



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK 2022-23

“It is of utmost importance... that the Church's institutions be genuinely Catholic: Catholic in their self-understanding and Catholic in their identity....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 classical Catholic college preparatory education 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 academic and personal skills and sent out to love and serve as Christian disciples.

In teaching, practice, and policy, STMA is aligned with and obedient to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. STMA follows Church teaching in all matters of faith and morals, including but not limited to: truth and natural law; the equal dignity of all human persons; the right to life from conception to natural death; marriage as a permanent, faithful, and exclusive union of one man and one woman; rightly ordered human sexuality and the vocation to chastity; and a biblical understanding of human identity, that as *“male and female He created them.”*

Academic Policies and Procedures

1. St. Thomas More Academy (STMA) offers a high quality classical liberal arts education. STMA’s curriculum is an integral whole. 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 and sections. Student or family requests for assignment to particular core courses or sections cannot be accommodated. The Registrar’s decisions regarding assignment to core courses and sections are determinative. Students may not decline to take a course that the Registrar requires or shift course sections.
3. Most core courses in grades 9-12 offer honors credit. Honors credit requires a grade of 77 or better on the written entrance exam for the oral Socratic honors exam, for the oral exam itself, and for the course. Exams are offered only once. Courses in grades 6-8 do not offer honors credit.
4. With the exception of students transferring to STMA from elsewhere for grade 11 or grade 12, juniors and seniors who select honors enrollment at the start of a math course may not drop honors.
5. The Registrar also assigns students to elective courses in grades 10-12. STMA requires three electives per year from students in grades 10-11 and four from students in grade 12. Students request electives before the start of each semester. Requests are reviewed strictly “first-come, first-served.” Elective courses are limited; all have firm enrollment caps. Elective requests never guarantee enrollment in requested electives. Noting the exception outlined above, elective drop/add is allowed within a specified period with Registrar approval. Electives do not offer honors credit. The Registrar’s final decisions regarding assignment to elective courses are determinative.
6. A student who enrolls for study at STMA at the start of grade 9 may not subsequently submit for credit any course taken outside STMA (including courses done under “dual enrollment”) except, with Registrar approval, geometry,

which may be taken elsewhere between grades 9 and 10. A passing grade on the STMA geometry proficiency exam afterwards is required for exemption from STMA geometry. Special conditions might apply for students who transfer into STMA after the first semester of grade 9. The registrar and admission team make these determinations case by case.

7. No STMA courses may be taken for credit if equivalents have been completed elsewhere. If course duplication is confirmed the Registrar will immediately disenroll the student from the relevant STMA course(s) regardless of work completed at the time duplication is confirmed.

8. The math faculty's judgments are determinative over math placement at every level. Natural math progression will be maintained. No student may enroll in a core math course that reverses natural progression. "Accelerated" math students (students whose first math is Geometry or Algebra 2) are enrolled automatically in the next natural course every year. For example, the accelerated student who completes Precalculus in the junior year is enrolled automatically in Calculus for the senior year. Advanced Functions is open to all non-accelerated seniors who complete Algebra 2 as juniors; a course grade of 91 or better as a junior in Algebra 2 is required to enroll in senior Precalculus.

9. Graded work at STMA includes tests (briefer "quests" in grades 6-9), quizzes, in-class writings, lab reports, and formal papers and projects.

10. STMA uses a traditional 4.0 scale and records grades in FACTS. The Registrar reviews student results each quarter and encourages any needed improvements.

11. Students must meet GPA standards to earn promotion from grade to grade in STMA's upper school. Promotion to grade 10 requires a cumulative 1.50 GPA or better over STMA courses before starting grade 10. Promotion to grade 11 requires a cumulative 1.75 GPA or better before starting grade 11. Promotion to grade 12 requires a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better before starting grade 12.

12. A student receiving STMA-based financial aid must earn a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better at the end of the first year and a cumulative 2.33 GPA or better at the end of each subsequent year to retain aid. STMA may rescind STMA-based financial aid for serious disciplinary or academic cause.

13. Any and all course failures in grades 6-12 require remediation per teacher direction (sometimes via other approved programs). Remediation must be completed before the start of the semester following the failure(s) or, in grade 12, before granting of the diploma. Precise deadlines are set by the teacher. The degree of remediation challenge is closely indexed to the degree of failure. This requirement applies to both full-year and semester-only courses, e.g., electives. Students in grades 9 may remediate a maximum of three courses per academic year, students in grades 10 and 11 a maximum of two, and students in grade 12 just one. Grade 12 remediation for a failed course risks delaying receipt of the diploma. Students who intend to withdraw from STMA before the semester following the failure(s) are not obliged to remediation.

