



SAINT THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Annual Report

2020-21

June 2021

Dear St. Thomas More Families, Community Members, & Friends:

WE MADE IT! After a year filled with morning health screenings, social distancing in classrooms, keeping students in pods, and sending out numerous announcements about potential and confirmed cases of COVID-19, our school can be proud of the fact that we got through a very challenging year in the midst of a global pandemic by the grace of God and the strength of our community! We were able to successfully navigate keeping our school open for in-person instruction for much of the school year except for our temporary move to distance learning between Thanksgiving and the Inauguration when our state saw a huge surge in the number of COVID-19 cases.

As I reflect on the past year, we would not have had the success we did without our community working together for the good of the children in our parish school. Our students did an amazing job adjusting to so many new protocols and always did so with a great attitude and can-do spirit. Much of our success in being able to stay in-person and not having to quarantine classes and grades multiple times is because our students were so very cognizant of the importance of personal safety and hygiene to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Our parents were rock stars this past year! They were so very proactive and responsive when concerns arose about the potential for COVID-19 spread in their household or in their children's classroom. I was so impressed with the number of families who didn't just look out for their own children but who were truly concerned about the well-being of every child in their child(ren)'s class and in our school. The proactive measures that so many parents took by self-quarantining, having family members tested, as well as simply contacting us with clarifying questions was very helpful in keeping our school open and serving our children in-person.

Finally, our faculty and staff deserve so much praise and gratitude for all they did to serve the students of our school. The amount of time they spent constantly adjusting teaching and learning in their classrooms was simply amazing as they navigated students who were distance learners, in-person, as well as those students who had to quarantine for up to two weeks at a time. Our faculty and staff went above and beyond to make this year a positive one for our students, and I couldn't be more grateful and proud of this outstanding group of professionals. We truly have outstanding teachers at STM!

Finally, I want to thank our Reopening Committee comprised of Emily Brennan, Maureen Burns, Tim Downey, Meghan Kemna, Barbara Koenig, Tom Kohler, Barb Larkin, Carrie Lucio, Tiernee Murphy, Carol Ney, Eli Pollock, Elizabeth Thimmesh, and Kelly Zweber, who began meeting with me last summer to put together all of our protocols and procedures that guided the successful reopening of our school. This group was invaluable in sharing insights, suggestions, and problem solving throughout the past school year. In addition, I was blessed with outstanding counsel from three medical professionals in our community (Dr. Jennifer Budd, Dr. Dave Tierney, and alumni parent,

Dr. Kim DeRoche) who were always willing to take a call from me, as well as share their insight and provide counsel as I navigated various situations that were all new to me!

Despite the many challenges of the past year, many good things continued to happen at our parish school. While we didn't achieve as many of the strategic objectives as we had hoped from the strategic plan we developed during 2018-19, our school has much to celebrate from the past year. In this report you will find updates about what was accomplished this past year, and what we plan to focus on during the 2021-22 academic year. As a school in the Jesuit tradition, we are committed to excellence and continuing to strive to do and be more for the students of our school. TOGETHER we always achieve MORE!



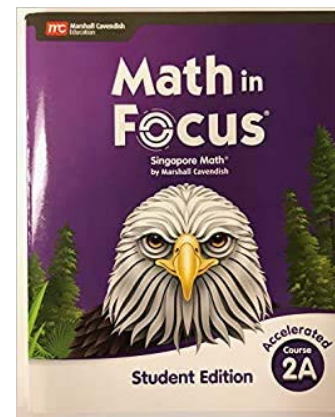
With Deep Gratitude,

Patrick A. Lofton, Ed.S.
Principal

The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

Curriculum Updates

After implementing a new math curriculum for grades 6-8 this academic year, our K-4 team wrapped up their review of our elementary school math curriculum and decided that we should continue to center our mathematics instruction around Singapore Math. Our school first implemented Singapore Math five years ago and we believe this approach offers some distinct advantages. First Singapore Math focuses on few topics but topics are covered in such a way to foster a much deeper understanding of these topics. In addition, Singapore Math is not formulaic and doesn't simply teach students various equations and facts, but students learn how the equation works and the multiple ways problems can be solved. In the end, we believe this approach fosters stronger mathematical understanding for students and will allow them to excel further in mathematics as they enter middle school and high school. During the 2021-22 academic year, we will be implementing a revised, In Focus, Singapore Math curriculum (copyright 2020) for grades K-5.



