



**Pre-Kindergarten
Ages 3 and 4
Program Guide for Parents
2015-2016**

St. Thomas the Apostle School

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St. Thomas the Apostle School

Pre-kindergarten Program Guide 2015-2016

This Pre-Kindergarten Program Guide for 3 and 4 Year Old Children is a *supplement* to the St. Thomas the Apostle School *Parent and Student Handbook*.

Both this Program Guide and the School Handbook are updated annually. The pastor and/or the principal retain the right to amend the Handbook at any time and parents will be given notification in a reasonable time if changes are made. Parents are responsible for understanding and following the content of these documents.

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St. Thomas the Apostle School

...where God's children in extraordinary variety are:

INSPIRED

to academic achievement through a comprehensive curriculum taught by dedicated teachers. STA students excel because they are educated in a safe, structured learning environment that expects their best efforts each and every day;

INSTILLED

with the values inherent in a faith-based atmosphere that nurtures an individual's spiritual, moral, and character development. STA students are prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century by having a better understanding of self;

INVOLVED

members of a caring, supportive community committed to responding to the needs of others. STA students understand what it means to live their faith and use their talents as responsible citizens in stewardship to the world around them.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the St. Thomas the Apostle School community is to lead, challenge, and encourage God's children in Extraordinary Variety to grow in faith, knowledge, and commitment to service.

OUR PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

St. Thomas the Apostle School believes that childhood is the most critical period for the development of attitudes, habits, capabilities, and skills, and that the curriculum encompasses all that a child experiences in his life at school.

The purpose of the school is to create a faith-filled learning environment. The pastor, principal, staff, teachers, parents, and other community members lay the foundation for a love of learning, instill a sense of personal worth and respect for others, and develop critical thinking skills so that the children can grow to be responsible and practicing citizens. We endeavor to develop a community of learners where respect, collaboration and excitement for learning prevail. Quality Catholic education is provided for students in preschool through eighth grade in a caring and family atmosphere.

The main components of the school's educational program are:

- Embracing a faith to be lived within a believing community.
- Developing Christian attitudes and habits as a contributing and supporting member of a diverse community.
- Acquiring essential knowledge, skills and techniques with the stimulus of practical application.
- Integrating technology skills and applications.
- Encouraging creativity and self-expression.
- Promoting each student's personal academic, artistic, and athletic gifts and talents.
- Nurturing each child to help balance the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and ethical development as a whole person.
- Promoting leadership as a service to others.

OUR VALUES

The entire staff and faculty of St. Thomas the Apostle School, in their efforts to achieve these objectives, hold certain convictions which underlie the learning process.

We believe in:

Faith Community

- The recognition of Jesus Christ as the meaning and purpose of our school
- The importance of modeling what we teach about Christian values and ethics

Respect

- Recognition of the dignity and worth of each person
- The importance of individual differences and potential

Academic Excellence

- The importance of responsiveness by the faculty to the interests, needs, and learning styles of individual children.
- Providing the academic rigor and challenge to meet each child's potential

Responsibility

- The shared responsibility of school, home and community for children's growth and development
- Fostering students' personal responsibility and accountability

Safe and Nurturing Environment

- The need for a warm, supportive school environment in which all children feel welcome, accepted, and safe.
- The importance of open and continuing communication between school and home.

Leadership

- The importance of teaching children ways to transfer learned skills to real world applications.
- The importance of teaching and demonstrating Catholic social teaching in daily life

PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

St. Thomas the Apostle pre-kindergarten program gives the young child the opportunity to learn and grow in a positive, Christian atmosphere. It is designed to meet the needs and interests of the young child, allowing for the opportunity to grow spiritually, socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

The program is based on the following goals:

- enable children to be aware of God's love for them
- provide a happy and caring environment that nurtures growth and respect for self and others
- create opportunities for each child to act and interact in a positive and relaxing atmosphere
- teach with kindness, encouragement, and direction
- help each child develop fine and gross motor skills
- promote reading, writing, and math readiness skills
- promote critical thinking skills

We consider it a privilege to serve each child at St. Thomas the Apostle Preschool. We want to provide enriching and loving experiences for each child. Doing so, helps the child grow gradually in cooperation and independence.

Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's preschool life. We, at St. Thomas the Apostle School, expect you to read to or with your child at least 15 minutes a day. Read! Read! Read! We cannot replace you as your child's primary teacher, but we can work with you. Feel free to ask questions about curriculum, your child's progress, social adjustment, and the like. By working together we can help your child derive as much as possible from the preschool experience.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

In early childhood, we believe that all children can learn naturally in a social environment. Each individual's cognitive, physical, social and emotional growth needs to be nurtured and supported. The program is based on the premise that children construct knowledge through discovery in free play as well as through social interactions with peers and adults.