14. STMA follows a *low-homework model*. Institutional commitment to this model has empowered uniformly positive outcomes. Other than reading and writing, traditional homework is a modest part of the STMA experience and is ordinarily limited to mathematics and upper school languages. Silent study periods support efforts to keep tasks inside school. STMA treats silent study periods seriously. Students are expected to use in-school study time properly and well. Students are expected to work alone and silently. Group study is not allowed.

15. STMA's proven approach to math practice develops student responsibility and supports high outcomes. In the upper school ungraded homework supports graded quizzes that are based upon assigned homework. Core math courses allow two quiz drops per semester.

16. Each semester students in the upper school compete for mention on the Dean's and Headmaster's Lists. The Dean's List requires a 3.89 semester GPA or higher. The Headmaster's List requires a 4.10 semester GPA or higher.

17. Each year an *ad hoc* faculty committee blind-reviews nominated writing from grades 10-12 for the Preparatory Writing Prize, recognizing the best course paper, and, from grade 12, for the Excellence in the Trivium Prize, recognizing the best senior honors thesis.

18. Seniors with four consecutive semesters at STMA may qualify for Latin honors at graduation. A cumulative weighted 3.89 GPA over STMA upper school courses is required for *summa cum laude*. 3.78 is required for *magna cum laude* and 3.67 for *cum laude*.

19. Seniors who have studied at STMA at least seven semesters are eligible for valedictorian and salutatorian honors. These are decided on cumulative GPA over STMA upper school courses.

20. Students enrolled in STMA's upper school for grades 9-12 must successfully complete all required courses to graduate. The Registrar evaluates transfer credits and specifies STMA expectations case by case. Transferred course credits do not figure into STMA's GPA calculations.

21. For nearly two decades the senior thesis has been the STMA student's summit academic product. All seniors write a thesis with the support of a faculty adviser. Seniors may write a standard thesis (minimum 3000 words) or an honors thesis (minimum 4000 words). Honors credit also requires a formal 20-30 minute Socratic Defense with an *ad hoc* faculty panel. Submission of a senior thesis that earns a 77 or better is a non-negotiable graduation requirement. Theses for the class of 2023 are due to advisers no later than 8:00 AM on Friday, 21 April 2023. Honors students must also submit a copy without identifying information to the Registrar by the same deadline. Theses for the class of 2023 will explore topics in American History.

22. STMA requires that students participate in school Masses, small-group "households" with faculty mentors, the annual March for Life, and in Service and Outreach projects built around the corporal works of mercy.

23. Timely graduation from STMA requires an approved senior thesis, a cumulative 2.00 GPA or better over all STMA upper school courses, completion of service requirements, and passing grades for all core and elective courses completed in grade 12.

24. 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.

25. Each student must have computer and functional printer access outside school and a personal TI-83+ or TI-84 graphing calculator for use in and outside school.

College Placement

26. STMA supports all students during transitions into college, other schooling, military service, or work and vocation. All students in grades 11 and 12 are required to enroll in the College Workshop, STMA designated advising venue. The Workshop is sufficient to meet needs for nearly all students, including those who do not intend to enter college directly after graduation.

27. STMA's established practices have proven highly effective. To protect applicants and maximize outcomes STMA only provides confidential references directly to reviewers. Requests for references should be directed to individual teachers. College counselor statements are administratively provided with transcripts and do not require separate requests. STMA cannot guarantee timely document delivery without three weeks' notice. Document deliveries are timed to official deadlines and cannot be expedited to meet personal deadlines. STMA cannot offer financial advice, but does provide scholarship information for review. STMA can only release student records (e.g., transcripts, diplomas) after financial accounts are fully settled.

28. Students who face placement challenges occasionally request individual advising with school leadership. A student's choice of college is a matter for parents and the student. School leadership must be informed about any colleges or college types that should be excluded from discussion if a student requests this individual advising.

