

# THE BUZZ!

What's buzzing around the halls of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School

August 2021

## We rise by lifting others...

Our 2021-22 school wide theme is "Arise, shine for the glory of the Lord is upon you."  
~ Isaiah 60:1-3

Welcome to Saint Thomas!

Whether your family has been connected to Saint Thomas for generations or you just moved to the area and chose our school to put down roots, you are now part of a strong and Christ-centered community. I want to encourage you all to reach out to one another, meet a new parent (or two) in our school. Open your arms and your heart to embrace one another. As a community, we partner together on this noble pursuit to provide our students with a positive learning and faith environment.

I challenge you to remember when you were new somewhere, an outsider, when you needed community or a friend. Remember that there are people in our community who feel that way now. We are an inclusive community. Jesus tells us, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

We are a faculty and staff of 48! That's 48 adults who are passionate about providing a dynamic education, centered in Christ —48 adults who recognize that putting in time and effort now to form young men and women of virtue will pay huge dividends in the future of our Church and world.

It's amazing to think that if you add up all faculty and staff -- all the people who work in this building -- it works out to a 7:1 ratio. That ratio means there are a lot of people investing in your child's development of mind, body, and soul. We rise by lifting others. We are so blessed!

Ryan Corcoran, Principal

2021-22 Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Theme  
**"Arise, shine for the glory  
of the Lord is upon you."**

# Important Dates in August/September...

Date	Event	Time	Location
August 23	School Open House	4:30-6:30pm	All classrooms
August 25	First Day of school Grs 1-8 P4 & Kdg Meet & Greet	8am/3:30pm Assigned times	PreK/K classrooms
August 26	P3 Meet & Greet First Day of Kindergarten & Enrichment	Assigned times 8-11am/8-330pm	Preschool Classroom Kindergarten Classroom
August 27	First Day of Preschool 4	8-11 am/ 12:15-3:30pm	Preschool Classroom
August 31	First day of P3 First day of P4 Enrichment Uniform Holiday	8-11 am 12:15-3:30pm	Preschool Classroom Preschool Classroom
Sept. 3-7	No School - Labor Day Holiday		
September 9	Middle School Orientation	6:30-7:30pm	Middle School Science Classroom
September 22	New Family Parent Meeting	6:30-8pm	Lower level of the Church
September 22/23	School Pictures		Ministry Center

Check online [2021-22 School Calendar](#)

## Back to school information...

### School office contact info

Email [melissafischer@stthomasgr.org](mailto:melissafischer@stthomasgr.org)  
Phone number (616) 458-4228

COVID-19 information for 2021-22:

- Masks are recommended indoors.
- We are currently not allowing visitors to join us at school Masses or Chapel.
- Visitors should self screen for symptoms before coming to school.
- Visitors will be required to check in and health screen at the office before going to a classroom.
- Volunteers are able to come into the building for specific volunteer assignments following the above protocol.

Thanks for helping us stay healthy.

### School communication

The Buzz Newsletter – a bulleted look at the week ahead, emailed out weekly during the school year. It is only available electronically.

- Remind 101 – urgent text messages sent directly to your phone.
- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/saintthomasgr>
- Twitter feed – @SaintThomasGR
- Instagram – SaintThomasGR
- YouTube – Saint Thomas the Apostle GR
- Teachers' newsletters – emailed bi-weekly or monthly.

### School pictures

School pictures will be taken on Wednesday, Sept. 22 (P4-Grade 8) and Thursday, Sept. 23 (P3). This is a uniform holiday. Refer to the student handbook for guidelines.