We provide an enriched environment for reading and math readiness skills. Children use hands-on activities in order to learn by meaningful experiences and relevant connections to the world around them. Our role is that of facilitator whereby we help children to become responsible for their own learning and at the same time provide opportunities for children to refine their social skills.

ADMISSIONS

ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION POLICY

St. Thomas the Apostle School has been established to meet the spiritual, educational, and social needs of our students. Enrollment in the school is open to all students regardless of race, ethnic origin, or religious affiliation. The Pre-kindergarten program is a full-day, five-day-a-week program. There is a 1:9 ratio of teacher to children. Children must be completely potty-trained for acceptance.

Families must complete all application forms and submit them in a timely manner. After the principal approves acceptance, the family must register and make financial arrangements through FACTS in order to reserve a place in the Pre-Kindergarten Program. Pre-K children may qualify for financial Aid through the Illinois Action for Children program, depending on whether the state renews the program annually. Families make direct contact to the agency for this help.

OPEN Enrollment IS THE STANDARD OPERATION. Registration for the following school year is initiated during Catholic Schools Week, the last week of January. In order to be fully registered, the family must complete the registration forms, provide the health records that are required before the child may enter the Pre-kindergarten or kindergarten class, and pay the registration and supply fees. Additionally, the family meets with the finance officer and completes a financial agreement for the following year. All families sign up for the FACTS tuition management program. (See the Parent Handbook for more details).

ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTS

- A. Students must be completely potty trained and able to care for their own toileting needs.
- B. Students **must meet the age requirement: There are NO exceptions.**
 - 3 year old program: the child must be 3 years of age by SEPTEMBER 1st
 - 4 year old program: the child must be 4 years of age by SEPTEMBER 1st
- C. Parents submit a Health (Physical) Form with all information completed AND signed by the health provider who dates the form. This form includes an up-to-date record of immunizations. Students must have all immunization records up to date by the first day of school. Students will not be permitted to attend the program until this requirement is met.
 - Required Immunizations include:
 - 4 DPT's (DTaP's, DT's)
 - 3 IPV's (Oral Polio)
 - 3 doses of Hepatitis B vaccine
 - 1 MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
 - TB test
 - Lead Poisoning Screening
 - 2 doses of varicella vaccine
- D. Parents of NEW Pre-kindergarten children submit a dental form that is signed and dated by the dentist.
- E. When registering please bring your child's original birth certificate and we will copy it, and for Catholic families, the baptismal certificate is required—even if your child has been baptized at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish.
- F. Other agreements are also required: financial through FACTS, Parent-School contract, photographic release, medical, and emergency card—completed and signed.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

REGISTRATION FEE

\$175.00 per child (non-refundable).

PRESCHOOL ACTIVITY FEE

\$400.00 per child (non-refundable). This is used to pay for books and materials throughout the year.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN

TUITION

1 child \$6,350	2 children	\$12,650
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METHOD OF PAYMENT

All tuition payments are due on the 1st or 15th day of each month. *Late fees are assessed after 14 days.* Payments may be made by automatic withdrawal from your checking or savings account or credit card. You may be invoiced and pay by check or money order directly to FACTS. Tuition is paid only through FACTS.

NON-PAYMENT OF TUITION

If a family leaves school and does not pay the balance of tuition, the unpaid balance will be expected within a week or the account will be turned over to a collection agency. If a family leaves a school and does not pay the balance of tuition, the school will send only the health records on to the public school. Report cards will not be sent to the next school until the balance is paid.

FINANCIAL AID

Pre-K children may qualify for financial aid through the Illinois Action for Children program. Families make direct contact to the agency for this help. For financial aid in Pre-Kindergarten, families must first apply to Action for Children. If they do not qualify, then families may apply for financial aid through the school. It is a requirement for any financial aid through the school that the family use the FACTS application for financial aid. The school office staff will remind you how to access FACTS for application for financial assistance. All scholarships are given on a financial need basis and are awarded at the end of June, July, and the second week of August until all funds are exhausted.

Pre-K families do not qualify for aid through most Big Shoulders or Archdiocesan scholarship programs, but a limited amount of help is available through the St. Thomas the Apostle Scholarship Fund. The best resource is through the Illinois Action for Children—as long as this agency is funded through the state.

SERVICE HOURS AND FUNDRAISING

Families must be familiar with the requirements of 20 Service Hours and assistance with fundraising as described in the Parent Handbook. Every family receives a Parent Handbook. Everyone participates and thus everyone benefits from these programs. It is expected that everyone lends a hand.

ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS

ABSENCES

Parents are required to call the school office between 7:30 and 8:30 if the child will be absent. Calls should be made each day the child is absent. Regular attendance is important and necessary for your child's success.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

ARRIVAL

The school day begins at 8 AM and *children should be in the classroom, ready to begin the day by 8 AM. It is strongly recommended that all students arrive no later than 7:45 AM in order to be prepared for school in the morning.* A child is marked tardy who is not in the classroom ready for school by the 8 AM bell. Parents should instill the value of a timely arrival. A timely arrival will increase your child's confidence before the start of the day rather than felling left-out from the group. When students are on time, they participate in the morning prayers and the daily classroom routines which are valuable tool of learning. Teach your child the important of being on time for school.

AM DROP-OFF for CARS

NO ONE SHOULD DROP OFF YOUR CHILD ON WOODLAWN AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING! Such action is very dangerous to children. Additionally, parking is not permitted in front of the school on Woodlawn Avenue in the morning.

Drivers must deliver their children to school through the designated private entrance to the parking lot. Parents should enter through the private alley off Kimbark Street and park in the school lot. They walk their children into the building through the FRONT entrance doors. These rules especially apply when the child arrives at school late—at 8AM or later. Do NOT use the side entrance!

Parents/Guardians walk the preschool child directly to the hallway outside the preschool classroom. They help the child remove any outer wraps and put away the backpack into the locker. An older sibling may take on this duty as well. The parent leaves immediately and thus will not disturb the child's inclusion in the group. Parents never linger in the classroom. They should not linger in the hallways as well.

If the family arrives *after* the 8 AM bell, they first go to the office to announce that their child is tardy and not absent. (Any child, not in the classroom when the morning bell rings, is considered absent unless a tardy slip is submitted).

After delivering the preschool child to school, drivers leave the parking lot on Woodlawn, (not through the alley which is a one-way drive), making a RIGHT turn onto Woodlawn Avenue. NO left turns.

DISMISSAL

The Pre-K dismisses fifteen minutes earlier than the rest of the student body. School ends at 3:15 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. School ends at 2:15 PM on Wednesdays for Staff Development. The children leave the building in a group and move to the designated area for dismissal outdoors—or in the gym when there is inclement weather. Do not come to the classroom at the end of the day to get your own child. Do not stand outside the classroom to take your child from the line. Do not take your child from the line as the group is leaving the building. We watch the group carefully and want to make a smooth transition while supervision of all the children is clear.

Children should be picked up from school no later than 3:30 PM. Those who do not leave with a family member by that time will attend the After Care Program.

PM PICK-UP

PRE-KINDERGARTEN students are dismissed at 3:15 PM which is 15 minutes earlier than the rest of the student body. The PRE-KINDERGARTEN children are brought directly to the parking lot and stand in the safe area. Parents/guardians pick up the children from the teacher. If there is rain or heavy snow, the children will be waiting for their rides in the gym.

NO ONE SHOULD PICK UP YOUR CHILD IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING ON WOODLAWN! Parking is not permitted in front of the school in the afternoon.

Just as in the morning, parents should enter through the private alley off of Kimbark Street and park in the school lot. Parents walk to the sidewalk next to the school building to get their children from the teacher and make certain that there is eye-contact with the teacher as acknowledgment that the child is leaving with the parent or designated person. If anyone other than yourself comes to pick up your child, please be sure they know the procedures for PM Pick-Up. Drivers leave the parking lot on Woodlawn, making a RIGHT turn ONLY. NO left turns. This measure ensures the greatest safety for you and for others.

PARKING PROCEDURES

Parking and traffic flow at both AM and PM dismissal is crucial to child safety.

- Please read the section of the School Handbook entitled, "Procedures for Drop Off and Pick-up in the Parking Lot." These procedures are strictly enforced. If there are any questions about the traffic procedures, do not hesitate to speak with the volunteer parking lot attendants or call school at 773-667-1142.
- Always model proper respect in speech and action for the traffic monitors. They are parent volunteers. Follow their directions and demonstrate to your child respectful speech and gestures when the traffic monitors assist you.

Extended Day Program

Pre-Kindergarten children may participate in the Before and After care Extended Day program. Please note the rate of \$1.50 per 15 minutes of care. For the Before-Care, children may arrive as early as 7 AM and be cared for until school begins. After Care begins at 3:30 for the Pre-K children and is available until 6:00 PM. See the Parent handbook for more details.

COMMUNICATIONS

It is vital for the lines of communication to be open between the home and school. Parent/staff interaction is a key ingredient to a successful preschool program. Formal parent/teacher conferences are held in order for the teacher to keep parents informed about the progress of their child. Either parent or teacher may initiate additional conferences at any time that either party feels it necessary for the good of the child. These conferences should be scheduled at a time convenient to both parent and teacher.

