SAINT THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2025–2026

Annual Report

WELCOMING HEARTS. **INSPIRING** MINDS. **IGNITING** EXCELLENCE.

We support, we teach, but most of all

we inspire all children to be their best in all they do.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Saint Thomas More Catholic School is to be a vibrant, inclusive, student-centered community built on shared values, service, and academic excellence rooted in the Jesuit and Catholic tradition.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Saint Thomas More Catholic School prepares students to be leaders in an ever-changing world through an interdisciplinary, literacy based education built upon three pillars:

SHARED VALUES

SERVICE

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Our School offers a Jesuit education to all students characterized by *cura personalis*, a personalized focus on the whole person: mind, spirit and body.

By their graduation, our graduates exhibit the hallmarks of a Jesuit education: open to growth, committed to excellence, loving, religious, and committed to doing justice by standing with and for others.

Principal's Perspective on 2025–2026

Dear Saint Thomas More Families, Community Members, and Friends:

As we conclude the 2025–26 academic year, we have much to be grateful for and much to look forward to. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that this year also brought significant challenges as our community navigated the grief, fear, and uncertainty following the tragic events that unfolded at Annunciation on our second day of school, along with other stressors across our larger metropolitan area during the winter months that affected members of our community. Through it all, the strength, faith, and resilience of our Saint Thomas More family shone brightly.

In a particular way, I am deeply grateful for our exceptional faculty and staff. At a time when educator turnover is increasingly common, Saint Thomas More continues to be blessed with remarkable stability and commitment among our teachers and staff. Their dedication to our mission of forming hearts and minds, especially during difficult times, has been extraordinary and has helped our school to continually strengthen our mission and outcomes as the Jesuit elementary school of the Twin Cities and state of Minnesota!

The strong partnership among our families, faculty, staff, and our parish community continues to make Saint Thomas More a truly special place. The relationships our faculty and staff build with your children and families are among the greatest blessings of our school, and are a powerful reflection of our shared commitment to Jesuit-Catholic education.

Thank you for entrusting your children to us this past year. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and for the countless ways you support our mission each day. As parents, you play the primary role in the formation of your children, and we are blessed to walk alongside you as we help each student discover who they are and who God is calling them to be.

This year also brought many reasons for celebration. In addition to achieving several important strategic goals, we completed or launched a number of significant projects, including the refurbishment of our school gymnasium, the successful launch of a capital campaign to support critical improvements to our historic church and school buildings, and the most successful school auction in our history. These accomplishments reflect the dedication, generosity, and partnership of our faculty, staff, families, parishioners, alumni, and supporters.

I encourage you to take some time to review this Annual Report. It highlights the many blessings and accomplishments of the past year while offering a glimpse of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. We have much to be thankful for and even more to look forward to as we faithfully journey together.

With Deep Gratitude,

Pat Lofton, Ed. S.

A FEW NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

OUR LIBRARY

It has been an exciting year for the our library, thanks to the many hours of hard work by our lead volunteers, Kate Reinhardt, Deb Gjervold, and Alissa Falvey! Their dedication to improving both our environment and our collection has made a lasting impact on our school community. The library has become a bright, calm, and joyful space for our students and staff. With an addition of nearly 1,500 books, this space continues to foster a growing love of reading among students. We also had the opportunity to bring local Hmong author Kao Kalia Yang for a reading and book singing this spring, a testament to our heart of learning, listening, and loving. We are deeply thankful for her generosity, her storytelling, and the opportunity to learn from her voice and experiences.

50 YEAR REUNION

In mid-April, our school joyfully welcomed more than 60 alumni from the Saint Luke's School Class of 1976 for a reunion filled with memories, laughter, and reconnection as they revisited their former school. As these graduates reminisced about their experience at our school, what stood out most was the lasting impact this Catholic school experience had on their lives, and the deep friendships that have endured for more than 50 years. Although our school and parish now bear a different name, the heart of our community remains unchanged: a welcoming place grounded in faith, hope, love, and a deep commitment to children and families. We would love to welcome additional classes of our predecessor schools to gather and celebrate their years attending our school: Saint Luke's, Immaculate Heart of Mary, and IHM-Saint Luke's.

Academic Year in Review

2025–2026

29%
of students represent diverse populations

95%
of graduates test into honors level courses in high school

95%
of parents participate in parent-teacher conferences

30%
of students are non-catholic

NWEA MAPS GROWTH TESTING

Our school administers the NWEA Map Growth tests in math, reading, and language in the fall and spring to all students in second through eighth grade. Test results and a letter were sent to parents at the end of the school year.

While many students met or exceeded their projected growth targets, our focus remains on helping every student continue to grow academically. Teachers use NWEA data along with classroom assessments, tests, projects, and daily work to identify learning needs and set meaningful goals for each child. To further support student growth, our school uses IXL, a personalized learning platform that creates targeted skill practice based on each student's NWEA results. This allows teachers to provide focused instruction tailored to individual strengths and areas for improvement.