In addition, as we look at our school's religion curriculum our teachers are committed to continuing to use the Loyola Press series, *Finding God*, because it is rooted in Jesuit tradition and spirituality and is an excellent fit with our beliefs about how religion should be taught to students in elementary school. We will implement the 2021 version of this series in the fall of 2021.

The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

A March Toward Radical Inclusion

One of the goals of our school strategic plan is having a visible commitment to creating an inclusive, supportive, and innovative learning environment for all students through our classrooms, shared learning spaces, student behavior policies and practices, implementation of classroom technology and application of culturally sustaining practices.



In light of the events that took place surrounding the death of George Floyd in May of 2020, St. Thomas More Catholic Community began community dialogue and committed itself to stand in solidarity with the family of George Floyd and all those who have suffered from the scourge of institutional racism for far too long. Saint Thomas More is committed to engaging and taking collective action on issues involving race, especially given the continued violence against black and brown people.

We believe it is imperative that we commit ourselves to listening, learning, advocating and taking bold action to address racism in all forms within our community. It is simply not enough to decry injustice and bemoan the lack of opportunity. Rather, we must all pray, listen, learn and act. We are compelled to do all that we can, to make a difference for the better, for justice and equality. As our Jesuit mission calls us to do, it is my hope that our school community along with our larger parish community will use our collective voices as a lever for justice and the common good. I call upon our students, alumni, faculty and staff to take concrete steps to make a difference in our school, parish, city, state, and larger nation.

Earlier this school year, school advisory committee member Anton Jones began leading our efforts to help facilitate conversations with parents and staff around race, bias, racism, and what is required for radical inclusion to be fully realized at our school. Anton hosted a series of Multiple Perspectives conversations among different stakeholders and he has created a platform for idea sharing. We have had over 50 individuals participate in these conversations and we'd love to see this number double in June. To assist with this effort, a digital platform has been created for STM community members to engage with, stay in the loop through, and share learnings and actions among members of our community. Families of the STM community are encouraged to create their own log-in and password by going to: <https://www.thespartist.com/stm-crossing-patterns-landing>. Once logged into the Crossing Patterns platform, click on the "take action" button to name your monthly pledge for taking action to create a radically inclusive environment at St. Thomas More.

In addition, our staff participated in a two half-day workshops after we completed the 2020-21 school year with Dr. Annie Mason from the University of Minnesota who helped lead our staff in conversation about how we can commit ourselves to growing our own knowledge and commitment around cultural competency and anti-racism, updating our curriculum to reflect more diverse voices and perspectives, and creating a school climate that truly embraces an increasingly diverse student population. Dr. Mason will be working with our staff throughout the 2021-22 academic year.

The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

Facilities Updates



Updated Classrooms

During the summer of 2020 and during the six week switch to distance learning from Thanksgiving to Inauguration Day, our maintenance staff continued to update a number of classrooms, hallways, and common areas to the point that now just about every interior space in our school has been updated. The ongoing maintenance improvements at our school are due to the commitment and support of our larger parish as well as our school parents.

New Phone System

During the summer of 2020, we upgraded our very antiquated parish and school phone system to a web-based phone system that is much more reliable and easy to use. This much needed improvement was funded through the generosity of our larger parish.

Inspirational Jesuit Quotes

Over the course of the 2020-21 academic year, the second floor hallway of our school was transformed with a variety of decals that remind students of our Jesuit roots and what they are called to do and be as students of St. Thomas More. These decals were a gift from the class of 2019.



New Lighting

During the summer of 2020 every light fixture in common areas, staircases, and classrooms was replaced with high efficiency LED fixtures which provide very clean light in the interior of our school as well as give our classrooms a more modern look and feel. These new fixtures are both pleasing to the eye as well as highly energy efficient. This remarkable change in our school was paid for through the parish's capital campaign that was launched several years ago.

New Elevator

During the 2020-21 school year, a new and reliable elevator was installed in our school building so that we can serve students who are physically challenged to navigate the many levels of our school building. This wonderful upgrade was a result of funds raised through our parish's capital campaign.



The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

Facilities Updates



New Exterior Signage

Through the creative expertise of parent Megan Junius and her team at Eight Moon Design, the exterior of our school continued to see improvements with the addition of beautiful exterior signage at the entrances of our school. We are very blessed to have Megan designing our school promotional materials as well as signage around our school.



Enrollment 2020-21



During the 2020-21 academic year, our school enrollment was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In our elementary and middle school we saw growth as many new students transferred to STM from public and other private schools that were not offering in-person instruction. However, our preschool program saw a decrease in students as many families chose to keep their youngest children at home during this unprecedented year. As we look to the 2021-22 academic year, we anticipate having two sections of kindergarten again as well as growing our preschool, elementary, and middle school. Our continued growth is fueled by the good word that our families continue to share with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Please continue to spread the good word about St. Thomas More!

STM wins CAA 8th Grade Boys Baseball Championship!



Congratulations to our 8th Grade Boys Baseball team that captured the CAA (Catholic Athletic Association) Championship after an undefeated season. Throughout the season, this team had powerful hitters, awesome defense, and stellar pitching. This year's team was coached by two St. Luke's Alumni, Justin Diehl and Chad McCauley. Congratulations to an awesome group of young men on an outstanding season!

The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Partnerships



University of St. Thomas Partner School

During the 2020-21 academic year, our school welcomed three students from the University of St. Thomas School of Education for their student teaching experience in grades K-3. These three student teachers spent the entire year with us. During the first half of the year they worked with students remotely and then beginning in January they were in our school daily learning from our outstanding teachers. Our school was selected to be a partner school because of the culture of learning that exists at STM, as well as the professionalism and competence of our highly respected teachers. Based on my serving on the Dean's Advisory Board for the School of Education as well as the Elementary

Education Advisory Board, I know that many professors and administrators at the University of St. Thomas hold our school in high regard.



During the 2020-21 academic year, we entered into the second year of a partnership with St. Paul based Language Sprout to provide highly engaging and interactive Spanish language instruction. This year we made a programmatic decision to focus Spanish instruction on Grades 4-8 so that K-3 students can be fully focused on the Believe & Read Program that we partner with Groves Academy to offer our youngest students. We were fortunate to continue to have Ms.

Lulu Breitschneider, a native Spanish speaker and a very engaging teacher assigned to our school. I know that Ms. Lulu loves being part of the STM community.