NEWSLETTER / CALENDAR/WEBSITE/ SCHOOLREACH/FAST DIRECT

NewsBriefs, the school newsletter, will be sent by email on a regular basis during the first week of each month, and often it is sent more often. This NEWSLETTER will inform parents of coming events and activities. **Important events** are posted on the school website. Parents are urged to regularly check the **school website www.stapostleschool.com** for information. The Pre-Kindergarten teachers will send monthly newsletters as well as a monthly calendar. All families are connected through **SCHOOL REACH and FAST DIRECT**.

The principal will notify families of events through emails, phone calls, and/or text messages through both of these resources. Through FAST DIRECT, parents may send messages directly back to the teacher, staff members, and even to parents. It is the parent's personal responsibility to read and/or listen to the messages sent home regularly about school events. Every effort is made by the school to inform families in advance of events and activities through the written word.

PARENT / PRINCIPAL CONFERENCE

In keeping with the principle of subsidiary, concerns should be solved at the lowest level whenever possible. If a parent has a complaint about a teacher, the parent should discuss the difficulty with the teacher. If the parent is reluctant to address the teacher alone, the administrator might offer to be present at the conference. All conferences must be made by appointment.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences will be scheduled in November and in March. At the conference, the teacher will share a detailed progress report on the child's development with the parents. If a parent needs a conference prior to the formal conference, the parent may request one through an email or call the office and the teacher will respond to the parent at a convenient time. Generally, the teacher will meet informally and briefly with parents at dismissal or pick up times for simple messages.

DISCIPLINE

Our classroom discipline plan provides guidance for every student in making good decisions about his or her behavior and thus an opportunity to learn in a positive rewards, and consequences for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Our plan is based on our efforts to build a faith-community.

Classroom rules:

1. Listen carefully.
2. Follow directions.
3. Keep hands, feet and objects to ourselves.
4. Speak kind words.
5. Use word to express feelings and needs.
6. Use walking feet.

Positive Recognition:

1. Praise-Verbal & Nonverbal
2. Child becomes a special helper.
3. Child participates in special activities with the group.

Consequences: A student breaks a rule:

First time	Warning-verbal or nonverbal.
Second time	Child is moved closer to the teacher.
Third time	Redirect activity choice.
Fourth time	Teacher chooses an activity for the child.
Fifth time	Call parents.
Severe Disruption	Accompany student to the Principal and/or call the parent.

If, at any time, the teacher feels that a child is not socially ready to handle the daily routine of the classroom, or is uncooperative and hurtful to himself/herself or other children on a consistent basis, the teacher will contact the family to inform them of the situation. The teacher may request a formal conference with the child's parents and the school principal if the situation does not resolve in a timely manner.

As a result of consultations between parents and teachers, the child may then be scheduled for a probationary period at school during which the teacher and teacher assistant will daily document both appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Following the probationary period, a follow-up parent conference will be held. The school will reserve the right to make the ultimate decision whether a child is truly ready to remain in our school or to move to another setting.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The school building is locked to the public at all times. Everyone must be "buzzed in" to the building. **Visitors to the classroom during the day (including parents) must first stop at the office for a pass. Parents do not visit the classrooms or conduct business with teachers without making an appointment first.**

Children never answer the classroom door. Students do have access to exits in any emergency. Teachers are trained in first aid, AED, and CPR. Children will be guided to participate in drills for fire, tornado, earthquake, and other safety threats.

CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL

Inclement weather may sometimes call for school delays, early dismissals, or cancellations. For any closing or delay, families will receive a phone call, email, and text message through **School Reach**, our automated voice messaging system. The closing will be posted on the school website. The radio stations and TV stations also will carry the message. Be certain to listen for our full name: St. Thomas the Apostle.

SEVERE WEATHER

In the event of severe weather and the school will open with a delayed start, the delay will be announced through the automated phone system, School Reach, over local radio, and on the school website. School dismissal, on delayed start days, will be at the regular time. School lunches will be served. The Before-School Program will begin at the regular time, 7.00 a.m. even if the delay is for one or two hours.

TORNADO

Tornado drills are conducted in the fall and spring. Teachers guide students to safe areas within the school.

FIRE

Fire drills are conducted once a month. Students will practice exiting the school quickly and safely.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE AND BUILDING EVACUATION DRILLS

These emergency drills are practiced periodically, but at least once a semester for the practiced safety routines in the school. The teacher will guide the students and practice the difference drills with them.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

IMMUNIZATIONS

Children must have their immunizations completely up to date and may not enter or remain in the Pre-Kindergarten program without submitting proof of them submitted to the school office. See the forms given to all who register. No child will remain in school without required immunizations. This is non-negotiable.

ACCIDENT

In the event of an accident or illness of a student, the parent or other designated person indicated on the Emergency Medical Form will be telephoned. If the accident is serious, the child will be taken to the hospital indicated on the Emergency Medical Form and the parent/guardian will be contacted.