We are blessed with dedicated and highly skilled teachers who thoughtfully use assessment data to support each student's development and prepare them for success in high school and beyond.

map GROWTH

GROVES ACADEMY: BELIEVE AND READ PROGRAM

For the seventh year, our school's preschool through third grade students participated in the Believe and Read program. Through this program and individualized support from Carol Kimlinger, our Coordinator of Student Support Services, every preschool through third grade student showed positive growth in reading fluency during the 2025–2026 school year. Some of the successes from this past year include:

- 100% of kindergartners improved their Letter Naming Fluency and Letter Sound Fluency.
- The number of students identified as "high risk" or "at risk" in reading decreased significantly from preschool through third grade, with no third graders identified at these levels.
- Over 90% of first through third graders are at or above grade level in oral reading fluency.

OUR LITTLEST LEARNERS: STM PRESCHOOL REVIEW

Saint Thomas More Preschool had an amazing year with 52 students enrolled in 2025–2026. Throughout the year we welcomed eight additional littles, and a total of 27 new preschool families.

We were proud to graduate 19 students from the More's 4s program, and even more excited that 15 of those children will continue with us for kindergarten this fall. We love seeing our preschool alumni proudly wearing their uniforms!

This year, our preschool program continued the Zones of Regulation curriculum which promotes healthy emotional regulation, and the cherished More's 4s/4th Grade Buddies program. Additionally, our preschoolers joined the Spring Concert alongside the older students for the first time, and we had another successful April Arts Month and Preschool Art Show. Barb Larkin, our Preschool Director, continues to lead with grace and empathy, and inspires our littlest learners daily.

Words cannot express our gratitude to our families. Thank you for sharing your children with us each day—we are honored to be part of their early learning journey!

Notable Achievements 2025–2026

NEW GYM FLOOR AND MATS

Thanks to last spring's successful Fund-A-Need and the generosity of our school community, our gymnasium received a stunning refresh featuring a refinished and branded floor and new perimeter matting. This change completely transformed this well-loved space for our students and community!

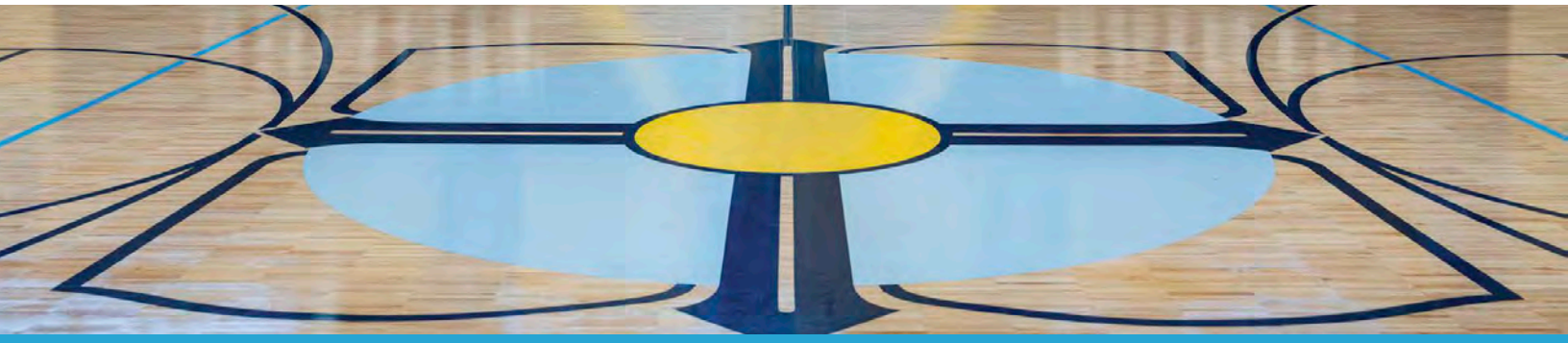
SCHOOL SAFETY UPDATES

Following the tragic shooting at Annunciation Church and School in August, our school and parish strengthened campus safety and communication by updating procedures with the Saint Paul Police Department, upgrading our PA system, and partnering with law enforcement and security experts on emergency response mapping of our school building, with student safety as the top priority.

Welcoming hearts.

Inspiring minds.

Igniting excellence.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

This year, Saint Thomas More launched *This Holy Place: Renewing and Restoring* — a capital campaign in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and the most significant investment in our parish and school in a generation. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our community, this work is already underway, and we look forward to sharing more milestones in the year ahead.

CHURCH EXTERIOR RESTORATION

Deteriorating masonry, failing drainage systems, and roof tiles past their life make exterior work urgent to protect our sanctuary from continued damage.

SCHOOL RESTROOM REPLACEMENT

Water-wasting, inefficient systems and failing fixtures put strain on our plumbing, and we are in dire need of developmentally appropriate equipment for all.

PLAYGROUND REVITALIZATION

Our playgrounds no longer meet the varied needs of our growing community, and are falling into dangerous disrepair. Our students need more green space and more inclusive playground equipment.

Learn more and support this work at morecommunity.org/capital-campaign

MORE MILESTONES

- Enrollment reached 332 students in preschool through eighth grade!
- Renovation of our school gymnasium with a newly refinished STM branded floor and vibrant matting along the walls.
- Over 90% of our kindergarten through third grade students tested at or above their grade level in reading fluency.
- Over 160 Cast and Crew participated in this year's production of Willy Wonka, Jr!
- A record breaking spring auction that grossed over $240,000 in revenue!
- Planning began for a new playground for preschool through eighth grade students for construction during the 2026–27 school year.
- Tremendous community support following the tragic events at Annunciation Church and School, and Operation Metro Surge this winter.
- Inaugural Grandparents & Special Friends Day.

School Finances
2025–2026

Saint Thomas More is incredibly grateful for the generosity of our parish, parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends that ensure our financial health. Your sharing of time, talent, and treasure helps to advance our mission and ministry. Your financial generosity directly impacts our families and students by helping to keep tuition affordable, attracting and retaining highly qualified faculty and staff, providing necessary resources to offer the highest academic and faith-centered learning environment for our students, and making our education available to anyone who desires it regardless of financial position. Here is a summary of our fundraising and school initiatives from the 2025-26 academic year:

SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The School Advisory Committee (SAC) serves as an advisory body to the principal and pastor. Their responsibilities include: 1) Supporting the administration in obtaining necessary staff and assets for the school's long-term viability; 2) Supporting the implementation of a school strategic plan; and 3) Recommending policies and practices that are consistent with the school's mission. The SAC is not involved directly in school operations, faculty and staff employment, or curriculum and assessment decisions.

Our SAC was chaired by parent Brian Bergson. Members included: Patrick Felicetta, President of DeLaSalle High School; Ken Goodpaster, former STM trustee; alumni parent and parishioner, Katherine Gernes; and current parents, Julie Blaskowski, Eric Branson, Katie Campbell, Colby Dixon, Kevin Lagos, and Jill Peterson.

AIM HIGHER & CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

The Aim Higher Foundation and the Catholic Community Foundation helps children access the proven benefits of a Catholic education by making tuition more affordable at K-8 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis by providing $1,000 scholarships to children for families with demonstrated financial need. This year, 23 students at Saint Thomas More received an Aim Higher Scholarship and 6 students received a scholarship administered through the Catholic Community Foundation!

NEW PLAYGROUND FOR ALL AGES

Thanks to the generosity of our community at this spring's Blue & Gold Auction, our dreams of a new playground for all ages and abilities is coming true! We are deeply grateful for the support of current and alumni families, friends of our school, and parishioners for their generous support. We aim to create a large playground with a unified play space on the east end of our parking lot along Oxford Avenue, finally placing the tot lot and big kid playground next to one another. We anticipate work on this playground will commence during the upcoming 2026-2027 school year.

BLUE & GOLD
AUCTION
Spring Gala

SCHOOL AUCTION

This year's auction grossed over $240,000—a record-breaking success! Over $130,000 was raised to cover the cost of replacing the tot lot and updating the big kid playground.

FALL RAFFLE

This year's fall raffle raised over $70,000! These funds help offset operating expenses.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Parent Partnership Program and the Annual Fund raised over $60,000 from alumni families and school supporters—bridging the tuition gap of educating students at our school. Thank you for your continued generosity!

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE MORE

THANK YOU for supporting the mission of Saint Thomas More School!

Scan the QR code to donate online.

This past school year, we have received unsolicited donations from people who simply love our school and students. Donations to our school qualify as charitable deductions for federal tax purposes and may help reduce your tax liability. You are encouraged to check with your financial advisor regarding any questions you might have. With this being said...

- Monetary gifts of any size can be made at any time. Our school accepts cash, checks, and credit/debit card payments. Gifts can be made in the school office or on our school's website.
- Many corporations match their employees' gifts to nonprofit organizations, thus increasing the overall gift. You are encouraged to contact your employer to see if your company has a matching gift program.
- Saint Thomas More accepts gifts of securities, stocks, and bonds.
- Including Saint Thomas More Catholic School in your estate planning is a simple way to ensure your giving will continue for future generations.