# Teachers, staff and new families ...

## 2021-2022 Teachers and Staff

Mrs. Emily Brunner	PS3
Mrs. Sue Hieshetter	PS4/Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Teacher
Mrs. Lori Schumaker	P4 Enrichment
Mrs. Mary Ann Bridge	Kindergarten/PM Enrichment
Mrs. Jeremiah Sluggett	Kindergarten/PM Enrichment
Mrs. Bonnie Burke	Preschool Classroom Aide
Mrs. Katie Morrow	Kindergarten Classroom Aide
Mrs. Kate Casey	Grade 1
Mrs. Brenda Tietema	Grade 2
Mrs. Kelly Donohue	1/2 Multi-Age Class
Mrs. Shawn Schuring	Grade 1 and 2 Parapro
Ms. Molly Heeringa	Grade 3
Mrs. MarySue Stegehuis	Grade 3
Mrs. Kailey Malonek	Grade 4
Mrs. Abby VanDyke	4/5 Multi-Age Class
Mrs. Amy Zakrajsek	4/5 Multi-Age Class
Mr. Mike Mester	Grade 5
Mr. Ed Carr	Teacher Emeritus
Mrs. Mary Schafer	Middle School Language Arts
Mrs. Nicole Hoedeman	Middle School Math
Mr. Adam Baxter	Middle School History
Mrs. Jen Bendon	Middle School Science
TBD	Middle School Religion
Ms. Courtney Richards	Director of Student Development / Preschool and After-Care Director
Mrs. Cheryl Coderre	ESS Teacher
Mrs. Sarah Faber	ESS Teacher
Mrs. Rachael Kohn	ESS Instructor
Mrs. Joni Poggi	ESS Instructor
Mrs. Meg Sullivan	ESS Instructor
Mrs. Jeanne Walch	Enrichment Teacher/Librarian
Mrs. Karen Willams	GRPS Art
Mrs. Ashley Emmerson	GRPS Physical Ed
Mrs. Becky Keane	GRPS Spanish
Mrs. Rebecca Guyette	GRPS Technology
Mrs. Ann Isaacson	GRPS Music/Band
Mrs. Lauran Despres	School Counselor
Mr. Brian Cooper	Technology Coordinator
Mr. Ted Coon	Maintenance Supervisor
Mr. Don Serba	Maintenance
Mr. Drew Edgerton	Maintenance
Mrs. Cammi Lawrence	Admissions/Marketing
Mrs. Betsy Edgerton	Director of Dev./Outreach
Mrs. Melissa Fischer	Administrative Assistant
Dr.. Marygrace Tyrrell	Assistant Principal
Mr. Ryan Corcoran	Principal

## Welcome, new families!

### New families

Scott and Kelly Andersen	Alaina 4, Sam P4, Peter P3
Craig and Marissa Bilbrey	Eliana P3
Syrus and Jennifer Bingman	Liam 8
Jeanette Boivin	Bastian 3
Matt and Danielle Boog	Haley 4, Peter 2, Sophia 2, Ben P3
Christopher Ratnasamy and Monica Christopher	Marielle 6, Francis 3
Michael and Danielle DeVasto	Lucy K
Dan and Kathryn Eardley	Patrick P4
Matt and Jennifer Elliott	Frances 4, Lincoln 1
Tim and Celia Horst	Felicity P3
John and Molly Kennedy	Suzi P3
Eric and Rebecca Kohn	Harper 5, Reagan 2
Robert and Jamie Kratz-Hahn	Fulton 4
Charity Kuzner	Michael 7
Tom Kuzner	
Paul and Courtney Martin	Clara K
Michael and Laina Mills	Grey P4
Adam Piotrowski and Alexis Neuman	Sasha P3
Terry and Marygrace Tyrrell	Mara 8, Eleanor 6, Clarke 3, Hugh 1
Michael and Katy Vaccariello	Max K
Corey and Cariana VanderMeer	James K
Brad and Megan Vedders	Sydney 8
Austin and Jacqueline Waggoner	Kate K, Joseph P4
James and Hilary Wilson	James 6, Thomas 3, Cecilia 1

**#WeAreSaintThomas**  
**#YouBelongHere**

# Daily Details...

## School day schedule

### Grades 1-8

8am	School begins
8:05am	Chapel
8:20 am	Classes begin

### Lunch/Recess Schedule

1st/2nd recess	10:30-10:55 - lunch - 11:00-11:25
K/3rd recess	11:00-11:25 - lunch - 11:30-11:55
4th/5th recess	11:30-11:55 - lunch - 12:00-12:25
6th/8th recess	12:10-12:35 - lunch - 12:40-1:05

3:15pm	End of Day Prayers
3:20-3:30pm	School dismissal

### Preschool & Kindergarten

8-11am	P3, P4, K (AM)
12:15-3:30pm	P4 (PM), P4 and K Enrichment

## Hornets' Nest

The Saint Thomas After-School Program begins on the first day of school, Wednesday, Aug. 25 and runs from 3:30 - 5:30pm. Please contact Courtney Richards for more information.