ILLNESS

Parents are asked to keep children home who register a temperature above normal or have communicable health issues. Children who have a fever may not return to school until 24 hours have passed after the fever ends.

MEDICATION

Personnel will not administer medications. All medication is administered by a parent. No child may have any medication in his/her possession.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Students with head lice, pink eye (conjunctivitis), or other communicable disease must be excluded from preschool until symptoms are no longer apparent. Students may not remain in school when they have a fever and headache.

EMERGENCY FORM

Prior to the start of school, parents will receive an Emergency Medical Form to be completed for their PRE-KINDERGARTEN child. All sections must be completed and signed. The form must be submitted prior to the first session of preschool. Students may not remain in class beyond the first hour if the form has not been completed and submitted. *They may not return without a fully completed form.*

SNACKS

Children will have a snack each day that is furnished by parents on a rotating basis. A monthly calendar will be available for parents to volunteer to provide snacks. Parents are requested to make these snacks nutritious. As a firm and fast rule, **no** snacks with peanuts or any tree nuts should be brought to school. Please check that snacks are also not manufactured in a facility that processes peanuts or tree nuts. Do not send sandwiches with peanut butter. Additionally, no gum or candy is permitted for student snacks. The PRE-KINDERGARTEN teacher will provide you with a list of suggested/recommended treats as alternatives.

SPECIAL TREATS

Children may bring special treats to school for their birthdays and other celebrations as instructed by the teacher. Check with the teacher as to what is appropriate. Our School Nutrition Policy indicates that we avoid all high-sugar treats.

TOYS

The children will be allowed to bring a "show and tell" item on Fridays. We do not allow any kind of toy weapon or item which can be used as a weapon. The teacher reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the toy. Do not send valuable "treasure toys" to school.

PARENT SERVICES

VOLUNTEERS need VIRTUS TRAINING

During the school year, parents will be called upon to help with field trips, parties, and special events. All parents must be *Virtus* trained and up to date with training bulletins if they are involved with contact with children in a class activity or field trip. Information about *Virtus* training will be distributed to all parents at Orientation. Please review the School Handbook for an explanation of *Virtus*, also known as "Protecting God's Children." It is located in the section titled, "Safe Environment Program." Families may register online for a training session on either September 25, 2014 or on February 14, 2015.

FUNDRAISING

PRE-KINDERGARTEN parents are expected to volunteer for any STA school-wide projects and to participate in the Home and School fundraisers. Participation on committees for fundraisers is a way to meet other families and to enjoy camaraderie as everyone works together.

SERVICE HOURS

When families are involved in school, the students perform better. Each family is required to serve a minimum of 20 hours of service at the school per year. Service hours may be earned

while participating in classroom activities, school-wide activities, fund raising events, and even at home. Service hours can be earned in various ways. (Options are listed in the addendum of this handbook). Families are requested to submit a form to the school office upon completion of the service hours on or by May 1. For those families who choose not to fulfill this requirement, a fee of \$300 will be added to the final tuition payment. The \$300 fee will be pro-rated for those who complete only some of the required 20 hours.

SCHOOL POLICIES

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT

Because St. Thomas the Apostle School assumes responsibility for children in the school, it is important that we be notified of any special arrangements regarding custody of and access to children whose parents are divorced and/or separated. Unless directed otherwise, all information and notifications will be provided to both custodial and non-custodial parents.

UNIFORMS AND DRESS CODE

PRE-KINDERGARTEN students will follow the uniform policy that is found in the school handbook. In brief:

- Uniforms are worn daily. The regulation school uniform is clearly defined in the Parent Handbook.
- Students wear plain white or plain black gym shoes (regulation) or dress shoes with the uniform. Shoes with lights or colorful designs are not permitted.
- They have the option of a school sweatshirt or a solid navy blue sweater.
- GYM CLASS: There is a separate uniform for gym class.
- In August and September when the weather is very warm, the students may wear their gym uniforms to school on a daily basis. An alternative is the school uniform shorts with a school shirt or blouse
- SPIRIT WEAR: Families have the option of purchasing School Spirit Wear. These items may be purchased through the school and are not available at the uniform stores. Special days are announced periodically when students may wear their School Spirit items.

Students have many options for their uniform wear. Parents must be acquainted with the Dress Code as outlined in the school handbook because PRE-KINDERGARTEN students must follow every part of the code as explained. Teachers will notify you of any infractions to the rule and students must quickly come to compliance.

Although we expect all children to be toilet trained, accidents do happen. For that reason, we ask that each child have a *complete change of underwear, socks, and clothes* in school at all times.

Articles of clothing, especially hats, seasonal jackets, sweaters, etc. should be clearly marked with your child's name. Clothing that has been mislaid can be located in the Lost and Found bin in the school office. Three times a year the bin is emptied and all useful items are removed.