Health and Attendance

29. If a student shows *any* signs of illness the student's family is firmly expected, per Board directive, to keep the student out of school. Signs of illness include (but are not limited to) upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea, diminished senses of taste/smell, conjunctivitis, sneezing, coughing, congestion, sore throat, and fever. STMA will promptly send home any student who shows signs of illness in the school or during an extracurricular activity.
30. A student presenting with acute emotional indisposition (e.g., anxiety or panic attack) at school will be asked to return home to rest and recover. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to discuss concerns with a medical professional.
31. STMA defines excessive absence as more than 15 absences per academic year. At Board discretion this ample allowance might be increased (within limits defined by the Board) on the grounds of sustained illness. Proper documentation from a medical professional is required to appeal for any increase.
32. Excessive absences impact academic progress. Delay in making up missed work does as well. These delays create extra and often large demand on teachers and present myriad scheduling challenges. Quizzes and in-class writings are often unannounced, but lab reports, papers, and tests/"quests" are always announced well in advance.
33. Absence on a testing day requires written documentation of illness or serious indisposition from the student's parent or guardian if the student wishes to make-up the missed evaluation for full credit. Otherwise a seven-point penalty will be calculated daily until the work is submitted and assessed against the ultimate grade. A student who is absent for a test must make up the test on the day the student returns to school. A student who is absent for a routine quiz must make up the quiz within three days upon his or her return to school; when this extension expires the missing quiz is dropped. Teachers manage missing in-class writing case by case. A student who is absent for any reason on the day a paper, project, or lab report is due must submit the work electronically or by proxy by 8:00 AM on the due date. Otherwise a seven-point penalty will be calculated daily until the work is submitted and assessed against the ultimate grade.
34. Tardiness risks class disruption for the tardy student, classroom peers, and the teacher. A student should always aim to arrive by 7:45AM to guard against delays and to allow time to settle into the day.
35. The Dean of Students and Registrar will intervene if a student posts more than four tardies in a semester or moves near the absence limit. Excessive tardiness, absence, or both may result in make-up school outside regular school hours/days.
36. A student must attend school a full school day on the day of an extracurricular event to participate in the event. Documented professional appointments are exceptions.

Extracurricular Activities

37. STMA offers many extracurricular activities, all of which support the top Luddy School outcomes (below) and sharpen portfolios for college and future careers. As STMA's founder Robert Luddy has made clear, participation in extracurricular activities, including athletics, is a *privilege* at STMA, not a right. The privilege is afforded students who are positively engaged in school life and earning adequate grades. Policies pertaining to eligibility and ineligibility are non-negotiable.
38. It is the responsibility of students and parents, not STMA's faculty, to ensure grades are maintained for extracurricular eligibility. The Registrar evaluates all mid-semester progress reports and all end-of-semester report cards to ensure student eligibility. Spring semester report cards determine fall semester eligibility. A student who earns one or more failing grades on any mid-semester progress report or end-of-semester report card or who drops below a cumulative weighted 2.0 GPA on an end-of-semester report card must set aside the privilege of extracurricular participation to focus on improving grades.
39. The duration of extracurricular ineligibility is determined by the *Dean of Students* on evidence of sustained improvement. In all cases the Dean determines what constitutes sustained improvement, not the student. Urgency to

rejoin an extracurricular activity is not and cannot be a factor in eligibility restoration. If eligibility is suspended on a *single* grade input for a course that allows a grade drop at semester's end the Dean may allow the student to drop the failing grade at mid-semester and maintain *probationary* eligibility. The student accepts the risk of the early drop and agrees that a subsequent failing grade on an assessment will cause immediate suspension of eligibility. The Dean may also elect to suspend extracurricular eligibility as a *formation* intervention, with eligibility restored at the Dean's discretion.

40. Extracurricular organizations (e.g., Drama, FFA, Student Council) may freely establish their own higher standards around GPA, conduct, and student contribution. Students who desire to participate must meet established standards.

41. STMA staff cannot supervise students at sports and other off-campus events. STMA is not responsible for coordinating rides to and from sports and other off-campus events nor for what might happen during rides to and from these events. Families are the proper resource. STMA's Athletic Director is exclusively authorized to communicate with the NCISAA and Conference schools. Parents and student athletes may not communicate directly with other schools and/or state officials. If there are concerns related to athletics, resolution must go through the Athletic Director.

Conduct and Engagement

42. STMA expects all members of the school community to follow the Gospel rule of love toward God and neighbor that fulfills the Ten Commandments.

43. Correction of negative student conduct is fundamentally a parental responsibility. A student who disrupts class or otherwise violates school rules will be sent home so parents can address the negative conduct. STMA is not and cannot be a reform school. If resolution is not achieved the student will be asked to find other placement.

44. STMA cannot monitor all student interactions in and outside school. Parents should contact other parents to talk over ordinary peer-to-peer issues. Staff will assist if resolution is not achieved. Likewise, STMA cannot always notify families about student issues in advance of conversations with students, but FACTS formation notes serve to document and communicate interactions.

45. "Local Formation" notes report low-intensity counsel over conduct. Emailed to students and copying parents, these might come from any STMA staff member and seldom raise concerns unless they accumulate in a student's record. "Formation Meeting" notes come exclusively from the Dean of Students and the Student Life Team. These report intervention over conduct. These notes often convey requests for family meetings to discern best paths forward to positive resolution.

46. The Dean of Students has broad discretion over student disciplinary formation. Possible outcomes of the Dean's interventions range from counsel to indefinite suspension.

47. Failures of academic integrity--plagiarism and other forms of cheating--are serious. All students in all grades are informed about integrity expectations. A first instance of founded academic disintegrity will cause penalties at the discretion of the Deans. A second instance will cause indefinite suspension.

48. Students represent STMA on and off campus and must avoid presentations that risk scandal or divisiveness or chaff against the values and sensibilities of a well-ordered Catholic community.

49. Students are to maintain proper decorum inside and outside school. Compliance with "house rules" is expected. STMA cannot and does not allow the following:

- Class disruption. Per the Board of Directors, classroom disruption will not be tolerated. Non-compliant students will be sent home for the day per directive.
- Political imagery, clothing, stickers, posters, etc.
- Exclusive relationships and coupling on campus and at school events.

- Use of personal electronic devices on campus between arrival at school and 3PM. Devices brought to school must be turned off and stowed in the student's locker until 3PM.
- Public presentations (including internet and social media postings) that do not respect STMA's Catholic values and honor its good reputation.
- Cyber- and other forms of bullying or meanness.
- 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. All medications (including OTC) must be secured with the Registrar, along with written parent/guardian instructions.
- Smoking/vaping/related products, alcohol, illegal substances, or weapons on campus or at school events.
- Eating/snacking in class without verified medical reasons or explicit instructor permission.
- Gum-chewing is not allowed on campus.
- Storage of large backpacks and bulky personal belongings outside assigned lockers.
- Water bottles or backpacks in classrooms
- Untidiness in school spaces. Students may not tape anything to the outside of lockers and must keep all school spaces clean, neat, undamaged, and free of trash.
- Sleeping in school. Students who fall asleep will be sent home.

50. STMA's ordinary classroom expectations reflect the character of a well-ordered Catholic preparatory school:

- Come to class on time and prepared.
- Wear the proper uniforms properly.
- Sit up straight and be attentive.
- Engage with class discussions.
- Take notes.
- Avoid side conversations with peers.
- Prepare to leave class only when dismissed by the teacher.

51. Failures to profit from the STMA education merit serious concern. As a private school STMA may dismiss a student at any time without right or process of appeal.

Family Expectations

52. STMA expects that concerns about a student's school experience will go first to the adult(s) most familiar with the situation that is causing concern, ordinarily particular instructors and activity supervisors (e.g. coaches, club leaders, etc.). School administrators (Headmaster and Deans) are seldom the proper first points of contact except for concerns about their own classes or activities, but will always engage if students and families do not achieve resolution with the adult(s) most familiar with the situation.

53. Mission alignment, steady cooperation, and positive engagement with the STMA education lead to the best student outcomes. For more, please follow this link:

<https://stmacademy.org/files/resources/stma-parent-cooperation-expectations.pdf>

54. "Bearing false witness" against the school or its teachers will incur prompt and firm administrative response. STMA and its Board will not tolerate recalcitrant negativity or disruption from any student or family. Such presentations will be challenged; if not immediately corrected, involvement with the school must terminate.

Other Policies

55. STMA cannot admit “visiting” students for only a part of an academic year. Intention to complete at least the full academic year following enrollment is an assumption in admissions.

56. 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. With appropriate permission a self-driving student may leave and return during school hours only for a professional appointment.

57: Arriving students are not permitted to linger in vehicles on school property. This pertains to a student’s lingering in his or her own vehicle after arrival and to entering another student’s vehicle after arrival. Arriving students are also not permitted to linger in the parking lot, but are expected instead to move promptly into the courtyard or lower building.

58. All visitors must register and obtain a visitor’s tag at the front desk.

59. STMA cannot advertise for non-STMA events unless directed to by the Board and cannot promote fundraising efforts that are not directly related to STMA and approved by the Board.

60. STMA takes a conservative approach to delayed openings and school closures due to inclement weather. Decisions are not based on forecasts, as they are often inaccurate or wrong. STMA does not cancel school for thunderstorms or forecasts for heavy rain and wind that are part of the remnants of tropical storms. Closures due to winter precipitation will be based on actual road conditions over the majority of our school community as verified by DOT cameras and faculty observations. This is the school’s approach to inclement weather, but ultimately parents must make decisions for the safety and wellbeing of their family. Delayed opening and school closure decisions are made as early as possible, but might come as late as 6:00 the morning of school. All will be communicated via email, posted to social media, and available via WRAL.com.