Please contact Bridget Her, Director of Admissions and Advancement for more information at bher@morecommunity.org

Strategic Goals 2026–2027

- Continuing to strengthen and celebrate our Jesuit identity.
- Completing much needed plumbing, bathroom, and locker room renovations starting in the fall of 2026.
- Constructing a new play area for preschool through eighth grade on the east end of our parking lot, while increasing green space where our tot lot is currently located.
- Reimagining leading-edge professional development for preschool through eighth grade teachers and staff.
- Updating and improving teacher observations and the continued development of teacher professional practice goals.
- Continuing to foster alumni involvement and support of our school.
- Preparing for a Lumen Accreditation visit by representatives of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul Minneapolis during the 2027-2028 school year. More information will be shared about this accreditation process during the upcoming school year.

Children do not simply attend Saint Thomas More Catholic School,

they belong.

Our Story IS UNIQUE

Saint Thomas More Catholic School is a ministry of the Community of Saint Thomas More. Our school and parish have been administered by the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, since 1991. Our Jesuit identity guides and defines who we are and what we do each day.

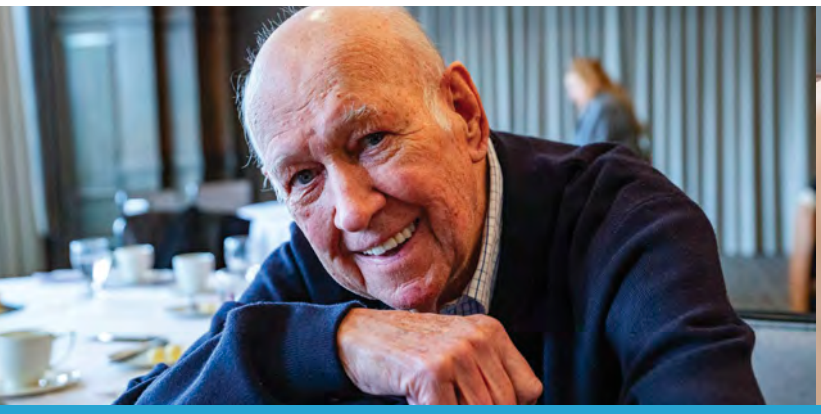
Our parish school has a long and proud history dating back to Saint Luke's School founded in 1904, and Immaculate Heart of Mary founded in 1952. Over the years we have been known by different names, but the spirit of our school and community has remained the same. We have a rich tradition of offering a transformative Catholic education in the heart of Saint Paul.

We have flourished from the roots of our founding schools and have been blessed by the pastoral leadership of the Jesuits for 35 years. The visionary leadership and joy of our pastor, Father R.J. Fichtinger, S.J., and our associate pastor, Father Peter Etzel, S.J., this past year has helped us continue to grow.

As a school rooted in Jesuit tradition, we intentionally teach children at Saint Thomas More to be loving, open to growth, committed to excellence, religious, and to become young people who stand with and for others, especially those who are poor and marginalized.

In April, we mourned the loss of Saint Luke's teacher, coach, and friend: Wally Wescott. He taught middle school math and language arts, ran the school newspaper, was a multi-sport official, and so much more during his 25 years here. Wally was a pillar of this community, and we will feel his loss for many years to come.

This year, our beloved church building marks a remarkable milestone, celebrating 100 years of prayer, worship, and community life in this sacred space on Summit Avenue. To honor this centennial, a commemorative logo was created, its design drawn from the church's iconic rose window: a symbol of light, beauty, and the enduring presence of God at the heart of our community.



In this centennial year we also launched *This Holy Place: Renewing and Restoring* — a capital campaign to protect and renew the very building that has sheltered our parish for a century. To care for these walls is to honor all who have worshiped within them, and to ensure that the generations to come will know this place as their spiritual home too.

We are blessed that our parish is energized and experiencing growth. As stewards of this vibrant parish and historic campus, we must continue to care for our buildings and grounds and work to be a bright light in the community through worship, fellowship, education, and outreach.

Our parish celebrated 3 catechumens and 15 candidates in OCIA this year. We are constantly encouraged by the growth and positive energy in our parish community!

We hosted three Lenten Fish Frys this spring in our school's auditorium, a wonderful representation of our school and parish communities coming together.

Father R.J. and the entire parish staff continue to find ways to serve our school community and bring Jesuit values into each day. We are fortunate to have the Society of Jesus' kind and welcoming presence to support our community.

Our school community will publish a financial statement for this fiscal year in the fall. Our parish continues to improve its financial position through increased stewardship on the church side, and increased enrollment in our parish school.

Our community's financial health is dependent on continuing to increase school enrollment, increased parish stewardship, and successful advancement efforts in the years ahead. If you haven't made a commitment to share your time, talent, and treasure, please do so. Any financial gift helps strengthen our mission and ministry. In addition, your good word about our parish school helps us continue to grow. Keep spreading the good news about Saint Thomas More Catholic School!

1065 Summit Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
651.224.4836

info@morecommunity.org

SAINTTHOMASMORE.ORG