SCHOOL SPIRIT DAYS

On the first Tuesday of each month (in most cases), we will celebrate Spirit Day. On Spirit Day the students wear green and white, our school colors. They may wear dress jeans on these days along with Spirit Wear shirts. These special clothes days are indicated on the calendar. The Spirit Wear clothing is ordered and distributed on a periodic basis. Students may wear non-regulation gym shoes on this day

SCHOOL N.U.T. DAYS

On N.U.T. Days, students are permitted to wear other clothes rather than their uniform if they chose. *N.U.T.* stands for **No Uniform Today**. During the year, students may earn N.U.T. cards for special activities, for example, as a reward for good behavior or collecting *Boxtops for Education* or for attendance at school events. On N.U.T. Days, students may wear non-regulation shoes.

FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are educational in nature and require a sufficient number of chaperones. For PRE-KINDERGARTEN children, St. Thomas the Apostle requires one adult to every two or three students. All chaperones must be in total compliance with all Virtus requirements in order to attend an event. (See School Handbook for details).

Field trip permission forms are required for each field trip. Parents must sign the school form permitting their child to take the trip. Children who fail to submit the proper form *will not be allowed* to participate in the field trip. A phone call or note from a parent is not acceptable. We need written permission. A faxed form may substitute. Parents do have the right to refuse to allow their child to participate in a field trip. If the child is kept home, he/she is marked absent for the day.

Rarely is private transportation used for a Field Trip. If a private passenger vehicle is used to transport a child who is not your own, the following must be verified by the driver.

1. The driver must be 21 years of age.
2. The driver must have a valid, non-probationary driver's license and no physical disability that may impair the ability to drive.
3. The vehicle must have a valid registration.
4. The vehicle must be insured for minimum limits of \$100,000 per person / \$300,000 per occurrence.
5. The vehicle must have an adequate number of seat belts, one per person.
6. All children **must** have a car/booster seat for trips.

PARENT AGREEMENT

PARENT-SCHOOL CONTRACT

As a condition of enrollment, a student's parents or guardians are required to sign an agreement with the school. This agreement articulates the expectation of parents in helping the school provide a quality education for their children. In conjunction with the Parent Handbook, it outlines expectations for parents whose children attend St. Thomas.

Since St. Thomas recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children, it is the policy of St. Thomas the Apostle elementary school to require active parental support and participation in the life of the school as a condition of enrollment. Such support is necessary prerequisite for the school in order to be able to offer a quality educational program. Accordingly, all parents are required to sign a contract with the school, committing themselves to active support of the school.

Supplies Your Child Needs to Bring to School on the First Day

You are urged to bring these items on the *Welcome Back Event* prior to school starting.

Backpack: waterproof with no wheels;
 2 large boxes of Kleenex tissues
 1 box 5 oz. *Dixie* cups
 2 containers of disinfectant hand wipes
 2 container of Lysol/Clorox disinfectant wipes
 1 oversized t-shirt or smock for painting
 1 extra pair of gym shoes for play (kept in the locker)

An extra set of clothes (in case of an accident). Clothes must be labeled
 1 box (100 ct.) "Ziploc" style snack bags
 2 rolls paper towels
 1 box (25 ct) "Ziploc" style gallon storage bags

PRE-KINDERGARTEN DAILY SCHEDULE

8:00	SCHOOL PRAYER, PLEDGE, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
8:10	Daily Routine- Includes attendance, weather, calendar, days of the week, months of the year, counting and counting by 2's,5's, 10's, and backwards, number and letter recognition, words beginning with the same letter, word opposite vocabulary, rhyming, poems, songs, story, movement, music, finger plays, and more....
8:35	Snack
8:55	Students Rotate to Centers that include Literacy, Math, Science, and Creative Arts
9:30	Students Rotate to Centers that include Literacy, Math, Science, and Creative Arts
10:05	Students Rotate to Centers that include Literacy, Math, Science, and Creative Arts
10:45	Recess outdoors
11:15	LUNCH
11:45	Story
12:00	MONDAY through FRIDAY the schedule includes social studies, cooking, Spanish, Music, Physical Education
12:30	Religion
12:50	Washroom
1:00	Rest
2:00	Nature Walk/ Play with manipulatives
2:45	Geography
3:00	Story
3:15	Dismissal to the parking lot (or to the gym when inclement weather)

NOTE THAT DISMISSAL IS AT 2:15 EVERY WEDNESDAY.