We are also looking for people who would like to be a substitute in the Hornet's Nest. If you are interested in being on our "Sub List," contact Courtney (courtneyrichards@stthomasgr.org).

## Sign up for Remind.com

We use a text/email system to notify parents of school closings and other important Saint Thomas information.

If you are new to Saint Thomas or have not signed up, go to [www.stthomasgr.org/images/Remind\\_Instructions.pdf](http://www.stthomasgr.org/images/Remind_Instructions.pdf) for directions to get texts and/or emails. You may remove yourself from getting these notifications at any time by following the directions that come in the email or by responding to the text with the word "stop."

## Diocesan busing information

Grand Rapids Area Catholic Schools Transportation Consortium provides busing for students. Families must register each year by signing a new contract. If you have not registered and are interested, call Maureen in the Transportation office at 616-246-6470.

## Be on time...

School begins at 8am. Make every effort to be on time. After 8am, the administration and staff cannot be present at the gate or car line. If you are late, escort your child to the main office door. Ring the bell and your child will be admitted into the building.

## But not too early!

It is important that your student is NOT dropped off before 7:45am.

## If you're absent...

Email (melissafischer@stthomasgr.org) or call (616-458-4228) the school office, between 7:30-8:30am *each day your child will be absent*. Please leave your child's name, grade and reason for absence.

## Student drop off/pick up

- Students must NEVER be allowed to cross Wilcox Park Drive to enter or exit a car. DO NOT drop off or pick up students at the curb in front of school or church. **For the safety of all our children, please pick up and drop off students in the "Car Line" or "Gate Line" only.**
- Please make sure your children know which of the two "Lines" locations you will be using so to avoid confusion at pickup. The Car Line is near the Church parking lot, off of Wilcox Park Drive. The Gate Line is near Children's Healing Center, off Fulton Street.
- If you are picking up in the Gateline or Carline, please put a large sign on your front dashboard with your last name.
- Dismissal is in waves:
  - Preschool/Siblings 3:20pm
  - Gateline/Walkers 3:22pm
  - Carline/Hornets' Nest 3:23pm
- To aid in speeding up the drop off/pick up procedure, **please treat Wilcox Park Drive as a ONE WAY street (westbound only). Use Hope Street to travel eastbound.**
- When exiting the parking lot, turn right onto Wilcox Park Drive. By creating this ONE WAY environment, we can make the beginning and end of our school days more relaxing for you and our neighbors.
- Construction update: There is construction on Fulton, between Carleton and Holland Home. If you use the gate line at Children's Healing Center, you must be traveling east down Fulton Street. Turn right into the driveway before Children's Healing Center and exit going east.

## Recess/Lunch/Aftercare supervisors

We are looking for recess, lunch and aftercare supervisors. If you love spending time with children and are available between 11am-1pm one or more days per week or from 3:30-5:30pm, this is the job for you! Enjoy the smell of fresh air and earn money. If you are interested, email ryancorcoran@stthomasgr.org.

# Faith and service...

## Saint Thomas Mass/prayer

There is Mass at our Parish 7:20am before school Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for our community and any school families who would like to attend.

Our students will attend Mass on Monday (Grades 1-3) and Friday (Grades 4-8). Students need to be in Mass attire on their Mass day. At this time, we are not permitting parents to attend school Mass.

Each day, we pray the Fatima Pardon and Morning Offering. In addition, we recite the Pledge of Allegiance as a school community.

During daily Morning Chapel, we offer our students silent prayer time with a daily devotion and a virtue lesson.

We end each day in prayer with a time for reflection and Examination of Conscience.

