



## ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL

*Grades 6 - 12*

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# RESPONSIBLE RESTART 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

St. Thomas Aquinas School is committed to the health and safety of our students and staff. As we prepare to physically come back to school, we are utilizing the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the Responsible Restart Ohio framework provided by Governor DeWine, Stark County Board of Health, the Ohio Department of Health, as well as results from our parent survey to create procedures and guidelines to keep everyone safe as we return to our building.

Our intent by implementing these new procedures is to protect the health and increase the safety of our staff and students from COVID-19. This year is unlike any other. Students and parents/guardians are expected to follow these guidelines. By choosing St. Thomas Aquinas (STA), you are agreeing to these procedures and guidelines that are being designed to keep all of the STA families healthy and safe until we hopefully can return to “normal” in the near future.

Additionally, we are in an extremely fluid situation; policies and procedures could change per local, Diocesan, or state orders. We will inform our families right away of updates or changes. Thank you for your patience.

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## Calendar

St. Thomas Aquinas will begin school a week later than originally planned, on August 24. This will allow our staff more additional time to prepare for all contingencies for our STA students.

Monday, August 24 – First Day of School for Middle School ONLY (this includes Middle School Orientation)

Tuesday, August 25 – All students report to school (Middle School and High School)

## Pre-Arrival

- Parents/guardians are the first care provider students see each morning. Please commit to daily health checks before sending your child to school. Students with a fever (100 degrees F or higher) or exhibiting signs of sickness will not be able to stay at school.
- COVID-19 symptoms include: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. Symptoms range from mild to severe and may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

## Arrival

- Doors to the school will not open before 7:00 am. Students are not permitted into the building before 7:00 am unless they are meeting with a staff member.
- Students will have their temperature checked upon arrival by STA staff with non-contact infrared thermometers. Temperature checks will be randomly done. Students with a temperature of 100 degrees F or higher will not be permitted into the school.
  - Students who are driven to school should be temperature checked before the driver drives off of the campus.
  - All car riders will enter through the front entrance.
  - Students who drive will park in the front parking lot.
- Other screening questions regarding symptoms may also be asked at arrival.
- After temperature check/screening, students will proceed to the breakfast line, lockers, and homeroom. Students will eat breakfast in their homeroom classroom.
- Students who have a temperature will be isolated and must be picked up promptly by parents or guardians. We are unable to keep a student at school who is exhibiting signs of COVID-19.
- All students must be under the supervision of an adult at all times.



## Lunch

- To practice social distancing and promote best practices during this time students in grades 6-12 will eat lunch socially distanced from their peers.
- Daily hot lunch will be available. Students will wear face coverings in the designated area unless they are seated at their table where masks can be removed for the entirety of the lunch period.
- Students will not be able to move chairs to be closer to friends.
- All meals will be served using disposable plates and utensils. The school will make every effort to find biodegradable and recyclable materials.
- Tables and seats will be disinfected before and after each meal during lunchtime. Restrooms and common spaces will be disinfected between lunches.



## Water Bottles

All students will need to bring their own water bottle to school each day. Water bottles should be clear or translucent. Water bottles will be able to be refilled at our newly installed no-touch bottle filling stations. The traditional drinking fountain spigot will not be permitted to be used at this time.



## Sanitation

- Frequently touched surfaces will be sanitized throughout the day using an EPA designated COVID-19 sanitizing solution. Classrooms, hallways, and other common spaces will be sanitized every evening using an electrostatic sprayer containing EPA designated COVID-19 sanitizing solution.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be placed at each entrance, cafeteria, and restroom, as well as other strategic locations.
- Aerosol sprayers with disinfectant will be available in each classroom/office/common area for use by staff only.
- Seating charts will be used in all classrooms.
- Students and staff are expected to wear face coverings at all times.
- Classroom windows and doors will be open at all times to increase airflow (in cold weather students will be allowed to wear jackets).