CONSULT YOUR SCHOOL CALENDAR ON A REGULAR BASIS.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Our program is designed to suit the developmental needs of young children, promoting their spiritual, emotional, social, physical and intellectual growth. It represents the best of state standards, the Archdiocesan guidelines, and an application of NAEYC guidelines. The curriculum is well rounded and comprehensive. It is adjusted to meet the needs of the children. The following components comprise the curriculum of our preschool program:

Religion	Science and Critical Thinking
Reading Readiness	Health and Safety
Math Readiness	Personal / Social Development
Language	Multicultural Awareness
Dramatic Play	Independent Play
Art	Following Directions
Music	Fine and Large Motor Skills
Geography	

The curriculum uses a “hands-on” approach to learning in general. Multi-sensory activities enhancing the total development of children are planned according to a thematic unit on a regular basis.

The curriculum for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4 is adjusted for Developmental Readiness.

RELIGION

Religion is an integral part of the PRE-KINDERGARTEN Program at St. Thomas. Religious readiness involves the development of a positive self-image in relationship to a loving God. Children’s sense of God comes from the warm atmosphere of love and acceptance in the preschool environment. Children learn to pray and appreciate God’s wonderful creation. The seasons of the Church are highlighted through activities and stories. You are strongly urged to take your child to worship with you weekly.

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Religion:

- demonstrates knowledge of God as a loving creator
- identifies Jesus as God's son
- identifies the Bible as a book that tells about God
 - ◊ the Old Testament - the story of the Creator
 - ◊ the New Testament - stories of Jesus
- knows the Ten Commandments (or God's rules)
- identifies the church as God's home and a place for prayer
- describes praying as talking and listening to God
- remembers that God is always with us
- knows that the Cross is a sign of God's love
- celebrates the birth of Jesus at Christmas
- celebrates God's love on Valentine's Day
- celebrates Jesus' new life at Easter
- celebrates uniqueness through our senses
- is aware of the importance of participating in mission activities
- explains God's gifts of people, our world and ourselves

LANGUAGE / READING READINESS

Communication skills enable children to share their world with others. Transferring thoughts into words is the primary skill upon which future language development is based. Many activities are provided for the children to facilitate listening and speaking. Learning experiences, which promote an understanding of the sense of self, help children express thoughts and feelings in various ways. Visual and auditory discrimination and memory are important readiness skills that can be taught through play and learning activities. They easily memorize poetry and songs.

Children are also engaged in learning and play activities that promote letter, number, color, and name recognition. Listening to and sharing stories, poetry and finger plays as well as writing digital classroom stories about field trips, events enhance their language skills. As students are ready to learn sight words and to begin reading, they are encouraged and assisted in the process. Children will visit the school library periodically. They will share reading activities a few times a month with an older "buddy class" throughout the year.

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Language/Reading Readiness:

- understands the concept of written print and left to right
- recognizes and knows alphabet letters - upper case and lower case
- learns and reads the sight words
- knows letter/sound correspondence
- knows single consonant sounds
- recognizes and produces rhyming words
- knows word opposite vocabulary
- learns the main idea of the story and the five elements of story telling
- knows sequencing - first, next, last
- follows oral directions
- interprets pictures to understand stories
- knows that a story has a beginning, middle and ending
- differentiates between fiction and nonfiction
- actively engages in group reading activities
- listens to others and takes turns speaking
- speaks in complete sentences and expresses self properly
- writes the upper case letters correctly
- uses words and drawings when telling stories
- dictates stories
- is taught traditional rhymes
- recites seasonal poems and songs

In order to build literacy and responsibility in preschool children, all parents should read with their children daily. It is recommended that you read at least 10 minutes or longer with your child.

MATH READINESS

At the preschool level, math readiness involves understanding of colors, shapes, quantitative concepts, such as size differences, and basic counting skills, classifying, and ordering of a variety of objects. This is taught through hands-on activities and manipulative experiences. Parents should reinforce these skills at home. The teacher will regularly suggest ways to do this at home. The teacher will distribute a booklet to parents with suggested activities to extend math readiness skills at home. Students count and skip count and engage in math activities daily.

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Mathematics:

- count verbally
- count objects
- recognize numerals and represents numbers with objects
- compare groups of objects
- model and solve number stories with concrete objects
- represent and interpret data on graphs
- compare sizes of objects and recognize uses of measuring tools

- sequence events in time
- recognize and describe basic 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional geometric shapes
- use position and location words
- use spatial reasoning
- sort objects by attributes
- extend a repeating pattern

SCIENCE AND CRITICAL THINKING

Young children develop competence in critical thinking that will serve them across the curriculum. Critical thinking stems from actions, not words. We believe that science-related experiences often result from natural, spontaneous environmental stimulation. In order for learning to be meaningful, children must learn to investigate, question, analyze, solve problems, observe, sort, hypothesize, and come to meaningful conclusions and understandings. No other single area of the curriculum involves as many process skills that are so important to the development of understanding and thinking in young children.

