



Parent-Student Handbook  
St. Thomas the Apostle Elementary School

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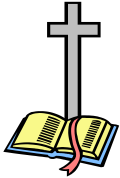
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Dear Friends and Families,

Welcome to St. Thomas the Apostle Elementary School! This handbook is intended to be a helpful resource for all needed policies, procedures, and information.



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## **Philosophy**

St. Thomas the Apostle Elementary School focuses on the educational mission of the Church by providing students with a Christian environment in which God is loved, humanity is served, and community is formed. Parents, faculty, and administration work cooperatively with the diocesan, parish, and local community to develop each student into a respectful, confident, responsible individual in a warm and caring atmosphere.

The academic program contributes to the development of the whole student by meeting his/her physical, social, cultural, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs within each appropriate stage of development. The administration and faculty recognize and respect the uniqueness of each student and provide an environment conducive to varying capabilities and diverse styles of learning. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others."

## **Code of Conduct**

In all areas of learning, discipline is considered part of the whole child growth and learning processes. Our Code of Conduct is based on the Gospel message of Jesus. Growth, love, and respect of all peoples is encouraged by the Code of Conduct. To achieve these ends, parents, faculty, and students work together to create the optimal learning environment. Saint Thomas students, staff, and visitors:

1. will be respectful, honest and courteous
2. will refrain from bullying of any kind
3. will comply with the technology and internet use policy
4. will adhere to the school dress code guidelines
5. will not bring to school nor possess on school grounds any real or toy weapons (i.e. guns, arrows, swords, knives, etc.)
6. will not chew gum on school property
7. will at all times conduct themselves at school and in the community in a manner reflecting the values and principles of the school's teachings
8. will complete all assignments and participate fully in class

The school observes this Code of Conduct because it is built on fundamental Catholic social teachings. The role of the principal/administration, staff and faculty is to work with the students and parents to assist the students in developing a strong Christian attitude toward life.



## 2011-2012 Faculty & Staff

Father Donald Dusza	Pastor
Mrs. Tammy Crawford	Pre-Kindergarten 3
Mrs. Tammy Wolfhope	Pre-Kindergarten 3 Aid
Mrs. Jody Zimmerman	Pre-Kindergarten 4
Mrs. Tonia Letrent	Pre-Kindergarten 4 Aid
Mrs. Sarah Bordi	Principal & Kindergarten
Mrs. Jody Zimmerman	Pre-Kindergarten
Mrs. Sarah Bordi	Principal & Kindergarten
Mrs. Marie Jorkasky	First Grade
Miss Katie Redmond	Second Grade
Mr. Heath Miller	Third/Fourth Grade
Mrs. Joyce Wityk	Fifth Grade
Mrs. Nancy Mickey	Music
Mrs. Michele Snavely	Secretary
Mr. Clay Easter	Custodian

Through Act 89 the school is provided with a weekly guidance counselor and IU8 Reading Specialist. A nurse is available to the school in case of an emergency.



## 2011-2012 Weekly Schedule

Drop Off Begins	8:00 a.m.
Daily Start of School:	8:20 a.m.
Monday:	Monday Morning Assembly 8:30a.m.
Lunch (PreK3/4 &K)	11:20-11:50 (Recess 11:50-12:10)
*Recess to follow	
Lunch (1st-5 <sup>th</sup> )	11:50-12:10 (Recess 12:10-12:30)
*Recess to follow	
PreK 3 Dismissal	2:15 p.m.
C. Ridge Bus Dismissal	2:20 p.m.
PreK 4 Dismissal	2:30 p.m.
Grade School Dismissal	2:40 p.m.
After Care Service Ends	6:00 p.m.



## Admissions:

All children in the Bedford County area are welcome to apply to St. Thomas School. Children whose parents are members of St. Thomas the Apostle, St. John the Evangelist (Everett) or St. John the Baptist (New Baltimore) are eligible for Catholic

admission to St. Thomas School. Readiness testing, at the discretion of school administration, may be used to determine the developmentally appropriate placement in the academic program. Readiness testing (fine/gross motor, speech, and language skills) is required within 60 days of the start of the school year for PreK 3, PreK4, and K, as well as new 1st-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

**K:** St. Thomas School requires that a child has reached five years of age before the first of September to enroll in Kindergarten. Each Kindergarten student must present a birth certificate, baptismal certificate, Social Security card, and health records providing documentation of the following immunizations: diphtheria, tetanus, type 1, 2, and 4 poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B and chicken pox.

