



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK 2021-22

“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; a biblical understanding of human identity, that as *“male and female He created them.”*

STMA is not and cannot be a reform school; students who persistently violate school norms and/or are unresponsive to STMA’s formation efforts will be asked to seek placement elsewhere.

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. Drop/add is not allowed.
3. Most core courses 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.
4. STMA requires three (3) elective courses per year from students in grades 10-12. Students request electives before the start of each semester. Requests are reviewed “first-come, first-served.” Courses are limited, and all have enrollment caps. Elective requests do not guarantee enrollment in requested electives. A few electives (e.g., the annual Dean’s Seminar and advanced courses in fine arts) enroll students at teacher discretion. Noting the exception outlined in (7) below, elective drop/add is allowed within a specified period with Registrar approval. Electives do not offer honors credit.

5. An enrolled student may not 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. Similarly, 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.
6. A rising senior whose grade 11 math was Algebra 2 may request either Advanced Functions or Precalculus as his or her grade 12 math. Strong performance in Algebra 2 is required to progress to Precalculus. The math faculty may decline any student’s senior math choice based on prior performance.
7. With the exception of students transferring to STMA from elsewhere for grade 11 or grade 12, students in grades 11 and 12 who select honors enrollment at the start of a math course may not drop honors.
8. Graded work at STMA includes tests (briefer “quests” in grades 6-9), quizzes, in-class writings, lab reports, and formal papers and projects.
9. STMA uses a traditional 4.0 scale and records grades in FACTS. The Registrar reviews student results each quarter and encourages any needed improvements.
10. 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.
11. Any and all course failures require compensated remediation per teacher direction. This applies to both full-year and semester-only courses, e.g., electives. Students in grades 9 and 10 may remediate a maximum of two (2) courses. Students in grades 11 and 12 may remediate only one (1) course.
12. Other than reading and writing, traditional homework is a modest part of the STMA experience. 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.
13. 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 (2) quiz drops per semester.
14. 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.
15. Each year an *ad hoc* faculty committee reviews nominated writing from grades 10-12 for the Preparatory Writing Prize (best course paper) and, from grade 12, for the Excellence in the Trivium Prize (best senior honors thesis).
16. Seniors with four (4) consecutive semesters at STMA may qualify for Latin honors at graduation. 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*.

17. Seniors who have studied at STMA at least seven (7) semesters are eligible for valedictorian and salutatorian honors. These are decided on cumulative GPA.

18. Students attending all four years in STMA's upper school must present at least 30 credits to graduate in 2022. The Registrar evaluates transfer credits case-by-case. These do not figure in GPA calculations.

19. Submission of a senior thesis that earns a 77 or better is a graduation requirement. During the spring semester of grade 12 each senior completes a 3000-word paper (4000 and a Socratic Defense for honors) under the direction of a faculty advisor. Topics emerge from the student's chosen Advanced Topics course (humanities or science), a core course taught during the fall semester of grade 12. As befits STMA's identity, senior Advanced Topics courses are among the most challenging in the school. Students are urged to select wisely and work hard.

20. Timely graduation from grade 12 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.

21. 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.

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

Financial Aid

23. 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.

College Placement

24. STMA supports all graduates during transitions into college, other schooling, or work and vocation.

25. All document requests (including for transcripts and teacher references) strictly require three (3) weeks' notice to the relevant party. STMA cannot ensure on-time delivery without this notice.

26. To protect students and maximize outcomes all teachers require confidentiality guarantees for references and only provide references directly to outside college/professional reviewers.

27. STMA can only release student records (e.g., transcripts, diplomas) after financial accounts are fully settled.

28. STMA offers all students and families ample college planning support. Various online presentations are scheduled from grade 9 forward. All students in grades 11 and 12 enroll in the College Workshop. Individual appointments with the college placement team are also available upon request. (Note that STMA cannot offer specialized financial guidance.)

29. Parents/caregivers who will allow application only to particular colleges must inform the placement team prior to the student's scheduling any advising appointments in the grade 12. To facilitate notification a form is distributed early in the fall semester for all seniors who request individual college advising.

Health and Attendance

30. 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. Sick students must wear a mask until they leave campus.

31. For more details about STMA's Health Policies, including Covid-19 policies, please follow this link. Policy adjustments will be announced and implemented if the Board discerns warrant for adjustments.

<https://stmacademy.org/files/resources/stma-covid-policy-2021-2022.pdf>

32. Families and students will make different choices about mask-wearing at school. Choices must be respected by all students and families.

