



SAINT THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2023-2024

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 2023-2024



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

Seventeen years ago I graduated my first class from our school. I am still in awe and wonder at the amazing students and community we have at Saint Thomas More! Our students grow intellectually, interpersonally, and spiritually during their time at our school. They truly learn to be a friend to all, to be kind and inclusive, and to treat others the way they would like to be treated. Ultimately, when students leave our hallowed halls, they are young men and women for others who recognize their gifts and talents and understand who they are called to be as they enter high school. In many wonderful ways, each student in our school is a work of art that takes shape throughout their journey at STM. As they move on to high school and college, they still have so much more to learn and develop to become the person God wants each of them to be, but the foundation of who they are and what they are capable of is certainly laid here at Saint Thomas More.

The children of our school are blessed to be taught by an incredibly talented and dedicated faculty and staff! In many ways, our staff is like a family who always supports one another and our larger community. They are selfless with their time and incredibly gifted with their approach to teaching and learning. When we ask students what they love most about our school, they often mention their teachers! We are blessed, very blessed!

During the 2023-24 academic year, we successfully achieved several strategic goals that were outlined in the strategic plan we implemented following our accreditation visit in the fall of 2022. We also accomplished several additional projects that we

were happy to complete this past year. I hope this Annual Report gives you a great picture of Saint Thomas More and what we are looking forward to in the upcoming school year.

Our school continues to grow! At year's end, we had 330 students in grades PreK-Grade 8. Next year we anticipate a slightly smaller kindergarten class, but we expect transfer students in almost every grade and an expanded preschool! Thank you for being such amazing ambassadors for our school. Often when I meet prospective families and I ask them how they learned about us, they say a current family told me how much they love STM.

Thank you for sharing your children with us this past year. Thank you for being awesome parents and outstanding partners with our faculty and staff. We can't do our job in forming and transforming your kids without all of you and the heavy lifting you do each day as parents.

Please take time to review this year's Annual Report. We had a very blessed and successful year in many ways, and we have much to look forward to during the upcoming school year.

With Deep Gratitude,

Pat Lofton



STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

2023-2024

We began this school year on the heels of a successful on-site accreditation visit in the fall of 2022 by the MNSAA (Minnesota Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association) that culminated in the development of a new strategic plan. This year's strategic goals were modest, and we were able to successfully achieve these goals, along with additional projects that were not included in our plan.





Academic Year in Review 2023-2024

50%

of graduates receive high school scholarship offers based on test scores

90%

of graduates test into honors level courses in high school

95%

parent participation in parent-teacher conferences

30%

of students are non-catholic

CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND ANTI-RACISM TRAINING

This school year, members of our K-8 faculty once again participated in an eight-month class entitled *Anti-racism in the Classroom: Beyond White Privilege* facilitated by the Minnesota Writing Project at the University of Minnesota. Following this training, all of our faculty will begin working together in a professional learning community to actualize the concepts and ideas that were discussed over the past two years to better serve all students in our school.

NWEA MAPS GROWTH TESTING

Our school administers the NWEA Maps Growth tests in math, reading, and language in the fall and spring to all students in grades 2-8. Test results and a letter were sent to parents at the end of the school year.

We continue seeing effects on student growth and achievement from the pandemic. Our teachers are committed to using the data from these assessments—along with data they gather from classroom assessments—to focus on specific learning targets for each student, helping them better achieve their projected growth. Our school uses a comprehensive assessment approach that relies on formative and summative teacher-created assessments. STM is blessed with highly knowledgeable, professional, and insightful teachers who use assessment data to meet students on their learning journey so that each achieves individual success.

BELIEVE AND READ

GROVES ACADEMY: BELIEVE AND READ PROGRAM

Through the Believe and Read program, as well as the one-on-one support provided by Carol Kimlinger, our Coordinator of Student Support Services, we assisted students in grades K-3 in their reading fluency so that every student made improvement in reading fluency over the 2022-23 school year.

Some of the successes from this past year include:

- 100% of kindergartners improved their Letter Naming Fluency and Letter Sound Fluency.
- 64% of students in grades 1-3 who started the year below grade level had a positive change in their national percentile indicating that they had an above-average learning trajectory and are closing the gap to be on grade level with their peers.

OUR LITTLEST LEARNERS: STM PRESCHOOL REVIEW

Saint Thomas More Preschool celebrated its 10-year anniversary—commemorated with new hallway murals designed by former parent Megan Junius and her team at Eight Moon. Eight of our 2024 graduates were preschool alumni and learners in the original preschool a decade ago!

The preschool welcomed 21 new students this year. This increased our footprint to four classrooms on the lower level of the school. We anticipate a record year in 2024-2025 with over 50 learners enrolled and the addition of another classroom.

We received a grant that will pay for our staff to get trained in the social-emotional curriculum, Social Thinkers, and continue training in the program The Zones of Regulation. These will be implemented this summer in preparation for the 2024-2025 school year. STM Preschool was fortunate to retain all staff and hire two new positions—their care, patience, and creativity is inspiring.

Words cannot express our gratitude to the families at STM Preschool. We are grateful that you share your kids with us every day. We do our best to keep their minds full of wonder and love. You all make our preschool such an incredible place to be.





Notable Achievements **THIS YEAR**

DATABASE MANAGEMENT

Implemented a new student information system and tuition collection program through FACTS.

STAFF EVALUATION

Developed and implemented a process for evaluating all employees, including the principal.

SCHOOL SUSTAINABILITY

Installed more secure and energy efficient rear doors of our school building and implemented a composting program in our school.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Reviewed our strategic plan and revised the scope of the plan, timeline of action steps, and principal responsibilities.

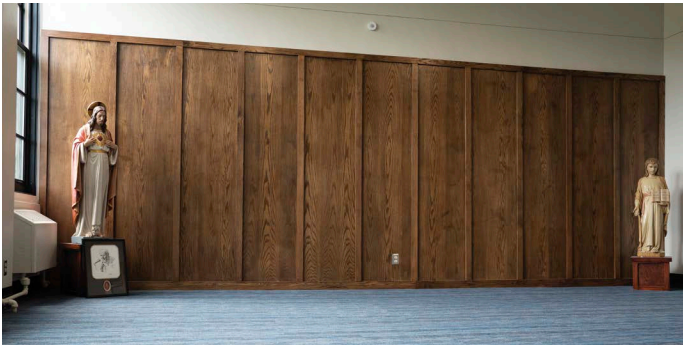


**Welcoming hearts.
Inspiring minds.**
*Igniting
excellence.*



SENSORY ROOM

Our new sensory room contains items that help relieve the anxiety or over-stimulation of students. Our goal is to provide children a break with varying textures, lights, sounds, and smells. This room was created from a generous dedicated donation by an alumni family.



SCHOOL CHAPEL

We created a welcoming chapel that classes use for meditation, prayer, and small gatherings. We await the installation of stained glass in the east facing windows, but are blessed to have this space in our school through a \$15,000 grant from the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence.



FLEXIBLE SEATING

We purchased new flexible seating for all of our K-8 classrooms giving students a choice in what learning space works best for them and helps them to work collaboratively, communicate, and engage in critical thinking.



MORE MILESTONES

- Completed a review of our K-8 social studies curriculum to represent multiple historic perspectives.
- Implemented an evaluation process for all non-instructional school staff and principal.
- Added an assistant principal position bringing Mrs. Meghan Kemna to our staff.
- Enrollment reached 330 students in preschool through grade 8!
- Shrek Jr. Musical—Cast and Crew of 120+ students. That's a 50% increase in participation!
- Began working on updates to our auditorium's sound system.
- Updated our gym entrance with new lighting and signage designed by Eight Moon.



School Finances **2023-2024**

Saint Thomas More is 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. Below you will find a summary of our fundraising and school initiatives from the 2023-24 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) Support the implementation of a school strategic plan; and 3) Recommend 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, Steve Stenzel and members, Patrick Felicetta, President DeLaSalle High School; Ken Goodpaster, former STM trustee; and alumni parent and parishioner, Katherine Gernes and current parents, Brian Bergson, Patty Houser, Anton Jones, Jill Peterson, Julie Savene, and Ellison Yahner.

AIM HIGHER FOUNDATION

The Aim Higher 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, 29 students at Saint Thomas More received an Aim Higher Scholarship!





OUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

Our school's fiscal year ends on June 30, 2024. Our community will publish a financial statement for this fiscal year this fall. Our parish continues to improve its financial position through increased stewardship from our church community and increased enrollment in our parish school.

Our community's long-term financial health is dependent on continuing to increase enrollment in our school, increased stewardship in our parish, and successful advancement efforts in the years ahead. If you haven't committed to sharing your time, talent, and treasure, please do so. Any financial gift—small and large—helps strengthen the mission and ministry of Saint Thomas More. In addition, your advocacy for our parish school helps us continue to grow. Keep spreading the good news about Saint Thomas More Catholic School!



SCHOOL AUCTION

This year's auction grossed over \$163,000! Over \$45,000 was raised to continue covering the cost of replacing the sound, projection, and lighting system in our auditorium

FALL RAFFLE

This year's fall raffle raised over \$55,000! These funds help offset operating expenses.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Parent Partnership Program secured over \$15,000 in donations from parents and the Annual Fund raised over \$45,000 from alumni families, and school supporters—bridging the tuition gap of educating students at our school.



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 donation 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.