**Pre-K 3 & 4:** Children applying for admission to the pre-K program must be three or four years of age respectively before the first of September in order to attend. Any pre-K student who is five by the following September 1 may continue on to the Kindergarten program.

## Attendance



Regular and punctual attendance is expected of all students. In order to receive maximum instructional benefits, students must attend school regularly and arrive on time.

### Absences:

After an absence the student must give his/her teacher a written excuse signed by the parent. This excuse must state the date(s) absent and the reason for the absence. If a signed excuse does not come to school, the teacher will notify parents of absence and ask for a written excuse. If the excuse still does not come, the absence becomes unexcused. After three (3) unexcused absences, the truant officer may be called. All excuses must be kept by the teacher for the current academic year.

\*If a child accumulates thirty (30) absences or more throughout the school year, the teacher must consider whether the child is academically prepared for the next grade. After a point of twenty (20) accumulated absences, a doctor's excuse will be required for each additional absence. Failure to provide this will result in an illegal absence.

### Excused Absences/Educational Trips:

Excused absences include personal illness or injury, medical and dental appointments, critical illness or death in the immediate family, and serious personal or family problems. A formal educational opportunity outside the school will be given an excused status and **should be submitted in writing for approval (10) days before departure.** All missed work must be made up within a week upon student's return to school.

### Tardiness:

School begins promptly at 8:20 a.m. Parent/guardian **must** bring the student to the school office with a written excuse or he/she will be considered unexcused when tardy.

Detention will be given when 3 tardies are accumulated per marking period. Students are not considered tardy if their bus is late or if they have a doctors note from appointments upon arrival.

### Emergency School Closings:

Whenever it is necessary to close school for an emergency or inclement weather, St. Thomas School will follow Bedford Area School District as announced on the local radio and TV stations. Sometimes schools have late openings or early dismissals due to weather conditions. On these occasions we will also follow Bedford Area School District.

**\*After School Care is not available on early dismissal days.**

### Early Dismissal:

No pupil may leave the school before dismissal time at 2:40 p.m. or be dismissed without the written permission of the parent or guardian. If a child must leave the school grounds during the school day, the parent is to send a written excuse to the teacher that day. Parents are urged not to schedule doctor or dentist appointments during school hours unless absolutely necessary.



## **Auxiliary & Technology Fee**

### Auxiliary Fee:

A \$200.00 annual Auxiliary Fee is included within tuition payments from all families. The Auxiliary Fee can be reduced by \$25 for every two hours of volunteering at non-bingo functions or by \$50 per volunteering at a monthly Bingo (\$100 maximum reduction). You may choose to have the credited amount applied to the following year's tuition or the last month's tuition payment of the current year.

### Technology Fee:

An annual Technology Fee of \$40.00 per student is included within tuition payments from all families. This fee defers the cost of necessary technology enhancements for student use within the school.



## **Awards**

Students receive special recognition for their efforts throughout the year including Student of the Week. These awards are intended to promote and recognize academic skills, athletic achievement, behavioral and spiritual growth. Parents will be notified in advance of award and presentation dates.



## **Behavior & Discipline**

### Classroom:

*Teachers are encouraged to handle their own discipline as much as possible.* When all techniques including counseling, revoking privileges, and conferences have failed, teachers will consult with the principal as to the next course of action. It is to the teacher's advantage to notify parents or guardians of behavior problems as soon as possible.

Detention may be given by a teacher or the principal to students in grades 4-6 who misbehave, hinder others from learning, are disrespectful, engage in bullying, or who fail to do assigned class work or homework. Parents must be given at least twenty-four (24) hours notice of detention. Students who are given detention and who travel home on a school bus will be obliged to make other travel arrangements for the day of detention. Students in lower grades **MAY BE KEPT AFTER SCHOOL FOR SIMILAR REASONS** at the discretion of the teacher and/or principal.

### Playground:

All incidents involving the playground are handled individually because of the varying degrees of activity and involvement in this setting. Usually the child will be given a warning or time-out during recess. Certain activities such as hitting, kicking and fighting will be dealt with more sternly, thus ensuring safety of all students.