## Physical Distancing

- Classrooms will be limited in the number of students. Students will be 3-6" apart in each classroom. This may require a more traditional seating arrangement.
- Due to the diverse selection of classes in high school, mixing of students will be greater in the high school than middle school.
- After the bell rings and students are released, staff will sanitize classrooms.
- All students will use hand sanitizer upon entering rooms.
- Signage and floor markings will help remind students to physically distance. Students not following physical distancing rules will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Students will walk on the right side of the hall at all times. Designated signs will be posted.
- All teachers will be using the Google Classroom platform for assignments.
- Students in Middle School will have regular restroom breaks scheduled.
- Restroom breaks will be permitted as usual throughout the school day. However, there will be limited occupancy depending on the square footage of the restroom.



## Face Coverings

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice (e.g., while shouting, chanting, or singing). These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies show that a large portion of individuals with COVID-19 lack symptoms (are "asymptomatic") and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (are "pre-symptomatic") can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The American Association of Pediatrics guidance also states that "spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic."

- Staff will wear cloth face coverings or plastic face shields at all times in student presence.
- Face coverings are required to be worn at all times by all faculty and staff.
- As of today, all students at STA Middle School and High School are required to wear a face covering while inside the building and on buses.
- A cloth face covering must fit snugly but comfortably, secured behind the head with ties or ear loops. Neck gaiters are also permitted for students. Bandanas with an open area at the chin are not permitted.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed nightly; disposable face coverings should be replaced daily.
- Face coverings are supplied by the student. Face coverings may be solid color, multi-color (such as tie dye), or have the STA logo. Any face covering that disrupts the educational process with graphics or wording is considered to be inappropriate.
- Students repeatedly not wearing face coverings or ignoring instructions by staff to wear their face covering properly are subject to disciplinary action.

- Face covering policies will be reevaluated throughout the year in accordance to CDC, AAP, and state/local department of health guidelines.
- There will be limited exemptions to the face covering requirements as allowed by the health department.
- Face covering waivers will be handled individually and will require medical documentation.

## In case of symptoms

- Staff and students exhibiting symptoms during the school day will be immediately sent to a designated quarantine room in the school. The student's parents will be called and directed to pick up their child.
- The school will follow directives from the local health department in each case of a suspected case or outbreak.
- Parents will be alerted to cases or outbreaks as directed by the local health department. Please remember that the names of infected staff or students will not be released for privacy reasons.
- Students and staff testing positive for COVID-19 must provide written documentation clearing them to come back to school.
- Students and staff testing positive for COVID-19 will follow the directives of the local health department. The school will follow all contact tracing directives. Staff and students will not be permitted on campus until approved by the local health department.

## Visitors

- No visitors are permitted without an appointment. Parents/guardians picking up a student during the day should pull into the front parking lot and call the office at 330-875-1631. They do not need to come into the office to sign out their child but will need to report to the front door so that the school can verify that the correct person is picking up the student.
- If you have to drop something off during the day, there will be a designated spot outside of the main entrance. Ring the bell at the door or call the office to let the main office staff know the item(s) are in the designated area. A staff member will retrieve the items, so you do not have to come inside.
- Please conduct business by phone and drop-off when possible.
- While family involvement is a cornerstone of Catholic education, at this time limiting the number of people inside the building protects us all.

## Scheduling

- Due to the unique situation of class size limits, schedule changes will only be permitted due to academic reasons (placement in wrong class, repeat of a class or not having a class needed for graduation).



## Virtual School Option

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Thomas Aquinas recognizes that even with all of the precautions in place, some parents/guardians will still feel it is in the best interest of their child to keep their student physically home from school. This year, we will offer an online option for students to earn credits in classes that we also offer on campus.
- Students will be required to report to each class virtually every day. Teachers will conduct class normally. Students who are virtual will watch the teacher's lesson live and be able to ask questions throughout the lesson.
- All teachers will be using the Google Classroom platform for assignments. Teachers will also provide recordings of their teaching within the Google Classroom platform for students to re-watch the day's lessons.
- Families will still pay full tuition and students will be considered an STA student. Tuition can be paid through FACTS. EdChoice scholarships, other financial assistance and reimbursements may be provided by the school and diocese.
- See "Chromebooks" for more information on student devices.
- Credits will be awarded and applied to graduation requirements.
- Attendance will be taken as a function of completion of work, per Ohio Department of Education guidance. Students not completing work will be marked absent. Chronic absenteeism not only jeopardizes status as a STA student, but could result in the loss of the EdChoice Scholarship.
- As directed by the Diocese of Youngstown, those students participating in the virtual school option will not be eligible for athletic or extracurricular activities.