33. STMA defines excessive absence as more than 15 absences per academic year. The absence allowance might be extended at Board discretion with proper documentation from a medical professional.

34. Delay in making up missed work impacts academic progress, creates extra demand on teachers, and presents scheduling challenges. Quizzes and in-class writings are often unannounced, but lab reports, papers, and tests/"quests" are announced well in advance.

35. Absence on a testing day requires documentation from a medical professional (or in the case of a planned trip, at least two weeks advance notice) if the student wishes to make-up the missed evaluation for full credit. Otherwise a 10-point per day penalty will begin on the day the exercise is missed. A student who is absent for a routine quiz must make up the quiz by the end of the third day after 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 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 the work will lose ten (10) points per day pending submission.

36. 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.

37. The Dean of Students and Registrar will intervene if a student posts more than four (4) 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.

38. A student must attend school a full day on the day of an extracurricular event to participate in it. Documented professional appointments are exceptions.

Extracurricular Activities

39. STMA offers many extracurricular activities, all of which support the top Luddy School outcomes (below) and sharpen portfolios for college and future careers. 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 strong grades.

40. Without exception, a student who earns one (1) or more failing grades 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. These standards are non-negotiable. It is the responsibility of students and parents, not STMA's faculty, to ensure grades are maintained for extracurricular activity participation.

41. 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.

42. In consultation with the Dean of Students the Registrar will restore suspended extracurricular eligibility on evidence of sustained academic improvement. The Registrar's judgment is determinative. The Dean of Students may elect to suspend extracurricular eligibility as a formation intervention. Eligibility may be restored at the Dean of Students' discretion.

43. Teachers cannot supervise students at sports and other off-campus 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.

Student Conduct

44. STMA practices subsidiarity (CCC 1894). It is proper to direct concerns about a student's experience to the nearest competent authority (usually the classroom teacher or activity leader). This approach ensures the school's prompt and helpful response.

45. Ensuring conduct correction is fundamentally the responsibility of parents. STMA will make all reasonable efforts to encourage students and support parents in their character formation efforts, but students who disrupt class or otherwise violate school rules will be sent home for their parents to address the conduct. Students who do not correct their conduct will be asked to seek other placement.

46. 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.

47. "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 from the Dean of Students and report intervention over conduct. These notes often convey requests for family meetings to discern best paths forward to positive resolution.

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

49. Failures of academic integrity--plagiarism and other forms of cheating--are always serious. All students are fully informed about expectations. *A second instance of founded academic disintegrity will incur indefinite suspension.*

50. 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.

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.

House Rules

52. 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.
- Storage of large backpacks and bulky personal belongings outside assigned lockers.
- 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.

Classroom expectations:

- Come to class on time and prepared
- No water bottles or backpacks in classrooms
- Uniforms should be worn properly
- Sit up straight, be attentive
- Engage with class discussions
- Take notes
- No sleeping in school. Students who fall asleep will be sent home.
- No side conversations with peers.
- Prepare to leave class only when dismissed by the teacher.

Community Expectations and Policies

53. Mission alignment, 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. 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 prizes and expects truthfulness from all. In a special way, “bearing false witness” against the school and its teachers will incur firm response. Grave or persistent divergence from STMA’s core ethical expectations will lead to dismissal from the school.

55. STMA 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.

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

Inclement Weather Policy

58. 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. 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

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

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

60. 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	4.33
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

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	Great Bible Stories	Jesus	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	Digital Citizenship Healthy Living Music	Art and Making Healthy Living Music	Arts and Making Healthy Living Astronomy

Upper School	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Trivium	Grammar The Socratic Question	Formal Logic	Advanced Rhetoric and Composition (2022-23)	Advanced Topics in Humanities or Science Senior Thesis
History	Ancient History	Medieval History	Modern European History	American History
Literature	Ancient Literature: Great Stories from Myth and Scripture	Medieval Literature	Modern European Literature	American Literature
Philosophy and Theology	See Literature and Trivium	Fundamentals of Catholicism	Catholic Moral Thought	Catholic Traditions in Politics and Economics Topics in Philosophy (spring 2022)
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 1	Precalculus, Advanced Functions, Calculus 1, or Calculus 2
Science	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	See Trivium

Electives	n/a	Three per year	Three per year	Three per year
Other	First Year of Studies	n/a	Noncognitive Skills 1 College Workshop 1	Noncognitive Skills 2 College Workshop 2 Personal/Professional Development

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 2021-22 STMA Community Handbook abrogates and supersedes any prior STMA Community Handbooks.

August 11, 2021