## Virtus training

Protecting God's Children Awareness Sessions  
If you are new to our school or still need to attend Virtus training (live or online). This is required for all school volunteers.

### Online training is now available!

Upcoming live sessions:

#### St. Robert of Newminster Parish (Ada)

6477 Ada Dr.

Saturday, August 21, 9am

Tuesday, September 14, 9am

Register online at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). On the left side of the page, select "First-Time Registrant." Then select "View a list of sessions." Click in the box stating "Select your organization." Scroll down and select "Grand Rapids, MI (Diocese)." Scroll down the page to see the locations. Go to the top of the page and select "Start Registration."

Complete the registration.

Please arrive a few minutes early to complete the sign-in procedure. Once the presentation begins, no one will be admitted. You must be 18 to attend.

## Servant leaders

Servant leadership is a hallmark of what we do and who we are at Saint Thomas. Our students will participate in service to family, service to parish and service to community through our Saint Thomas serves service initiative.

We will focus on this initiative through daily chapel talks, reflection before Mass and during the celebration of Mass.

If you have service ideas or needs and/or would like to help organize additional service projects, contact Jessica Poelma, Home & School president, at [Jessica.Poelma@gmail.com](mailto:Jessica.Poelma@gmail.com).

## Parent volunteer opportunities

Your gifts and talents will be celebrated at Saint Thomas. Fill out the following [form](#) and you can quickly become immersed in our school community!

If you have questions about volunteer opportunities, contact our VIP coordinator Katie Morrow at [katiemorrow@stthomasgr.org](mailto:katiemorrow@stthomasgr.org).

## Bible order form

Students in third grade\* and above have their own Bible, which they will keep at school to use.

*\* Our Home & School Association is generously purchasing The Good News Translation Catholic Edition for all students entering the third grade and new students entering grades 4-8.*

# Student information...

## PE class dress/shoes

Students wear their school uniform for PE. All shoes used in the gym must have light colored soles. No dark soles will be allowed. Check shoe for indication of a "non-marking" sole.

## School supplies

School supplies are tools that help with learning. Check out the website for [lists of school supplies](#) (select Parent Pages and then Forms & Resources).

## Infinite Campus information

Infinite Campus is the student management system for all diocesan Catholic schools. This online system gives parents access to student attendance, grades, lunch account balances and report cards.

The link to Infinite Campus is <https://micloud1.infinitecampus.org/campus/portal/parents/grcss.jsp> Bookmark it or find it in the lower right corner of the school home page. New families will be given a user name and password for the Infinite Campus Student Management System during the first week of school.

## Canvas information

Canvas is a learning management system that will let Saint Thomas students and parents easily navigate learning and expectations from any device. Log into Canvas at <https://canvas.grdiocese.org/>. Find a link to Canvas at the bottom of our school website. Here is a quick [Canvas app tutorial](#) and [navigating Canvas](#) video.

## School uniform policy

RBG Uniforms is the Saint Thomas school uniform provider. To order online, please visit the [RBG Uniform website](#).

The last Monday of every month is a uniform holiday for Saint Thomas students. Please check these [Uniform Holiday Guidelines](#) for clothing that students should avoid wearing even on uniform holidays.

**Mass uniform requirements:** White shirts and ties (boys). White shirts and skirts/jumpers (girls).

**Mark your calendar! Uniform holidays (non-uniform days) are the last Tuesday of each month.** Our first Uniform Holiday will be Tuesday, August 31.

## Cell phone policy

Cell phones are not allowed in the classroom at Saint Thomas, unless permitted for assignments.

If your student needs to bring a cell phone or any other electronic personal device to school, their teacher will collect it and store it in the classroom during the entire school day.

Students who need to contact parents during the day must use the classroom or office phone. Likewise, a parent who needs to get a message to their student may call the school office and we will deliver the message.

Our goal is to provide a dynamic Christ-centered education for your child. Let's work together to eliminate unnecessary distractions!

## School lunch...

All Students qualify for free lunch again this year thanks to the federal lunch program and Mary Jo Jones from West Catholic High School. Students may also bring lunch from home and should also pack a mid-morning snack.