### Expulsion Policy & Guidelines:

The principal and pastor will meet with the child and the parents to attempt to resolve the problem. The counselor will be asked to work with the child and the family. A student may be expelled from St. Thomas the Apostle School if the pastor and principal are in agreement that all possible attempts to resolve the problem have failed. The family will receive a letter of expulsion and a notation will be placed in the child's permanent record

**The following behavior may warrant expulsion:**

- Repeat vandalism
- Bodily injury to another individual
- Disrespect for Catholic and moral values/bullying
- Repeated use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco on school property
- Incompatibility between parents and school policy

**Suspension Guidelines:**

Suspension may be for a period of one, two, or three days. The length of suspension will be determined by the severity of the behavior and is at the discretion of the principal. Students will be readmitted to school at the end of the suspension period and after a conference between the parents and principal. Suspension may be in-school or out-of school at the discretion of the principal.

**The following behavior may warrant suspension:**

- Swearing
- Disrespect for teachers
- Vandalism to school property
- Fighting
- Use of drugs, alcohol, and/or tobacco
- Continued bullying



**Before & After School Care**

St. Thomas offers before & after school care programs managed by a qualified staff member.

**Before School Program:**

St. Thomas School offers before school care for your student(s). Before school supervision will be arranged on an as needed basis and will be available from 7:00-8:00 a.m. Morning care will only be provided on days when there are pre-paid reservations requesting care for a specific day. The pre-paid daily fee for morning care is \$3.00 per student. **Payment for before school care is nonrefundable.** Parents are asked to complete the morning care reservation form and pre-pay no later than Friday to arrange for morning care for their student(s) for the following week.

**After School Program:**

Our after-care program runs from 2:45-6:00 p.m. (begins at 5:00 p.m. for PreK students) The hourly charge for after care is \$3.50 per hour or any portion of an hour beginning at 2:45 p.m. **Because of the developed nature of this program, it is asked that parents sign up prior to the week needed to reserve a spot for your student(s).** Parents may also contact the school the morning of the day they require after school care for their student(s); however to ensure adequate supervision only a limited number of students are permitted.



**Busing**

Bus transportation to St. Thomas School can be arranged through your local school district. Please contact your district's transportation office for more information and to arrange for transportation.

Bedford Area	623-4223
Chestnut Ridge	839-4195
Everett Area	652-9114



**Cafeteria**

The Home/School Association Hot Lunch Program provides nutritious lunches on specific days. The children may choose to purchase these meals at a minimum price. Each child should carry

his/her lunch on the days they are not participating in the hot lunch program. Please return your hot lunch orders the second Wednesday of the month before.

Milk is included in the monthly tuition payment. Please return your milk order choices the second Wednesday of the month before.



### **Calendar & Family Folders**

The official school calendar is issued at the beginning of the school year and is available on our website. St. Thomas the Apostle School will follow the Bedford Area School District's calendar with a few exceptions. Written communications from the school will be sent home in a family folder monthly. The contents of the folder should be removed and reviewed promptly. The family folder should then be returned to the school with any required paperwork completed and included. Please note: classroom folders are separate from family folders.



### **Care of School Property**

Students are to care for school property in a respectful manner. Students who deface or damage school property or the property of others will make financial restitution. If library books are not returned by year end, students will be assessed an amount equal to the value of the book or its replacement, whichever is greater, as determined by the principal/administration.



### **Community Helper Oppourtunities**

#### ***Fish Fry Coordinator***

Coordinator is responsible for arranging the ordering of food and assignments of volunteers for the Lenten fish fry dinners.

#### ***Pancake Breakfast Coordinator***

Coordinator is responsible for arranging the ordering of food and assignments of volunteers for the pancake breakfast.

#### ***Play Production Chairperson***

Responsible for coordinating the annual St. Thomas Christmas and Spring School plays with the music teacher. This position helps to arrange for volunteers to assist with costumes, props, photographer/videographer coverage, and program printing.

#### ***Book Fair Coordinator***

Coordinator is responsible for managing the Scholastic book fairs. Includes staffing volunteers, setting up and cleaning up book displays, financial and inventory management, advertising the event and any special contests involved.

#### ***Yearbook Chairperson***

Chairperson will obtain the contract for production of the school annual yearbook. Responsible for layout, artwork, and volunteers to take photos. \* Please try to initiate student involvement in order to allow the students more enrichment opportunities.

#### ***School Lunch Chair***

Responsible for managing the overall set up, preparation and delivery of food to the students four times a week. Duties include producing a monthly school lunch menu, finalizing numbers for weekly orders with school secretary, ordering food and coordinating a staff of volunteers.