## Mass

- Our Catholic identity continues to be as important as ever as we continue into this school year.
- All-school Masses will not be permitted. Masses will be offered by class only.
- The class which has the Mass for the week will be permitted to go to the chapel for Mass, once approved by Fr. Dyer. Seating will be socially distanced.
- Eucharistic Ministers will bring communion to the eligible classrooms, once permission is given by Fr. Dyer, if able to do so.
- When classes go to Mass, they will need to wear masks en route and throughout the service.



## Extracurricular Activities/Athletics

- Athletic practices and events, including cheer, will follow OHSA, The Diocese of Youngstown, and Department of Health guidelines.
- There will be no assemblies or field trips during the first semester.
- Future assemblies and field trips will be evaluated at a later date.
- Clubs will be reviewed once the school year begins as to whether or not these are feasible and have the

ability to maintain social distancing.

- Choir, Fall Programs, and School Programs: Due to ongoing health concerns, these programs must be held virtually or are cancelled for the 2020-21 school year.

## Behavior Consequences

- Following rules, especially those regarding face coverings, social distancing, and sanitation protocols are of the utmost importance this school year. In order to return safely, students must follow these guidelines. Disciplinary actions will occur if guidelines are not followed.

## Dismissal

- To avoid crowding in the hallways students in grades 9-12 will be dismissed after grades 6-8.
- Middle school students waiting for a car ride must report to room 109 and may not congregate in the building.
- Students in the building after school hours must be under the supervision of an adult.
- There is to be no congregating on school property at dismissal. Students must abide by social distancing guidelines.

## Parent Communication

- This year, more than any other, will require excellent communication both from or staff, teachers and parents. Please make sure your information is updated with the office, you are receiving emails and parent alerts, and will have teachers' emails once schedules are released.
- You can update your information online on our website at <https://www.starkcountycatholicschools.org/updatefamilycontactinformation7662.aspx>.
- Staff and teachers' emails can be found on our website under our Staff Directory found at [https://www.starkcountycatholicschools.org/StaffContactInformation\\_STA.aspx](https://www.starkcountycatholicschools.org/StaffContactInformation_STA.aspx).
- Parents/guardians will receive emails and phone calls through a parent alert system. All important and emergency information will come via these routes from the school.
- Google Classroom will have all assignments and be utilized throughout the year.
- Please follow us on Facebook, @St. Thomas Aquinas High School (official), on Twitter, @stahsoh, or download our app, Stark County Catholic Schools, and follow our school to receive alerts to your mobile phone. Our free app can be found in the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store.

## Remote Learning Plan (in case of shut-down)

- In case of school shut down for a period of time, as directed by our local health department or the governor, classes will immediately continue virtually via Google Classroom.



- STA recognizes that all families will have different schedules during a shutdown period. However, students will be required to meet with teachers on a daily basis. Schedules will be posted for each class and will remain the same throughout the shutdown. Students will be required to complete the work at the designated time. Teachers may post recorded lessons, lectures, and assignments for students to view during the student/family preferred time.
- Virtual meetings may be conducted live for students to ask questions and receive additional direct instruction.
- Teachers will provide direct instruction every school day.

## Chromebooks

- Students in grades 6-12 will be issued a Chromebook if they have a need during shut down. Students will be required to sign an agreement. Students are expected to keep the Chromebook in working condition for the duration that it is in their possession. If the Chromebook is not returned, the student will be responsible for repaying the school for the Chromebook.
- If your student has a device to use at home, they are not required to bring their Chromebook home (to reduce the liability of a possible broken device).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What should I do if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?**

If your child shows symptoms of COVID-19, you should immediately contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask that your child participate in a COVID-19 test. Please alert the attendance office and do not send your child to school.

Students, staff, or any other person present in the building who start to show symptoms or have a temperature above 100 degrees F while at school will be isolated from others in a designated room while they wait to go home. Areas of the building occupied by the person will be thoroughly sanitized.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 must experience an improvement in symptoms and isolate for a period of time before returning to school. The local health department will provide a protocol for individuals to follow and work with the school.