[Letter from School Lunch Program Director](#)

[Free and reduced lunch form](#)

Classrooms that have a student with severe food allergies will post a notice of a specific allergens that could cause a life-threatening reaction. Classroom teachers will inform parents when there is a student with food allergies in the classroom to avoid known foods with allergens.

Please check out our [Allergen and Health Snack Management Policy](#) for more information.

## Required notifications...

### Asbestos notification

To comply with the requirements of the EPA's Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, all of the school buildings in the Diocese of GR have been inspected for asbestos containing materials. If you would like to review the Management Plan for Saint Thomas, it is available in the school office. The Management Plan will state recommended activities which will maintain the asbestos materials in a non-friable condition. ~ Ted Coon

### Pesticide notification

As a part of our pest management program, pesticides are occasionally applied. You have the right to be informed prior to any pesticide application made to the grounds or buildings. In certain emergencies, pesticides may be applied without prior notice, but notice will be following any such application.

## Receipts...

### Receipts for cash!

Our school can earn \$1,000 from SpartanNash, by shopping at any Family Fare Supermarkets, D&W Fresh Markets, Forest Hill Foods and Ada Fresh Market. Through the Direct Your Dollars program, we can turn eligible receipts into cash for our school!

Every time you shop at any SpartanNash grocery, save your receipts. Drop them in our Direct Your Dollars box, located in the school office.

This is our fourth year of collecting and we are on our way to collecting another \$150,000 in receipts. Please keep the FULL receipts coming! **Do not cut your receipt** as they will not be valid.

You can also mail the receipts to 1429 Wilcox Park Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. We do need original receipts to earn the \$1,000 donation, so please **no photocopies**. Continue saving those receipts! We'll continue collecting them throughout the year.

## Box tops...

### Free money for our library!

Please save those Box Tops for Education logos of General Mills products. Simply cut them from the packaging and send in with your child to school. Each of these Box Tops logos translates into FREE money for the Saint Thomas School Library!



## Home and School and stuff...

The Home and School Association extends a warm welcome to all new and returning families. As a parent or guardian of a Saint Thomas student, YOU ARE A MEMBER of the Home and School Association.

Home and School helps build the bridge between home and school. It provides support for the teachers, plans all-school social events, and helps build community in the school. Our first Home & School meeting will be at 8:30am on August 25. Look for us under the canopy outside the ministry center. Right after drop off and before the meeting, parents can gather by the canopy for a Parent Rosary. If you can't make the first meeting and would like to get involved, please contact Jessica Poelma at [jessica.poelma@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.poelma@gmail.com).

## Saint Thomas SCRIP Program...

Scrip is a program providing rebates on purchases to be used toward tuition. Using gift certificates or cards purchased through our provider, Great Lake Scrip Center, rebates can be quickly accumulated by everyday shopping expenses such as groceries, clothing and gasoline. These rebates are then credited toward tuition twice per year or may be designated toward the Saint Thomas Tuition Angel Grant Program. Check out the [Scrip Program FAQs](#) for more information.

## Immunization requirements...

State Law requires that each student entering Preschool, Kindergarten or a new school have a certificate of immunization on file at the time of registration or no later than the first day of school. In addition, Preschool students are required to have a physical dated within the past two years. Please see the immunizations required for all new students, preschoolers, kindergarteners and seventh grade students.

- **Preschool Requirements:** Up-to-date Immunizations Record on file. Signed Physical dated with the past two years. Consent for disclosure for immunization information on file.
- **Kindergarten Requirements:** Up-to-date Immunizations Record on file. Vision & Hearing Screening Record on file. Consent for disclosure for immunization information on file.
- **New Saint Thomas students:** Up-to-date Immunizations Record on file. Consent for disclosure for immunization information on file.
- **All 7th Grade Students:** Up-to-date Immunizations Record. Consent for disclosure for immunization information on file.

For more information, see the [Vaccines required for school entry](#) and the [Vaccines required for child care and preschool](#) from the State of Michigan.

Immunization Waiver: If you wish to obtain a non-medical religious or philosophical waiver, you must schedule an appointment at the Kent County Health Department by calling 616-632-7200.