Ore-K will use the guided learning units through the FOSS Science Program. The units include "trees" and "fabrics"

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Science:

- sinking and floating
- magnets
- gravity
- hot and cold air
- colors and color sandwich
- surface tension
- 5 senses
- solid/liquid
- static electricity
- bubbles have air
- human body parts
- planting a vegetable/ parts of a plant/ what do plants need in order to grow?
- volcanoes
- seeds
- observing caterpillars changing into butterflies

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

Time spent with other children will help to broaden a child's background. Stories, field trips and holiday customs are a few multicultural activities teaching that people are alike in many ways but have a variety of cultural expressions and festivities. Students are introduced to new languages and engage in a weekly Spanish class. They learn customs of various cultures throughout the year.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Social Studies:

- transportation
- community helpers
- holidays
- hygiene, health and safety (stranger danger)
- family
- good/bad manners
- animals

- all about the USA- colors of the flag, fifty states, pledge of allegiance, name of our state, city, etc.

Pre-K will learn the following concepts in Geography:

- the seven continents
- similarities and differences between a globe and a map
- locate places on a map and a globe
- many forms of water
- How much water in the world? How much land in the world?

PERSONAL-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the main goals is for a child to have a positive self-image which is essential to successful learning. Basic social interaction with other children and between children and adults provide ways in which the child establishes autonomy and learns skills for relating to the world. Personal development includes knowing name and age, eventually learning address, phone number and birth date, caring for toileting needs, separating from parent with relative ease, caring for own belongings and respecting others. Social development includes cooperative play, sharing, following directions, initiating conversations and play situations with peers, entering into group activities, developing a positive relationship with teachers and caring about others.

ART and MUSIC

Art is a joyful creative experience full of self-expression. Creative art activities come from using clay, paint, paste, crayons, scissors, and various objects. Exposure to a variety of art forms along with music promotes creative expression. Singing, listening to music, using rhythm instruments and making instruments, dancing, and other rhythmic activities are ways of developing a love and appreciation for music.

PLAY

Playing is the work of children. The value of free play indoors and outdoors cannot be overstated. Sand and water play are excellent activities that encourage multi-sensory learning. Opportunities for play will occur as the child enters the classroom and also after structured learning activities. Outdoor play will be part of the schedule when the weather permits. In inclement weather, the children will play in the school gym.

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Body coordination, as appropriate to the child's physical development is enhanced through large muscle activities of walking, running, jumping and hopping. Arm-eye coordination is attained by throwing a large ball or beanbag, catching and aiming at a target. Rhythm and movement provide an outlet for creative expression and the joy of using the body in dance, games, and organized play.

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Eye-hand coordination is developed through manipulating clay, stringing beads, hammering, pasting, using crayons, painting, pouring, lacing and using scissors. Dexterity and strength of the small muscles are developing skills that enhance reading and writing readiness. Use of the natural hand preference is observed and encouraged, although hand dominance is not achieved yet. Eye tracking is another fine motor activity that promotes the left-to-right progression skill required for reading readiness.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

The Spanish Teacher will engage the students in language development on a weekly basis.

FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

St. Thomas the Apostle School is a community of faith. It provides our children with an experience of a religious community within an academic community. It is a community of learners and teachers, administrators and parents, staff and religious leaders. All come together to make Christ present among the children in a special way. It is a school where everyone cares for each other because Jesus cares for us. This is particularly true in the PRE-KINDERGARTEN Program. Your child will receive moral guidance and spiritual opportunities.

Parent Involvement in School

Parents are urged to become involved in your child's education by keeping in contact with your child's teacher through the various means outlined for you. Stay current by reading the teacher newsletter and the school News Briefs online. Follow the information posted on Fast Direct, on the website, and even on the school Face Book page. Attend school and Home and School events.

You are encouraged to volunteer to help with classroom activities. You can volunteer to become a Room Parent to plan or coordinate events. All families are encouraged to participate in classroom activities and to offer your suggestions and ideas. At St. Thomas, all families must complete a minimum of 20 Service Hours a year. This is easily achieved and requests for school involvement for service will be announced on a weekly basis. Parents may be able to earn service hours for their time spent on classroom activities as well as school events. Opportunities for service hours begin in July and must be achieved prior to the close of school in June.

During the school year, parents will be called upon to help with field trips, parties, and special events. All parents must be *Virtus* trained and up to date with training bulletins if they are involved with direct student activity. *Virtus* primarily is a program about child safety. Information about *Virtus* training will be distributed to all parents at the Back-to-School Night. Please review the School Handbook for a greater explanation of *Virtus*, also known as "Protecting God's Children." It is located in the section titled, "Safe Environment Program."

See the Parent Handbook for additional information about St. Thomas the Apostle School.

NOTES: