

IMPACT



2021 Impact Report

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School | Dynamic education centered in Christ

LETTER FROM OUR PRINCIPAL

Who knew, on the first day of school this year that we would make it until the end of the year without needing to close due to COVID?

In March 2020, we began a plan that we hoped would allow us to open safely, and at the very least, begin our year together as a school. That first day in person turned into an entire year together...


This has been an amazing year of blessings. Our dedicated faculty never once wavered in their desire to be at school with our children every day that we could be. Over the summer, teachers learned Canvas, our new classroom platform that has allowed us to give our parents the option of learning at home if needed. We began with 30 students learning virtually and ended with only two.



This year, Father Jim went from celebrating one school Mass to three school Masses a week due to social distancing protocols. This was indeed a blessing, as Father tailored the readings and homily to his audience. Because this was so successful and warmly received, next year, we will have at least two school Masses a week.



Some of the more painful decisions we had to make to keep everyone safe became blessings in disguise. Masks forced us to look each other in the eyes. Classes remained together the entire day, and that created very tight classroom communities and quiet hallways. Sanitizing in and out of every space we entered eliminated the yearly flu and cold epidemic, and we did not have one case of head lice. Now that is something to celebrate!

 As we look towards our future, we have much to celebrate. We successfully completed our accreditation this year. We are due to begin the process of creating our new five year strategic plan. We have increased our enrollment next year by 20 students at this point, and with tours remaining on our calendar, that number will likely increase. Test scores across the school show wonderful growth in reading and math, and our students are thriving by being together.

Next year you will begin a new journey with a new principal and assistant principal. I know that they will love this school community as much as I do! Mr. Ryan Corcoran has amazing gifts and I am confident that he will skillfully move the school forward. His faith is deep and our Catholic culture will blossom in new and wonderful ways.

I thank you for your ever-present support and friendship. I have loved every moment of the last 19 years at Saint Thomas. This is a unique and special place. This community is known for its warmth and generosity, and I have experienced this abundantly as your principal. God bless each and every one of you, and continue to keep the school in your prayers!

E. J. Furlonger

#WeAreSaintThomas

#YouBelongHere

#BeTheLight



MISSION

Dynamic Education Centered in Christ

VISION

A leading innovative Catholic school that invites students to love and serve Christ and engage culture with a saintly passion.



2020-21 SCHOOL THEME

Be the light!

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”



~ Matthew 5:14-16

**“DO SMALL
THINGS WITH**



GR8

LOVE.”

~ Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Despite the tragedy of COVID, we've experienced many blessings this year. We now have three weekly Masses with lessons targeted to the ages of the students attending: Monday – grades 1 through 3, Wednesday – grades 4 and 5, and Friday – our middle school. We also have two virtual Chapels a day – older students in the morning and younger students after lunch. Students happily greeted Chapel talks the same way they would in-person – some answers to challenges are so easy. Read more of our school-year faith in action below:



Chapel talks with guests from all over the world

Inaugural 8th Grade Leadership Retreat

All-School Family Prayer Partners

You Belong Here – Vision 2020 Week-long Virtual Auction

Weekly Parent Rosary at Wilcox Park

Month-long Celebration of Life

Daily Theology of the Body lessons (K-8)

Daily virtual Angelus prayer led by 3rd grade

Weekly Catechesis of the Good Shepherd lessons (Pre-K/K)

Weekly virtual lessons from Father Jim

Weekly classroom Adoration

Virtual Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Classroom Prayer Partners (Grades 1 and 2)

Friendship Retreats (Grades 1 and 2)

Faculty/Staff Prayer Partners

First Communion Retreat (Grade 2)/Confirmation Retreat (Grade 8)

7th Grade Leadership Retreat Preparation

Lenten lessons with Father Jim

Virtual Advent by Candlelight

180 SCHOOL DAYS FACE 2 FACE!

COVID delivered something we had not anticipated. But that didn't change our determination to deliver a multi-faceted, collaborative curriculum for learners of all abilities – and in all locations. We spent our summer learning Canvas, a new educational platform that allows students to move seamlessly from in-person to virtual so they never miss a beat. The excitement of learning was still shared, academic work realized, and the strange transition to physical distancing and masks went smoother than we ever could have imagined. Check out some of our other academic accomplishments:

MAP test scores higher than the national average

In-Person and Virtual Learning (K-8)

Human-Centered Design (4/5 grade)

Advanced Math Classes (Middle school)

Virtual High School Math Classes (Grade 8)

Canvas tutorials hosted by Ryan Corcoran

Multi-Age Project-Based Classrooms (1/2 and 4/5)

Canvas Platform for Virtual Learning (K-8)

Dairy Discovery (Grades 1 and 2)

Stream Team at Aquinas College (Kindergarten)

Two student teachers hosted (Grades 1/2 and Middle school)

Enrichment services (Grades 3-5)

Flexible Virtual Parent/Teacher Conferences

Weekly Music and Movement lessons (P3/P4)

Virtual Junior Achievement (K-Grade 2)

Wigwam Construction (Grade 3)

Virtual Mystery Readers (Kindergarten)

Farm Bureau "America and Me" Essay top three award winners

Zoo Lab (Grades 4/5)

Science dissections (Grade 8)

Market Day (Grades 4/5)

Super Hero Olympics (Preschool)

Virtual Spelling Bee (Grades 3-8)

In-Person Mystery Readers (Grades 1-5)



DO IT WITH LOVE 3:23

Colossians

When it came to Servant Leadership this year, some answers were harder to find. COVID challenged us to think outside the box. We believe we are called to serve, which brings light to those in need. Many of our students, families, and neighbors faced the pandemic with their own unique circumstances. There was difficulty and uncertainty. But we are finding ourselves hopeful that soon we will move out of the era remembered primarily as the COVID pandemic. And, we vow to keep shining because the world needs our light – now more than ever. Read how we served this year:

Christmas cards for Holland Home senior friends (All school)

Service hours to neighbors in need (Kindergarten)

Daily virtual Chapel leaders (Grade 8)

Adopted three Christmas families through King's Table (All school)

Aquinas Project Unite Partner

Blankets for the Homeless (Middle school)

Do Good December Advent activities (All school)

All In Week – All kids. All abilities. All in. (All school)

Prayer wall – Pray a prayer. Share a prayer. (All school)

Shomari Tate Cultural Awareness (Middle school)

Virtual Grand Friends' Day

Home & School Stock the Teachers' Lounge

Red Glasses Ambassadors – Living boldly, loving big and passing it on.

Help for Homeless Project (All School)

In-person Mom's Tea (Preschool)

"I love Saint Thomas" video recordings
(Grades 1-8)



21st CENTURY STUDENTS

We need to continue to adapt as the world changes, so we are keeping COVID-learned lessons close by as we move forward. During this COVID year, we had to prepare our students to be virtual learners at any moment. This meant that our 1st-8th grade students needed their own computer in the event we needed to return to virtual learning. We made that happen by providing a Chromebook for each student. Check out how technology enhanced our curriculum – in and out of the classroom:

Chromebooks (grades K - 8th)

In-person/virtual learning options

Online religion curriculum

Flexible virtual parent/teacher conferences

Virtual Lunch Bunch

Virtual Coffee Talks with principal/assistant principal

Tablets for teachers and staff

Canvas platform for lesson delivery

Clever Touch Display Boards

Canvas parent tutorials with Ryan Corcoran

E-sports grades 6th-8th

Middle School “Game of Life” Financial Literacy

Virtual You Belong Here – Vision 2020 Auction SUCCESS made all the above a reality. Thanks you!



100%

All kids. All abilities. ALL IN!

COVID didn't slow down our Educational Support Services (ESS) mission to educate students of all abilities. Our ESS and enrichment program continued to provide services that enabled students to receive appropriate, specially designed instruction, ensuring their academic, social, and spiritual success! See how enrichment and support impacted our students:

Virtual MAP and AIMS testing available (K-8)

Virtual and in-person academic intervention

Virtual and in-person counseling

Hydraulics (Grades 3-5)

Lunch buddy groups

Demystification process – working through difficulties program introduced (K-8)

Sensory room, open to ANY student, not just those who receive ESS resources

Continuous analysis of student data

Prosthetic arm creation (Grade 3)

Flexible seating, services and materials

Touring Tumble (Grades 4-5)

Enrichment services (Grades 3-5)

Book clubs (Middle School)

In-classroom observation/consultation



SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

2,167



COVID reminded us that there's more to student success than computers and textbooks. An empowered community, a peaceful climate and constant communication go a long way to support student, parent and teacher success. WE ARE SAINT THOMAS and we made it! We made it through this entire COVID year together – sometimes virtual, sometimes in-person, always in faith. We know the future will be beautiful – we are ready to pave the way together with you and our school community. Learn how our community overcame COVID barriers:

Virtual 5K -- All kids. All abilities. All in!

Saint Thomas YouTube Channel

Monthly virtual coffee talks with Suzi and Ryan

Kindergarten Kick-Off

Father Jim's Facebook Live Friday messages

Week-long "You Belong Here" Virtual Auction

Virtual Home & School meetings

Virtual Preschool/Kindergarten Round-UP!

Virtual Lunch Bunch

Home & School Stock the Teachers' Lounge

Virtual Advent by Candlelight, featuring our own Lucyna Dieleman

Outdoor all-school May Crowning

New Grotto Groundbreaking

Here Comes the Sun Party in a Bag (P3-3rd)

Virtual Variety Show (Grades 3-8)

In-person Mothers' Day Tea (Preschool)



INFINITY AND BEYOND...

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School has always centered its education in Christ. We create an inclusive environment where children have opportunities to be themselves, learn, grow, and find a true sense of belonging.

We know our mission to be dynamic is ever changing, that's what keeps us "dynamic." In the past year, the need to re-work plans, programs, and strategies came up over and over again. We had to ask and re-ask ourselves: How?

- How will we teach our students virtually?
- How will we create community when we are miles apart?
- How will we make everyone feel safe and comfortable when coming to school even with being seated far apart and wearing masks?
- How will we provide opportunities for our students to thrive during a pandemic?

Some answers were easy: students happily greeted each other during virtual chapel the same way they would in person. Laughter and excitement were still shared, lessons were still learned, and the strangeness of physical distancing and masks went smoother than we ever could have imagined.

Other answers were harder to find: many of our students, families, and neighbors faced the pandemic with their own unique circumstances. But now, after so much focus on how to overcome the difficulties and uncertainty, we are finding ourselves hopeful that soon we will move out of the era remembered as the COVID pandemic.

We know as a school community we will need to adapt as the world continues to change. Just look at all we have accomplished this year! In-person learning for 180 days, a successful accreditation that affirms our school, an amazing weeklong virtual auction, and a community that has grown closer even though we've been distanced for so long. We are keeping our COVID lessons and blessings close as we move forward. We also know that the future is bright – we are ready to pave the way together with you and our entire community.



#WeAreSaintThomas

#YouBelongHere

#BeTheLight

SAINT THOMAS

our pictures are worth 1,000 words