The Year in Review: 2020-21 STM Strategic Initiatives

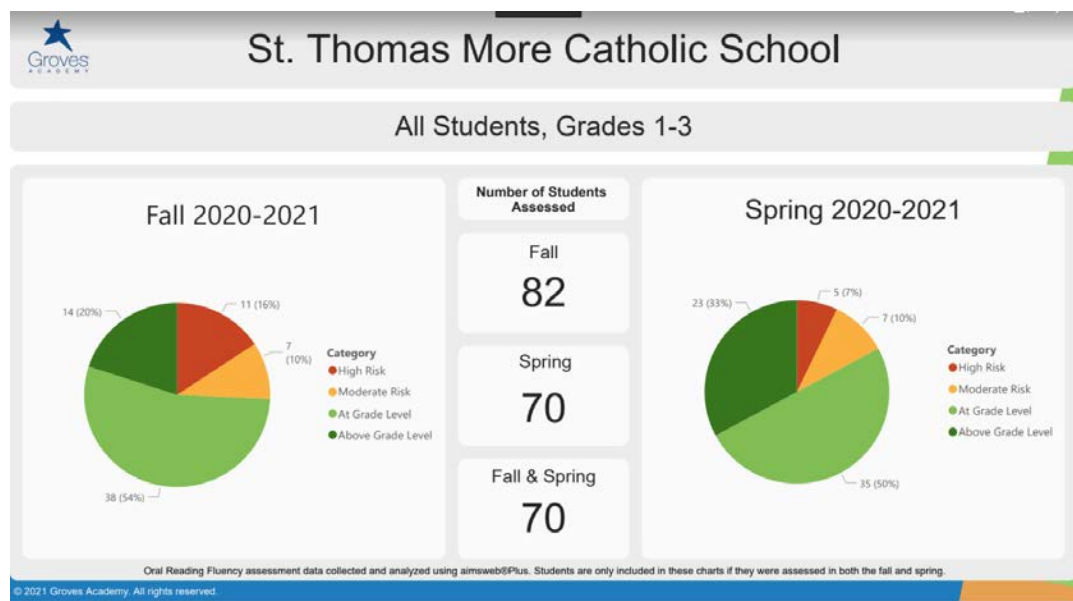


This year our school began the second year of a three year partnership with Groves Academy and the *Believe and Read* program. Groves Academy has a long and successful history of working with children around the Twin Cities who have reading disabilities, ADHD, and executive functioning challenges. Through a grant we received from the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence

(CSCOE) our K-3 teachers attended professional development throughout the year and received weekly one-on-one coaching from a literacy coach provided to us by Groves Academy. As our teachers returned to in-person instruction in the fall of 2020, our K-3 teachers were once again engaged in teaching daily lessons that were based on Orton-Gillingham reading instruction methods. Once again, our students made excellent gains in reading fluency over the course of this year. Our school is very fortunate to have Carol Kimlinger as our Coordinator of Student Support Services and lead teacher when it comes to reading support for our students. Her expertise in this area is unsurpassed. She often has a heavy load as she works with many students one on one and some in small groups.

Assessment Information: STM Students Achieve More!

The chart below shows how through the *Believe & Read* program, as well as the one on one support provided by Carol Kimlinger, our Coordinator of Student Support Service, our school reduced the number of students who were at risk and increased the number of students who were reading above grade level. STM is blessed with outstanding teachers who know how to effectively teach K-8 students how to read, write, and use both oral and written language effectively so they are prepared for the rigors of high school.



This year our school was able to administer the NWEA Maps Growth test in the fall and spring to our 2nd- 8th grade students.

Test results along with a letter were sent to all parents at the end of the school year. In my letter to parents, I shared that I was pleased to report that the majority of our students perform at or above grade level in mathematics, reading and language usage. However, some students achieved smaller growth. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the interruptions since March of 2020, we saw a greater range of scores, particularly in math given the many challenges of moving to distance learning for the end of the 2019-20 school year and then playing a game of catch-up when we returned to in-person instruction in August of 2020. St. Thomas More is blessed with bright and highly motivated students and I am confident that any gaps in learning will continue to be filled in the upcoming school year.

Our school uses a comprehensive assessment approach that relies heavily on formative and summative teacher-created assessments (class tests, quizzes, projects, etc.). Our school is blessed with highly knowledgeable, professional, and insightful teachers who use assessment data to meet students on their learning continuum so that each achieves success.



Our Graduates

This year's 8th grade class was once again an outstanding group of young men and women who were loving, open to growth, committed to excellence, religious, and committed to justice and who are ready for the rigors and enjoyment of high school. Once again, our graduates are well regarded by the high school they chose, and many of them received academic scholarships because of their placement test scores and outstanding work at STM. This year's graduating class will be attending a variety of high schools including: Concordia Academy, Cretin-Derham Hall, DeLaSalle, St. Paul Central, St. Paul Conservatory of Arts, and Visitation. We are exceptionally proud of this year's class and know they will use what they have learned at St. Thomas More as young men and women who stand with and for others, particularly the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

STM Honors Ms. Burns & Mrs. Wynne



Earlier this spring, I informed the St. Thomas More Community that Ms. Maureen Burns and Mrs. Sue Wynne were both retiring at the conclusion of this school year. Ms. Burns has taught at our school (IHM, IHM-St. Lukes, & now St. Thomas More) for 43 years and Mrs. Wynne has taught at our school (IHM-St. Lukes and now St. Thomas More) for thirty years. Both of these outstanding educators and people of faith have helped shape the minds and hearts of countless students during their dedicated service to our school.

To honor the accomplishments and legacy of Ms. Burns & Mrs. Wynne, our school will be dedicated two classrooms in their honor, constructing prayer walls on the first and second floors of our school, as well as installing a statue of Mary on the second floor of our school to remind students of the

importance of prayer just as Ms. Burns and Mrs. Wynne always worked to instill in their students. If you would like to make a donation to these projects, please contact Elizabeth Thimmesh (ethimmesh@morecommunity.org).

