A., University of Notre Dame)
Randall Blessing, Math and Sciences (M.S., Creighton University)
Luisana Briceno, Humanities (B.S., University of Zulia)
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)
Clint Eaton, Math and Sciences (M.S., University of Maine)
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)
Robert Kirkendall, Humanities (B.A., Biola University)
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
Stormy Noland, Admissions (B.A., Texas A&M University)
Emily Nye, Humanities (M.T.S., University of Notre Dame)
Dan Rolando, Math and Sciences (M.S., North Carolina State University)

The 2019-20 Community Handbook abrogates and supersedes any prior statements of STMA policy.

August 2019