#### ***Santa's Workshop Lead Elf***

Responsible for coordinating volunteer elf's, arranging for the items to be purchased in the workshop, purchasing wrapping necessities (when needed), and managing financial records of event.



### **Curriculum**

St. Thomas the Apostle School follows the recommended curriculum of the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese in all subject areas according to the Common Core Standards. Curriculum encompasses

the sequentially ordered learning experiences which the school provides for its students. The total curriculum includes the development of Catholic values and attitudes, as well as the attainment of knowledge and skills necessary for the student's spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical development. Each subject is taught along a continual series of concepts, skills, or topics.

**Religion:**

The religious curriculum is of primary importance and permeates the day; it is not only a subject taught but also a way to live. Children participate in a variety of prayer services and liturgies, reach out to others in service, and participate in all aspects of the religion program

**Guidance:**

IU-08, in conjunction with the Diocesan Education Department, provides St. Thomas the Apostle School with guidance services. The guidance counselor comes one day a week.

**Exploratory:**

Students will take exploratory classes to include gym, computers, library, and music.

**Special Topics:**

Special topics of social concern such as no bullying, drug abuse, and safety lessons are integrated into the curriculum throughout the grade levels. Other extended curriculum opportunities are offered through special programs, projects, and contests during the school year. Please visit our website for the current offerings and happenings!



**Conferences & Communication**

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year. Please understand, no report cards will be issued without a conference. The conference purposes are:

- To inform the parents of the student's progress
- To make the parents aware of the student's capacities and abilities
- To discuss ways parent and teachers can work together to help the student
- To help foster a positive relationship between teacher and parents

Conferences may be requested at any time during the school year by writing the teacher, via email or by telephoning the school office. Conferences may also be held with the school principal at any time by request via email or telephone. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers regarding any concerns prior to contacting the school principal. All email messages and telephone calls are to be returned by faculty and staff within 24 hours of receipt during the school week. Parent communications received over the weekend will be answered on the following Monday.



**Dress Code**

PreK 3 & 4: Students are to be dressed seasonally appropriate when attending school. We ask that a change of clothes be labeled and stored in the classroom in case of an accident. Close toed shoes (sneakers are excellent!) are recommended for play and exploration safety.

K-5<sup>th</sup> Grade: The uniform dress code provides a modest standard for our students. Please refer to the Uniform Code for specific requirements available on our website.



**Education School Council**

St. Thomas the Apostle School has an Education Council composed of members selected from the school and parish. The council serves as a consulting body to set up policies for the academic and financial future of the school. Dates for council meetings are the last Tuesday of every month.



## Emergency Cards

Emergency cards are sent home in the family folder at the start of the school year. These cards should be completed for every child in the school and returned to the school office. It is essential that these cards be updated if student information changes! If there is an emergency, we will act and contact you according to the card information provided.



## Family Responsibilities

Parents must be the first to foster a loving and disciplined atmosphere at home. The school provides a setting for training, but can only operate effectively with the cooperation of the family. To achieve this, parents are expected to:

- Provide for the physical, mental, and spiritual development of the child.
- Be supportive toward the school, education, and the church.
- Help the child develop into a positive, productive member of society and the church.
- Know and cooperate with and respect school policies and school personnel.
- Be responsible for any financial obligations incurred by the child in school.
- Follow the guidelines of the Parish Memorandum of Understanding.



## Fire & Other Drills

According to state regulations, fire drills should be held once a month. It is the policy of the school to abide by this regulation, weather permitting.

Emergency crisis drills will be practiced according to our crisis plan, which includes any danger that may happen in the building, on the block or in the town. We believe in hoping for the best but planning for the worst to keep all our students as safe and prepared as possible.



## Home & School Association

The Home & School Association is the parent-led organization that is an integral part of the school community by helping to fundraise, organize, and plan school functions such as: field trips, family fun nights, and Catholic Schools Week. Families are encouraged to participate, hold leadership roles as officers, and attend the monthly HSA meetings. The HSA is led by four officers: president, vice-president, and secretary. Officers are elected to one-year terms.



## Medicine

We need a parent note **and** a doctor's note for **any** and **all** medications to administer anything to your child.



## No Bullying Policy

We are a family at our school and act in a respectful, caring manner at all times hence, a NO TOLERANCE bullying approach is taken.