Uniforms and Dress Code

61. During school students must follow the uniform code. Please follow this link for full information:

<https://stmacademy.org/student-life/uniforms/>

62. Appropriate non-uniform dress is allowed only when leaving school to participate in an athletic event or in a practice, class, or club that requires it. 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. The administration’s judgments around student dress are determinative.

Grading Scale

Letter	Numerical	Narrative	Standard	Honors
A	95-100	Truly exceptional; meets or exceeds highest expectations	4.0	4.333
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

Course of Studies

Middle School	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8 (2022-23)
Trivium	Spelling and Grammar	Informal Logic	Basic Composition
History	Ancient and Classical History	Western Civilization	American History and Government
Literature	Great Books 1	Great Books 2	Great Books 3
Theology	Theology 1: Great Bible Stories	Theology 2: Jesus	Theology 3: The Catholic Church
Language	Introduction to Latin	Latin 1A	Latin 1B
Mathematics	Math 6	Math 7	Algebra 1/2
Science	Earth Science	Life Science	Physical Science
Other	Health and Fitness Music	Art and Making (2023-24) Health and Fitness Music	Health and Fitness Music Varied (2023-24)

Upper School	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Trivium	Grammar	Formal Logic	Rhetoric and Composition (2023)	Senior Thesis Workshop
History	Ancient History	Medieval History	Modern European History	American History
Literature	Great Stories from Ancient Literature	Medieval Literature	Modern European Literature	American Literature
Philosophy and Theology	The Socratic Question: Studies in Scripture and the Apostolic Fathers	Fundamentals of Catholicism	Catholic Moral Thought	Catholic Traditions in Politics and Economics
Language	Latin 1	Latin 2	French 1, Latin 3, or Spanish 1	French 2, Latin 4, or Spanish 2
Mathematics	Algebra 1, Geometry, or Algebra 2 (decided by placement test)	Geometry, Algebra 2, or Precalculus	Algebra 2, Precalculus, or Calculus	Precalculus, Advanced Functions, Calculus, or Topics in Calculus
Science	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	Advanced Topics in Science (2023)
Electives	n/a	Three required	Three required	Four required Senior Seminar

Other	First Year of Studies	n/a	Noncognitive Skills 1 College Workshop 1	Noncognitive Skills 2 College Workshop 2 Personal/Professional Development
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Faculty and Staff 2022-23

<https://stmacademy.org/about-us/faculty-directory/>

Top Luddy School Outcomes

STMA incorporates the Top 15 Luddy School Outcomes to encourage students to better themselves and reach new heights. By graduation each student should have mastered all of these Outcomes.

1. Unfailing Integrity compels a person to follow a strong code of ethics with honesty in all situations.
2. A Cooperative and Contributive Team Member knows how to collaborate to achieve successful results.
3. A Virtuous Leader with Well-Developed Judgment combines thinking skills and traits such as humility, generosity, and courage.
4. A Strong Work Ethic links perseverance, reliability, and honesty.
5. Self-Reliance creates confidence to depend on one's own powers and resources to meet all of one's needs.
6. Dreams and Aspirations to Change the World help us remember that directed efforts bring us closer to our goals.
7. A Truth Seeker searches for the correct, right, or accurate explanation of reality, following the scientific method.
8. Traditional American Values and Entrepreneurialism drive a leader to build and sustain a thriving economy.
9. A Critical Thinker discerns the truth of a statement or observation through questioning and examination.
10. Well-Developed People & Communication Skills promote effective sharing with a clear message.
11. Continuous Learners take lessons from all aspects of life and work, learn from mistakes, and adapt to change.
12. Gratitude acknowledges the gifts one has been given and the contributions of others.
13. Competent Technical Skills allow individuals to join modern technological industries and navigate modern life.
14. A Healthy Mind, Body, and Spirit offer freedom to operate at optimal levels and achieve a high sense of fulfillment.
15. Astute Problem Solving leads one to identify the solutions to a problem, evaluate likely outcomes, assess risk, and choose correctly.

**“Remember the precept that St. John the Evangelist used to give to his disciples:
‘Love one another.’ [This] is not a mere exhortation, but a command . . . Be good to
one another” (St. John Bosco)**

The 2022-23 STMA Community Handbook abrogates and supersedes any prior STMA Community Handbooks.

August 10, 2022