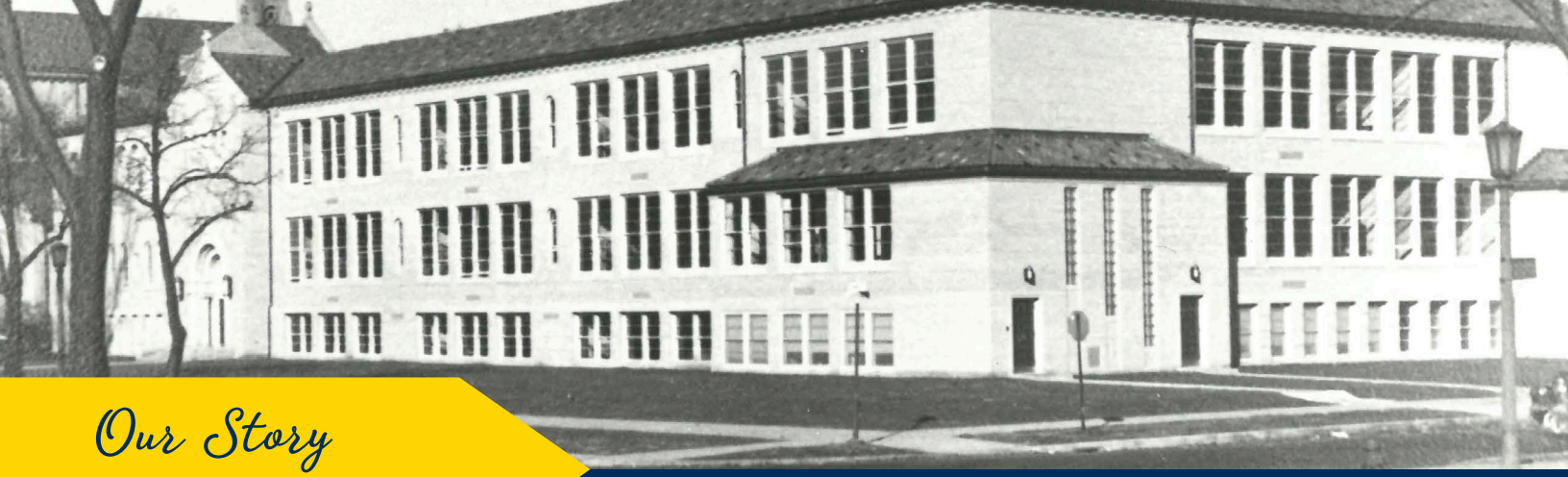
Please contact Bridget Her, Director of Admissions and Advancement for more information. (bher@morecommunity.org)



Strategic Goals 2024-2025

- Re-institute and reimagine Parent Visit Days and explore options for Parent Education Seminars.
- Offer parents education on the developmental needs and issues of their children.
- Develop a robust new parent orientation program for families.
- Publish a curriculum outline by grade to keep parents informed of key concepts explored in class.
- Create and offer more parent, family, and community events outside of school hours.
- Grow an alumni database and create networking opportunities.
- Review our science curriculum and adopt Next Generation Science Standards aligning with STM.
- Create ongoing faculty and Staff formation opportunities focused around Jesuit Catholic values.
- Provide parents with Jesuit resources and reflections.
- Foster a culture of active involvement in the life of our larger parish community.
- Engage our community through our 2024 master planning process with OPN Architects.
- Complete upgrades to our auditorium sound, projection, and lighting systems.

**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 over 30 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.

Our parish community began a master planning initiative with OPN Architects entitled “A Light That Guides Us”. This comprehensive facilities assessment and master planning process will guide our parish—church and school—over the next decade.



This process involves evaluating our current infrastructure, determining areas for improvement, prioritizing needs and desires, and producing a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development. Master planning is about making the connection between our facilities, our people, and the surrounding environment.





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.

A master plan allows us to discern and consider what our facilities need to meet the needs of our growing community and its many ministries. This process will lead our community into the next 100 years as we continue to evolve with our families and parishioners.

The parish has accomplished so much in addition to launching the master plan. Our parish began a major conservation project to restore and preserve the over 100-year-old Stations of the Cross—with one of the stations being sponsored by our Saint Thomas More School families! This mirrors our school communities generosity of funding Mary's Chapel in our sanctuary over 100 years ago!

Our parish celebrated over 40 baptisms this year! We are encouraged by the continued growth of young families and positive energy in our parish community.

Our parish hosted three successful Lenten Fish Frys this spring in our school's cafeteria. Fish Frys are a wonderful representation of our school and church communities coming together in shared joy and hospitality.

Fr. R.J. and the entire parish staff continue to find ways to serve our school community and bring Jesuit values into each day. Our students attend weekly Mass and have opportunities to experience new forms of prayer. We are fortunate to have the Society of Jesus' kind and welcoming presence to support our community

To learn more about our parish, please visit their website: www.morecommunity.org





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SAINTTHOMASMORE.ORG