2020-21 More Giving Report

St. Thomas More is dependent on the generosity of our parish, parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends of our school to ensure the financial health of our parish school. The sharing of time, talent, and treasure helps to advance the mission and ministry of our school and your financial generosity directly impacts the families and students in our school by helping to keep tuition affordable, attracting and retaining the most highly qualified faculty and staff, providing the necessary resources to provide the highest academic and faith-centered learning environment for our students, and making this outstanding education available to anyone who desires it regardless of the financial position.

Fall Raffle

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we did not hold a fall raffle as we did not think it was appropriate for students and families to go out and sell raffle tickets. However, as we look ahead to the fall of 2021, we will once again be doing a raffle with a few changes. Parents should watch their inbox this summer for details about the changes to our school raffle.

Parent Partnership & Annual Fund

The Parent Partnership Program was launched during the 2017-18 academic year. This program invites current St. Thomas More parents to make a tax deductible donation that helps bridge the gap between tuition paid and the actual cost of educating each student at our school. The Annual Fund program invites alumni parents, grandparents, parishioners and other supporters of the school to help bridge that same gap. The current gap is approximately \$2000 per student. This year we secured just over \$27,000 in Parent Partnership gifts and over \$16,000 in Annual Fund gifts. Donations to the Parent Partnership and Annual Fund go a long way toward helping our school achieve and maintain a balanced operating budget, retain highly qualified teachers and outstanding programs at our school, as well as help support financial assistance for families who could not otherwise afford to attend our school. If you would like to receive more information about the Parent Partnership or Annual Fund, please contact Elizabeth Thimmesh. ***Our fiscal year ends on June 30, 2021, and we welcome gifts to the Parent Partnership and Annual Fund of any size. As we look to the 2021-22 academic year, current parents can make a one time payment or may divide their gift over the course of the school year and pay through TADs. We would love to see more families participate in this very important giving program.***



Auction

For a second straight year, our school auction was a virtual event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On Saturday, April 30, 2020, current and alumni parents and friends participated in our auction from the comfort of their homes to raise essential funds for school. In just over two hours, we bested the \$80,000 that was raised last year as our school netted over \$106,000! As we look ahead to next year, we are looking forward to returning to an in-person event that consists of a large gathering of school

supporters having a great time and raising much needed funds for the benefit of the students of our school.

Capital Campaign Update

In the fall of 2018 our parish launched the first capital campaign in our community in over 30 years. Families from our community have made a three year pledge to improve accessibility in our church as well as to remodel the undercroft of the church. Funds from this capital campaign have been used to make several much needed improvements to our school building, and this summer, our parish will break ground on adding a new entry to our historic church, installing an elevator in this new addition to provide access to all levels of the Church and parish center, as well as remodeling the undercroft of the Church to serve as a much needed Church hall. This year, people who pledged gifts were asked to extend their gift for a few additional years so that all of this much needed work can be completed without a debt load for our parish. If you made a pledge to this campaign, you are asked to follow the schedule of payments you agreed to, and if you have not yet made a pledge, please prayerfully consider doing so. Every gift--whether small or large--makes a difference!



Summit Ave View



Interior View of Addition between Church & Parish Center

Opportunities to Give More

Over the course of this past school year we have received unsolicited donations--both large and small--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.
- St. Thomas More also accepts gifts of securities, stocks and bonds. Please contact Elizabeth Thimmesh in our school office to find out how to initiate such a transfer.
- Many corporations will 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.
- Including St. Thomas More Catholic School in your estate planning is a simple way to ensure your giving will continue for future generations. You may contact Elizabeth Thimmesh in our office regarding this.