### **My child has COVID-19-like symptoms, but tested negative for COVID-19. When can he or she return to school?**

If your child does not have COVID-19, but has another illness, you should keep your child home until the illness' symptoms disappear. If the child had a fever, he or she must be fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication for 24 hours. The school will require you to provide a negative COVID-19 test and/or a doctor's note verifying the negative test and clearance before your child can return to school.

### **What should I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19?**

You should immediately contact your doctor for additional instructions. You should contact the attendance office. You should not send your child to school.

**When can a student return to school after receiving a positive COVID-19 test?**

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the student must isolate and not return to school until they have met the Center for Disease Control's criteria to discontinue home isolation and followed the protocols set by the local health department. This includes:

1. Three or more days without a high fever; AND
2. A reduction of other COVID-19 symptoms by at least 75%; AND
3. At least 14 days, or the number designated by the health department, have passed since symptoms first appeared. A doctor's note may be required.

**What should I do if a member of my household (who is not my child) tests positive for COVID-19?**

You should immediately contact the attendance office. The school may ask that you keep your child home for 14 days or whatever is directed by the local health department. If your family member recovers from COVID-19 (through meeting the criteria in the previous question) AND your child shows no COVID-19 symptoms for the designated period, we will allow your child to return.

**What happens if my child's teacher or another student in the class tests positive for COVID-19?**

When a report that a member of the school community has contracted the virus is reported to the administration, the administration or designee will contact the person or the parent of the student to get the details of the situation. The administration will then consult with the local health department regarding the circumstances, and the procedures required by the health department for any student or staff member who has been exposed and the proper communication to those families will be followed.

All school parents will receive email updates to keep them informed of COVID-19 related information. If a person has been exposed, a period of quarantine will most likely be required and follow-up with the person's doctor recommended. A student or staff member may not return to school until the period of quarantine is completed or has been tested and the negative diagnosis and permission to return to school is given in writing by the person's physician.

If advised by the health department, a class, part of the school, or school may be shut down for a period to allow for deep cleaning or a possible quarantine. During that time, teachers will provide and support remote instruction. In all cases of exposure to the virus, the administration will follow the direction and advice of the local health department.

Note: Individual names of persons infected or exposed will NOT be shared with the health department. However, when a positive case is reported to the health department through testing results, the Health Department may contact families for contact tracing. Further, we will not release the name of anyone in our school community who has tested positive or displays symptoms of COVID-19.

**Could the school be closed down due to COVID-19 this year?**

If a COVID-19 surge occurs, we will work closely with state officials to determine if we can continue face-to-face instruction. If the Governor or the local health department issues an order to close schools temporarily, we will comply. Ohio's county color system may affect the decision to hold face to face instruction or remote learning. We will do our best to ensure a safe and healthy environment. However, if numerous cases appear in our school, resulting in the isolation of multiple classes, we may need to close temporarily. We will follow the protocol given to us by the local health department. If either of the two scenarios above become reality, the school will transition to remote learning for that period of time. Parents will be updated regularly should that need arise.

**What if my family needs to travel out of town?**

While it is recommended that travel be limited during the pandemic, if it is necessary for your family to travel, please consult the Center for Disease Control's Travel Guidance found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>. If you are traveling to an area that is having a surge, please report this to the school and plan to quarantine for 14 days upon your return. If you are traveling from a state officially designated by the Governor, your child must quarantine for 14 days before returning to school.

We will follow guidelines as outlined by the Diocese of Youngstown. More detailed information about the Diocese of Youngstown's Return to School Plan can be found at <https://doy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Final-Return-to-School-Planning-Guide20200727.pdf>

Any changes to these guidelines or if additional information becomes available as we learn more about COVID-19, we will communicate those changes or additions to our families as soon as possible. We are in an extremely fluid situation; policies and procedures could change per local, Diocesan, or state orders. Thank you for your patience. For questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to the school administration at 330-875-1631 or by email at [sttahigh@youngstowndiocese.org](mailto:sttahigh@youngstowndiocese.org).