## Photos & Media

Throughout the school year, various forms of media, press releases, photographs, and social media are utilized in the academic process and marketing of the school. The media permission form is to be filled out and returned before the first day of the school year to allow/prohibit your child's name and image to be used.



## Retention

In cases where the principal and/or teacher feels a child needs to repeat a grade, the parents will

be informed at least two months prior to the end of the school year. A decision will be made after a careful study of the child's work and a conference involving parents, teacher, and principal. The final decision will be made by the principal keeping in mind all the extenuating circumstances and what seems to be best for the development and welfare of the child.

## Report Cards

Report Cards and Progress Portfolios are given throughout each school year to monitor and share student growth. Each must be signed and returned to the classroom teacher.

Progress Portfolios will follow our earliest students from PreK3 to PreK4 to Kindergarten.

Report Cards will include grades for subject areas as follows:

A	100-93	Excellent Level Work
B	92-83	Good Level Work
C	82-73	Satisfactory Level Work
D	72-63	Below Level Work
F	<62	Unsatisfactory/Failing

\*Grades for exploratory classes are given as:

O – Outstanding

S – Satisfactory

N - Needs improvement

If a student is failing or in danger of failing any major subject, the parent will be notified at least two weeks before the end of the marking period.

## School Visitors

All persons other than school staff and currently registered students must first report to the school office immediately upon entering school grounds, sign-in and wear an identification tag when visiting the school. It is essential for the safety of the students that all school visitors, including parents and volunteers, check in with the school office before proceeding anywhere in the building.

## Technology Usage

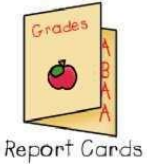
There is no expectation or right to privacy or right to freedom of speech when using the school's Computer/technology resources. Any use of the School's computers and Internet access must be in support of education and research and be consistent with the educational objectives of St. Thomas School. This policy is in place to keep students safe from inappropriate material and subject matter.

## Testing

The school's testing program is intended to assist teachers and administration in a systematic evaluation of the academic and religion programs, to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses and to aid in revision of the curriculum and planning of instruction.

## Transfers

A student may be transferred to and from St. Thomas the Apostle School at the request of the parent. Parents must register their child in another school before records will be released. All transfers should be completed by the end of June so records may be sent to the new school. Any



parent who wishes to transfer his/her child into St. Thomas the Apostle School during the school year should make an appointment with the principal to discuss admittance.



## Transportation

Students will not be permitted to leave the school grounds with any person other than a parent/guardian unless permission is provided by calling the school or writing a note. If any child has to alter his/her regular transportation from school, the teacher must be notified, and a written note must be sent for record to the office.



## Tuition

The commitment of the St. Thomas parish is to provide the opportunity for a quality Catholic education. This requires a like commitment from those individuals desiring such an education.

- If a family is having unexpected difficulties in paying their tuition in a timely manner, they should talk with the principal or pastor.
- If a family is behind on payments, at the end of each marking period, the church office will send a tuition reminder to them.
- At the end of the year, report cards will be held if tuition is not up-to-date.

The parishioners of St. Thomas Church help to subsidize the cost of educating St. Thomas Church and feeder parishes; any member of those parishes who desires a Catholic education for their children shall receive one. If subsidy is needed, the St. Thomas parish pastor, with input from the principal, shall determine on an individual basis the amount of the subsidy. A Memorandum of Understanding must be signed by the pastor in order to receive the Catholic rate before the first day of the school year.

Non-Catholic students will be assessed the full tuition. In the event a non-Catholic family makes no effort to pay any part of the tuition nor has discussed the hardship with the principal for three consecutive months, that family's child(ren) will not be permitted to attend the school. If tuition (or any debt) is still outstanding at the end of the school year, report cards will be held, and the child may not return until the funding is discussed with pastor and principal.

2012-2013 Tuition Schedule		
Program	Tuition	Includes...
PreK (3 Year Olds)	\$396/month	Tuition, Technology Fee, Snack, Milk Order, Auxiliary Fee, Care until 5PM
PreK (4 Year Olds)	\$356/month	Tuition, Technology Fee, Snack, Milk Order, Auxiliary Fee, Care until 5PM
K-5 <sup>th</sup> Grades- Catholic	\$156/month	Tuition, Technology Fee, Classroom Fee, Milk Order, Auxiliary Fee
K-5 <sup>th</sup> Grades- Non Catholic	\$316/month	Tuition, Technology Fee, Classroom Fee, Milk Order, Auxiliary Fee