School Governance-Accreditation-Finances

School Advisory Council

The St. Thomas More School Advisory Council (SAC) serves as an advisory body to the principal and pastor. This advisory body's primary responsibilities include: 1) Supporting the principal and pastor in obtaining the time, talent and treasure necessary for the school's long-term viability; 2) Developing and overseeing the implementation of a school strategic plan with the school administration; and 3) Recommending policies and practices that are consistent with the school's mission. The School Advisory Council is not involved directly in school operations, faculty and staff employment, or curriculum and assessment decisions. Our school was the beneficiary of the wisdom and counsel of this year's SAC that was chaired by alumni parent, Patty Brick, and included Michael Dockry, current parent; Patrick Felicetta, DeLaSalle High School; Ken Goodpaster, former STM trustee; Anton Jones,



current parent; Judith, Ries, current parent & immediate past chair, as well as current parents, Melissa Ryberg; Jessie Tierney, and Kelly Schwab.

Accreditation

(Self Study-Strategic Plan-Onsite Visit)

We are accredited by MNSAA (The Minnesota Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association) and every seven years we go through a comprehensive accreditation process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the faculty and School Advisory Committee concurred with me that it would be best for us to request that our re-accreditation process be deferred by one year. In the late fall of 2020, the MNSAA board approved our request for an extension. As a result, during the 2021-22 academic year, our school will be engaged in a self-study where we will examine all aspects of our school's operation to identify areas of strength, as well as areas that we need to improve. This self-study will, in turn, lead to the further development of a new strategic plan as we prepare for an onsite visit team to visit St. Thomas More in the fall of 2022.

Finances

Our school's fiscal year ends on June 30, 2021, and our community will publish a financial statement for this fiscal year in the fall. With our increased school enrollment as well as increased stewardship in our parish, we know our financial position continues to improve. For the past several years we have run a deficit budget as we have worked to rebuild membership in our Church as well as enrollment in our school. Over each of the past four years we have steadily decreased the size of our operating deficit, we anticipate that by the 2022-23 academic year, our parish community (church and school) will run a balanced budget. Our community's long-term financial health is dependent on continuing to increase enrollment in our school, stewardship within our parish, 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 small or large helps strengthen the mission and ministry of St. Thomas More.



New Strategic Initiatives for 2021-2022

As we look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, we do so with continued optimism. In addition to engaging in a self-study as we prepare for an onsite visit in the fall of 2022, our school community will be focused on a number of new strategic initiatives that are outlined in our strategic plan including:

- Enhancing our school's Jesuit identity through retreats for staff and students, ongoing faith formation for our faculty and parents, signature service projects, cultivating the sharing of time, talent and treasure within our broader community and adding additional Ignatian imagery throughout our school building.
- Continue to grow our conversations, commitment, and collaborative efforts around cultural competency and anti-racism training within our parish school and larger parish community so we can grow in our knowledge, understanding, and commitment to welcoming and working with diverse groups of people.

- Implementing a professional development plan for our faculty and staff around cultural competency and anti-racism work with the assistance of Dr. Annie Mason from the University of Minnesota. Our staff is committed to growing their own knowledge and commitment, updating our curriculum to reflect more diverse voices and perspectives, and creating a school climate that truly embraces an increasingly diverse student population.
- Implement a new school lunch program
- Returning our school to normal daily operations with parent and family events, signature school activities, as well as coming together as a family of families to celebrate the many wonderful aspects of St. Thomas More Catholic Community!

What Makes STM Unique...

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



Our parish school has a long and storied history dating back to St Luke's School founded in 1904 and Immaculate Heart of Mary founded in 1952. In 1991 these two St. Paul Catholic Schools merged to form IHM-St. Luke's School and in 2008, the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Luke merged to form St. Thomas More Catholic Community. 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 Catholic education on Summit Avenue in St. Paul.

We have flourished from the roots our founding schools provided and we have been blessed by the pastoral leadership of the Jesuits for 29 years and most recently over the past five years by our pastor, Father Warren Sazama, SJ. and Associate Pastor, Father R.J. Fichtinger, SJ. Both of these men are educators and are highly committed and present in the life of our school.

St. Thomas More provides a comprehensive and rigorous liberal arts curriculum that is focused on developing the whole child: mind, body, and spirit, from preschool through grade eight. At the heart of a Jesuit education is the belief in *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person. As a school rooted in Jesuit tradition, we intentionally teach children

at St. Thomas More to be loving, open to growth, committed to excellence, religious, and to become young men and women who stand with and for others, especially those who are poor and marginalized.



St. Thomas More Catholic School
1065 Summit Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55125
651-224-4836
www.school.morecommunity.org

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